THE JAPANESE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY IN THE WORLD

The COVID-19 Pandemic, Challenges, and the Prospects for the Future

Masami Tamagawa

ROUTLEDGE

THE JAPANESE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY IN THE WORLD

This study of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community sheds light on the intersectionality of lived experiences, including gender, sexuality, family, (mental) health, race and ethnicity, migration, and nationality, offering a picture of a community whose experience is deeply embedded in the dynamic society around.

The Japanese LGBTQ+ Community in the World takes an innovative approach, viewing the community as an integral part of the world in flux, rather than an isolated monoracial and monolingual tight-knit entity. Like the US and many other countries in the world, when the pandemic struck Japan, its citizens were not all equally equipped to withstand it. Due particularly to lingering systemic injustices, including stigma, ostracism from family and society, and lack of legal protection of their basic human rights, the pandemic has disproportionately affected the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals and couples in Japan. They face unique challenges in various facets of their lives. Their experiences are an integral part of understanding how this pandemic is affecting a societal response to an already marginalized group of individuals. This important study looks at the issues from a range of perspectives including public healthcare services, the media, and cross-cultural experience.

This book is ideal for students and scholars of gender studies, LGBTQ+ studies, sociology, health, and Asian studies.

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PREFACE

This book concerns the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic among the Japanese LGBTQ+ community by examining ways in which this global health crisis has affected their visibility, availability and comfort with healthcare, and work and familial relationships. Having compiled and analyzed both data and personal stories from the over 300 respondents to my study, primarily in Japan but also with members of the Japanese LGBTQ community in some other countries, I see this book as representing both sociological and personal perspectives.

As with everyone experiencing this global pandemic, I found myself having to adapt dramatically to my daily life. For me, that meant teaching remotely from home – a more challenging and more time-consuming undertaking than I would have guessed – keeping a great physical distance from personal and professional associations and, as a Japanese man, noting increased racism in the US due to former President Trump's direct and misguided blame of China, and Asians in general, for the pandemic's origin. I have felt fortunate, however, to be in a relatively more gay-friendly country than many, without having to go back into the closet or face discrimination and negative interpersonal repercussions, as many of the respondents of my online survey describe their experience in Japan at the time. Everyone's story concerning the pandemic, no matter their circumstances or part of the world, is unique and, to many degrees, quite relatable. I am touched, saddened, yet hopeful to learn of the resilience of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community through this difficult time.

Having left Japan in my early twenties, where I did not feel comfortable living openly as a gay man, I have now spent more than half of my life outside of Japan, for the most part in the US. I no longer have close LGBTQ+ friends in Japan, though my thoughts are always with the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, in particular those who have felt isolated, marginalized, and not seen, very much including the respondents to my study who shared their experiences in

writing through comments both in the survey and via email. Throughout the process, I felt as if they were with me, encouraging my completion of this book and representing their voice, at a difficult time for us all. The majority of their experiences during the pandemic were far more difficult than my own, as illustrated and elaborated upon in the following pages.

A few disclaimers: the names of Japanese people are written in this book in Japanese order, with the family name coming before their first, unless their names are written in a different way in other publications. All translations are mine, unless otherwise noted. There are also a few graphic and/or demeaning expressions used that might seem offensive to some readers, in particular in Chapter 7.

I very much would like to acknowledge my appreciation toward my professional and familial support during this project. First of all, editor Alexandra McGregor, for seeing the potential and importance in this work and contracting my proposal with Routledge. My current editor Charlotte Taylor and editorial assistant Eleanor Simmons have been immensely kind, patient, and helpful. I am also grateful for my institution, Skidmore College in New York, US, for their Faculty Development Grant and continued support of my research and publications.

I thank my husband, Todd Norton, with whom I survived the pandemic in close quarters. Thank you so very much for your patience, encouragement, and thoughtful comments. Needless to say, without you, I couldn't have completed this book as a life partner is a miraculous gift, one that people of all genders and sexualities should be entitled to have and be recognized. Thank you, and I love you! My additional familial gratitude goes to our canine family member, Momo, whom I feel is the most lovely and sweetest dog on earth – though I am biased in this regard! All of us serve as important members of our families, be they biological or found among like-minded and loving friends and associates. I feel fortunate to have Todd and Momo as my family.

Last but certainly not least, I thank the many respondents to this survey who have made this book possible by sharing their experiences. It is my hope that going forward, all LGBTQ+ people may find greater comfort, inclusion, and hope within the world at large as a result of increased personal and political awareness, support, and recognition.

1

THE JAPANESE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY IN THE WORLD

1.1 Introduction

At the time of writing, COVID-19 remains prevalent in various regions of the world. The lasting effects of this pandemic have yet to be discovered and carefully examined. On the other hand, some preliminary studies, as well as media outlets, have reported many incidents of discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals and couples in the face of this public health crisis. The effects of the pandemic on the Japanese LGBTQ+ community are profound. Like the US and many other countries in the world, when the pandemic struck Japan, its citizens were not all equally equipped to endure the ensuing challenges to daily life. In particular, due to lingering systemic injustices – including stigma and ostracism from family and society – as well as a lack of legal protection for their basic human rights, the pandemic has disproportionately affected the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals and couples in Japan, who face unique challenges in various facets of their lives. Their experiences are an integral part of understanding how this pandemic affects a societal response to an already marginalized group of individuals.

This study of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community takes an innovative approach: viewing the Japanese LGBTQ+ community as an integral part of the world in flux, rather than as an isolated monoracial and monolingual tight-knit entity. It also sheds light on the intersectionality of various interrelated facets of the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals and couples, including gender, sexuality, family, (mental) health, race and ethnicity, migration, and nationality. In this way, it offers a holistic picture of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, whose experiences are deeply embedded in the dynamic society around it.

1.1.1 Is Japan LGBTQ+-Friendly?

A widespread and persistent myth concerning the condition of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community – even among the concerned parties themselves – is that Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals are fortunate (*shiawase*). Some of the reasons, however plausible, include the lack of sodomy laws except for a brief period in Japanese history; no overt homo/transphobia in public; the *Sei dōitsusei shōgai tokurei hō* [Act on Special Cases in Handling Gender Status for Persons with Gender Identity Disorder] of 2003, which allowed transgender people to legally change gender; various popular culture genres and titles that include sexually diverse themes and characters; and the world-renowned Shinjuku Ni-chōme ward in Tokyo playing host to several hundred LGBTQ+ entertainment venues and a *hattenba* [gay cruising spot] well-known across the country. These claims are often used as "evidence" of an LGBTQ+-friendly Japan, where Japanese LGBTQ+ people are tolerated (*kanyō sareteiru*).

Conversely, Japan has no relevant protective measures at the national level. Although Japanese LGBTQ+ people may not frequently experience overt homo/transphobia in the public domain, they often experience harsh reactions at home. For fear of being found out by or outed to their family members, they are typically reluctant to come out of the closet, often only "coming out" to other LGBTQ+ friends instead. Sterilization and other stringent conditions are required to change gender officially. Although present, LGBTQ+ characters in Japanese popular culture are often stereotypical and depicted to satisfy a mainstream audience. Shinjuku Ni-chōme serves only Japanese LGBTQ+ people who are "out" to their LGBTQ+ friends and live in the Greater Tokyo Metropolitan area, many of whom still lead a double life. *Hattenba* is almost exclusively gay. Ultimately, LGBTQ+ persons may be tolerated in Japan, but only if they stay on the fringes of Japanese society and remain silent.

At a more theoretical level, these differing perspectives on the condition of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community compel us to address the following series of important questions: Does the Japanese societal model work better for the Japanese LGBTQ+ community in any way, if at all? If yes, how might we help improve the condition of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community? In addition to X-gender (*ekkusu-jendā*), as well as newly imported sexual and gender diversity terms, the Japanese LGBTQ+ community has become increasingly more diversified sociodemographically, and their experiences greatly differ. Of note, since the late 1990s, the Japanese have used the term "X-gender," which is equivalent to the English terms "genderqueer" and "non-binary." If the Japanese societal model does *not* work better for the LGBTQ+ community, how can we help bring sexual equality to Japan? Are Japanese LGBTQ+ rights human rights? Do the rights of Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals need to be protected by law? Are LGBTQ+ rights privileges?

As such, the main theoretical framework of this book touches upon the timely topic of LGBTQ+ rights in Japan. The shared experience of the COVID-19

pandemic also makes a comparative analysis not only possible, but also meaningful in domestic and global contexts, highlighting the hardship the Japanese LGBTQ+ community has faced, albeit diverse to a considerable extent. In the end, what can we learn from the experiences of Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1.2 The COVID-19 Pandemic, Japan, and the World

1.2.1 Japanese Authorities' Measures Against COVID-19

Three of the key concepts that the Japanese authorities employed to combat COVID-19 were *sanmitsu* [the "Three Cs"], *jijo* [self-help], and *fuyō fukyū* [nonessential and nonurgent]. The Three Cs approach was implemented to prevent COVID-19 infection by avoiding confined and enclosed spaces (*mippei*), crowded places (*misshū*), and close-contact settings (*missetsu*; MHLW, n.d.). The term *sanmitsu* itself is originally an esoteric, or Shingon, Buddhist term meaning "three secrets" or "three mysteries," which conjures up images of the human body, speech, and mind, which are traditionally regarded as the origins of all three types of secrets and mysteries (Yamaori, 2000). In Japan, the authorities leveraged this linguistic opportunity to convey their messaging to a society that was voluntarily quarantined. They did so by transforming a concept redolent of Buddhist enlightenment into a message relevant to the changing socioeconomic circumstances created by the pandemic (Zhong, 2020).

In turn, *jijo* [self-help] was one of the three kinds of "help" (*jo*) promoted to facilitate the Three Cs approach. According to a Japan Red Cross pamphlet titled *Jijo kara kyōjo he, tomo ni tasukeaeru chiiki zukuri wo* [From self-help to mutual aid, building a community where we can help each other] (n.d.), three types of activity are needed in times of disaster: *jijo* [self-help], *kyōjo* [mutual aid], and *kōjo* [public assistance]. *Jijo* is the most important of the three and denotes "protection of your own life by yourself, including your family":

> As the ratio of "self-help," "mutual aid," and "public assistance" is said to be 7:2:1 based on lessons learned from past disasters, it is extremely difficult for the government to provide prompt assistance to all disaster victims. To minimize damage, it is especially necessary from now on for each resident to acquire the correct knowledge before a disaster occurs and for local communities to work together to link self-help to mutual aid.
>
> *(Japan Red Cross Society, Nagano, n.d.)*

Together with *sanmitsu, jijo* emphasizes that self-help, including for one's family, is one of the most important measures by which everyone is expected to abide to prevent COVID-19 infection – that is, by avoiding the Three Cs.

The Japanese authorities also asked citizens to refrain from going out and moving around unnecessarily: *fuyō fukyū* [nonessential, nonurgent]. They asked

for cooperation in preventing the spread of the new coronavirus. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government, for example, made the following requests to the city's residents:

- Refrain from unnecessary and nonessential outings and travel, including during the daytime.
- Refrain from going out, except when necessary to maintain their lives and health, such as going to medical facilities, buying food, medicine, and daily necessities, going to work, exercising outdoors, or taking a walk.
- Refrain from unnecessary and nonessential travel between prefectures.
- Avoid crowded places and peak times. (Tokyo Metropolitan Government, 2021)

Other requests include refraining from frequenting restaurants and limiting drinking time to 90 minutes or less, with no more than two people in the same group. As I will discuss in detail in Chapter 8, these measures were produced out of the country's heteronormative ideals and further reinforced by ignoring and excluding LGBTQ+ individuals and couples.

1.2.2 The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Japanese LGBTQ+ Community

The problems posed by the COVID-19 pandemic are continuous and integrated with those previously faced by LGBTQ+ people, making it difficult to separate existing problems from those posed by the pandemic. This difficulty is exacerbated by the fact that LGBTQ+ issues are particularly hard to pinpoint for two interrelated reasons: first, the general repression in Japan for those who identify as LGBTQ+ to raise their voices as such, and second, the difficulty in recognizing the relevance of being LGBTQ+ to the issues that arise for them (Sunagawa, 2021, p. 30). Such difficulties are shared by other minorities in Japan:

> The fact that they are minorities, which would not be apparent if they did not say so, is shared by people from the Buraku people and Korean residents in Japan. The main difference is that LGBT people are often invisible to their families and relatives, and when they are made visible, their families and relatives sometimes become more oppressive.
>
> *(Sunagawa, 2021, p. 31)*

In his article "*Kizon no yokuatsu ni kajū sareru kon'nan: Shingata korona uirusu kansenshō to LGBT*" [Difficulties compounded by existing oppression: New coronavirus infections and LGBT], Sunagawa, cultural anthropologist and LGBTQ+ activist, points out some specific issues facing transgender people, including limited access to medical care, suicide, and commuting to school by gender (*danjo bunsan tōkō*; pp. 31–34). Concerning same-sex couples, the author foregrounds

issues related to the recognition of their relationships and privacy. The partners of same-sex couples may not be recognized in society. Although some municipalities have introduced a partnership system, the number of municipalities that do not have such a system in place is much larger. In addition, such systems are not legally binding. Moreover, even when their relationships are recognized, if same-sex couples desire, they may choose not to inform their employers, families, or others about their relationships. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, concerns have been raised about the possibility of protecting privacy while tracing the pathways of infection. It must be emphasized here that this is not due to the "selfishness of minorities" (*mainorithī no wagamama*; p. 38), but rather to the deep-rooted oppression and aversion toward same-sex couples in Japanese society as a whole.

Common issues facing LGBTQ+ individuals include losing one's place (*basho*) in society and anxiety about being exposed. The former refers to both loss of one's residence due to economic deterioration and removal from one's usual hangouts and relationships as an LGBTQ+ person due to restrictions on leaving one's home. One way of coping with this situation is to move in with family, relatives, or friends. However, it should not be forgotten that this can often cause emotional distress, since one is not or cannot always be open with one's LGBTQ+ identity among those with whom one lives. On the other hand, anxiety about being exposed highlights the fear that if they or others with whom they have shared the same place become infected, they will have to tell people that they have been to gay bars, lesbian bars, club events, and other places that are important to them for their emotional stability and sense of community as part of confirming the route of infection. Transgender people also have a strong fear that if they are infected, they will be known by the gender of their family registry (*koseki*) or in a body other than the gender in which they live (Sunagawa, 2021, pp. 39–41).

Aside from Sunagawa's article, a few other works have been published by Japanese LGBTQ+ support groups. Noteworthy examples and their key findings are presented later. "*Niji VOICE 2020 – Korona-ka de konkyūsuru seiteki mainorithi, daremo torinokosanai shien wo*" [*Niji* VOICE 2020 – Sexual minorities in need due to the corona pandemic, support for no one left behind] (2020) is a collaborative research project by Nijiiro Diversity and the Center of Gender Studies (CGS) at International Christian University (ICU) in Tokyo. Their sample consists of 2,017 individuals, of whom two-thirds (1,350) are LGBTQ+ individuals (p. 1). According to their flash report, LGBTQ+ respondents were likelier than their non-LGBTQ+ peers to report that their relationships with family and close friends had deteriorated, possibly due to either a lack of understanding or stress from being forced to stay home with family members to whom they have not felt safe to come out. The mental health of LGBTQ+ respondents, especially transgender individuals, has also rapidly worsened and to a greater extent than their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts. Reasons considered include economic poverty, social isolation, and anxiety about the future (pp. 4–6).

Family relationships are one of the major concerns among LGBTQ+ individuals in Japan. "LGBTQ Youth TODAY" (June 23, 2020) by the Pride House Tokyo Consortium (Pride House Tokyo, the NPO ReBit, and the LGBTQ Ally Committee at Accenture) reports that COVID-19 has weakened Japanese LGBTQ+ young people's connections with people and places where they can feel safe and that they are experiencing difficulties with unaccepting family members and people with whom they live due to the stay-at-home order, as well as anxiety about restructured student life and future plans due to school closures and the shift to online learning. ReBit specifically asks, "Are there any difficulties you are experiencing with being at home (or where you live) with people you live with?" The responses selected by more than 25% of participants were as follows: people they live with make assumptions about their non-LGBTQ status (41.6%); they have to hide their sexuality from people they live with (36.3%); they feel it is hard to be at home or where they live (33.3%); people they live with engage in anti-LGBTQ behavior (27.9%); they feel lonely or isolated at home or where they live (27.0%); and they feel anxious about their sexuality being revealed to people they live with (25.1%). The report also cites the respondents' experiences in their own words:

> I used to live alone, but now that I'm back at home, I live with family members who haven't come out, and I can't call my partner or friends, so I don't have a place to stay.
>
> I don't have an environment where I can talk easily because there are no real gatherings of LGBT people.
>
> My siblings, who do not understand my sexuality or mental illness, work from home and yell at me and say heartless things to me whenever they see me while I am recuperating, making it hard for me to stay home. Since there are no libraries, cafes, or other places open where I can stay for long periods of time, I have nowhere to escape.
>
> My father, who has been working alone, has returned home, but because he is in denial about my transgender status, he treats me as his daughter and expects me to act like a daughter, which is hard for me.
>
> *(Pride House Tokyo, June 23, 2020)*

For gay and lesbian couples, the lack of legal protection for their relationships poses many serious issues. Reviewing some of the major findings of Marriage for All Japan's *korona-ka ni LGBTQ ga kakaeru kon'nan ni tsuite no kinkyū onrain chōsa* [Urgent online survey on difficulties faced by LGBTQ during the COVID-19 pandemic] (2020): due to the lack of a legal relationship with their partners, (1) more than one-third of respondents expressed concern about whether they could contact their partners in case of emergency or hospitalization; (2) about 14% were anxious over protection of privacy if infected; and (3) 16 participants feared restrictions due to foreign nationality. In addition, about a quarter of survey participants called for marriage equality, and about 10% called for equal treatment as opposite-sex marriage.

Concerning work-related issues, *Shingata korona uirusu kansen-shō kakudai ni tomonau LGBT no rōdō-kankyō, tenshoku-katsudō, shūshoku-katsudō heno eikyō no jittai chōsa ankēto hōkoku* [A report from a survey concerning the impact of the spread of COVID-19 on the working environment, job-hunting and job-hunting activities of LGBT people] by JobRainbow (June 5, 2020) reveals some of the major difficulties faced by Japanese LGBTQ+ workers due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a whole, a large proportion of LGBTQ+ people (32.4%) work in the service, food, retail, and travel industries, so the impact of the pandemic has been more urgent and severe, including reduced salaries, layoffs, and reduced working hours. The spread of COVID-19 has caused serious economic damage to the LGBTQ+ community, with an average annual income drop of 533,000 yen. The pandemic (37.8%) emerged as the third most common reason for LGBTQ+ job-hunting/job-hopping, 67.9% of which was due to worsening working conditions, such as salary; 23.2% to dismissal; and 8.9% to revocation of job offers – indicating that job-hunting and career change activities were prompted by negative factors rather than positive ones. In addition, 27.7% of respondents cited a lack of understanding of LGBTQ+ as the reason for changing jobs, indicating that this phenomenon in the context of Japanese companies is directly related to the outflow of human resources. The aforementioned study by Nijiiro Diversity and CGS at IUC (September 7, 2020) adds that the LGBTQ+ community, and especially its transgender constituents, is less likely to work remotely than its non-LGBTQ+ counterparts. This is probably because they are often employed in positions that require them to be on-site. The study also reports that more LGBTQ+ respondents, especially transgender constituents, have lost their jobs and income than their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts due to COVID-19.

In addition, a report on *GID/GD/toransujendā tōjisha no iryō akusesu no genjō* [Current status of access to healthcare for GID/GD/transgender persons] (2020, September) by TRanS, the Department of Global and Community Health, and Nagoya City University School of Nursing considers the question "Has the use of medical services and the continuation of hormonal medicine been affected by the outbreak of new coronavirus infections?" Common responses include medical visits and treatment stopped; self-imported hormones not delivered; deterioration in access to medical facilities; involuntary change of doctor's appointments or difficulty in seeing a doctor; concern about coronavirus infection related to hospital visits; and difficulty in seeing conventional doctors and changing prescriptions.

1.3 The COVID-19 Pandemic and LGBTQ+ Communities Around the World

A great number of research articles, especially concerning the psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on LGBTQ+ individuals, have already been published by scholars around the globe. At the same time, an increasing number of monographs and edited volumes are shedding light on more elaborate

and comprehensive accounts of the effect of the pandemic than the existing ones. Although not comprehensive, the following section highlights a number of important themes and findings identified in the literature that will help understand the key findings from the present study.

1.3.1 Psychosocial Concerns

Indian psychiatrists Banerjee and Nair (2020) succinctly explain the unprecedented situation and their concerns about its psychosocial impact on LGBTQ+ individuals as follows:

> Social distancing and lockdown measures have disrupted human lives in terms of social relationships and emotional bonds. Every individual is facing unique challenges to cope with these unprecedented times. However, certain sections of the population, like the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) community, are particularly vulnerable to not only the infective risks of the virus, but also the psycho-social offshoots of the global lockdown and the pandemic aftermath.
>
> *(Banerjee & Nair, 2020, p. 113)*

The authors also mention the psychological and societal consequences of worldwide lockdowns and the pandemic, including the following:

> the immunocompromised state, increased comorbidities of sexually transmitted diseases, other chronic medical disorders and substance abuse, as well as reduced access to health care, to stigma and social discrimination, administrative apathy, economic constraints, and uncertainty of social rituals like the Pride Celebrations.
>
> *(Banerjee & Nair, 2020, p. 113)*

The authors note that such factors may result in under-detection of the viral load, higher physiological hazards associated with COVID-19, reduced assistance seeking, and disparities in health and legal treatment. In addition, their emotional and psychosexual health deteriorates, increasing their risk of psychological disorders, which can lead to a high rate of suicide (Banerjee & Nair, 2020, p. 113).

Other reports from around the world include one by Australian psychologists on how COVID-19 regulations impaired LGBTQ+ Tasmanians' mental well-being, visibility, and sense of belonging (Grant et al., 2021). Similarly, psychologists (Pereira et al., 2021) identified recurring themes such as mental health, isolation, relationships, work-related problems, education-related problems, financial problems, life changes, coping, and LGBTQ+ topics such as health barriers, going back into the closet, pride celebration events, and online dating through online interviews with Portuguese and Brazilian LGBT individuals.

The researchers highlight the specific challenges exacerbated by preexisting social inequalities caused by prejudice and sexual discrimination.

1.3.2 Mental Health

"Minority stress" is the chronically high level of stress faced by members of prejudiced minority groups. The condition has many possible causes, such as a lack of social support or low socioeconomic status, but the most well-known are prejudice and discrimination in interpersonal relationships (Peterson et al., 2021, pp. 6–7). Guided by minority stress theory, Peterson et al. (2021) examined psychological responses to the pandemic as a function of sexual identity, using a convenient sample of 170 men and women in the US, of whom about one-third were from a sexual minority; greater general mental distress and peritraumatic stress related to the pandemic were reported by these participants compared to the sexual majority and male counterparts.

The psychological impact of social distancing has also been studied. One online survey of 1,007 US adults, 128 of whom identified as homosexual, bisexual, or queer, reported that compared to heterosexual individuals, sexual minorities reported less prospering, more psychological discomfort, social alienation, increased COVID-19 anxiety and experiences. Social distancing and distress were positively correlated among sexual minority participants. The study also points out that increased COVID-19 worry and social distancing among sexual minority participants explain their lower psychological well-being (Baumel et al., 2021). Another study from the US (Moore et al., 2021) sheds light on perceived social support, mental health, and somatic symptoms to assess the asymmetric impacts of the pandemic on LGBTQ+ communities. Here, LGBTQ+ respondents demonstrated a higher frequency of physical symptoms and depressive and anxiety symptoms associated with COVID-19, reflecting a significantly higher percentage of depression and anxiety scores above the threshold of clinical concern. These findings were drawn from an online survey of 1,380 adults, of whom 290 defined as a sexual or gender minority. Incidentally, Chilean psychologists have concluded that while the pandemic has had some impact on all LGBTQ+ participants, the psychosocial impact has differed for those who identified as sexual minority rather than gender minority, with the former group feeling its effects more greatly (Barrientos et al., 2021).

Living with unsupportive parents during the pandemic can be daunting for LGBTQ+ young people. Based on transcript data from 31 online chats in spring 2020, the article "I'm Kinda Stuck at Home With Unsupportive Parents Right Now" (Fish et al., 2020) explores how LGBTQ+ young people's experiences were accompanied by LGBTQ-specific interpersonal, intrapersonal, and structural issues. These included maintaining mental health, isolation due to a lack of family support, and personal loss of identity-based socialization and support. Sexual minority–specific COVID-19–related stressors, including family conflict, have been found to explain significant variance in depressive and anxiety

symptoms in the LGBTQ+ community. In their community-based survey of 857 LGB individuals in Hong Kong, Suen et al. (2020) found that more than a quarter of those who took part met the criteria for probable clinical depression and generalized anxiety disorder. The researchers identified a number of stressors specific to a sexual minority: about 5% of participants frequently experienced family conflict related to their sexual orientation, while one-third reported a major reduced connection to the LGBTQ+ community.

Transgender people also experience specific causes of psychological distress. Kidd et al. (2021) have examined the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of an established cohort of 208 transgender and gender non-binary (TGNB) individuals in the US. Disruptions in gender-affirming care and decreased support from members of the LGBTQ+/TGNB community were cited as indicators of psychological distress during the pandemic. The health crisis was also found to exacerbate mental health disparities among TGNB individuals. Moreover, the study concludes that lower LGBTQ/TGNB support was associated with increased psychological distress. Additionally, interruptions or delays in gender-affirming healthcare were associated with increased psychological distress during the pandemic.

Similarities as well as differences across countries sometimes emerge due to cultural differences. LGBTQ+ young people stuck at home with parents is a major source of concern across the world. Using an online survey of 1,934 LGBTQ+ young adults in six countries, Gato et al. (2021) explored how the pandemic has affected the mental health of LGBTQ+ young adults who were confined with their parents during the pandemic in six different countries. Participants from South America were more influenced by the pandemic's negative psychological impacts. Depression and anxiety were shown to be more prevalent among individuals who were younger, unemployed, and residing in Europe, as well as those who were emotionally affected by the epidemic, uneasy at home, or isolated from non-LGBTQ acquaintances. Lower educational level was a predictor of depression; not being completely confined to the house, living with parents, and being more fearful of future infection predicted anxiety. Gato et al. (2021) further examined how the pandemic's psychosocial consequences relate to mental health, focusing on LGBTQ+ adolescents and young adults ($N = 403$) in Portugal. The study found that three conditions were associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety: (1) not having a college degree, (2) being exposed to the daily negative effects of the pandemic, and (3) a negative family environment. Furthermore, the family environment partially mediated the association between the personal impacts of the pandemic and both depression and anxiety.

1.3.3 Healthcare Access

The compromising of the healthcare system due to the pandemic caused a number of serious issues. Suen et al.'s (2021) exploratory study examined the factors

associated with difficulties accessing HIV services during the pandemic through an online survey of 236 Chinese-speaking gay and bisexual men in Hong Kong. Of those who reported needing to access HIV services, 22.9%, 33.9%, and 43.2% reported moderate to high, mild, or no difficulties accessing services, respectively. Concerns about the possibility of COVID-19 infection, actual health effects of COVID-19, work/study disruptions, and a decreased connection to the LGBT+ community were all associated with difficulties. Another finding was that having sex with casual partners was associated with an increased likelihood of using HIV services; however, this association was not significant when looking at regular partners.

Martino et al. (2021) have described patterns of COVID-19 testing among LGBTQ+ individuals and rates of COVID-19 testing and test results by sociodemographic characteristics in US adults. Of 1,090 participants over 18 years old, 187 (16.7%) received a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test, 16 (8.8%) of whom had a positive test result. Participants who were non-US–born (25.4%) versus US-born (16.3%) and working full-time or part-time (18.5%) versus unemployed (10.8%) had higher PCR testing rates. Positive PCR findings were greatest for cisgender homosexual males (16.1%) among sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) groups with appropriate cell sizes ($n > 10$). It seems that the findings from these two studies indicate certain unique trends among gay men.

1.3.4 Work-Related Quality of Life

Due to the economic downturn during the pandemic, a large number of workers experienced significant changes. Mendes and Pereira (2021) examined the impact of the pandemic on work-related quality of life in 1,396 Portuguese-speaking individuals, of whom 96 were gay or lesbian and 87 were bisexual. Here, bisexual participants scored higher than heterosexual or gay/lesbian participants for "fear of COVID-19" and "negative effects of COVID-19." Sexual orientation differences were also discovered across all dimensions of work-related quality of life. For example, compared to bisexual or gay and lesbian participants, heterosexual participants scored higher on "general well-being," "family-work interface," "career satisfaction," and "working conditions" and lower on "stress at work." Gay and lesbian participants had lower scores on career satisfaction and working conditions than heterosexual and bisexual participants. Sexual orientation, fear of COVID-19, and negative COVID-19 effects were identified as significant predictors of overall work-related quality of life (explaining 13% of the variance). The results also indicated that sexual orientation was a significant moderator of the association between fear of COVID-19, negative effects of COVID-19, and work-related quality of life; LGB people, especially bisexual individuals, were more severely affected by the pandemic than heterosexuals, and their work-related quality of life was also lower.

1.3.5 Social Media

Due largely to social distancing measures, many people have spent a significant amount of time online during the pandemic, including on social media. Holloway et al.'s (2021) study examines how physical social distancing impacts gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men based on an online survey on Hornet, a networking application, with 10,079 participants across a number of countries. About two-thirds of participants reported leaving the house only when necessary. Those practicing social distancing were likelier to feel anxious or lonely and to report being less satisfied with their current sex lives. To alleviate this situation, social technologies are used to be in touch with others, especially among those who practice social distancing. Incidentally, the aforementioned study by Baumel et al. (2021) concludes that the more frequent the computer-mediated communication, the more thriving is apparent across groups of participants.

Even at home with unsupportive parents, LGBTQ+ young people may be able to maintain their identity-based social relationships and receive support online. Woznicki et al. (2021) examined parasocial relationships and depression among 183 LGBTQ+ adults aged 18 to 23 living with their parents during the pandemic. The study looked at how parasocial relationships with LGBTQ+ media personalities, such as LGBTQ+ YouTubers, could help to reduce the link between family support, loneliness, and depressive symptoms in LGBTQ+ young adults living with their parents. According to the findings, the strength of parasocial relationships moderated the relationships between family support and loneliness, as well as loneliness and depressive symptoms. Furthermore, strong parasocial relationships weakened the links between family support and loneliness, as well as loneliness and depressive symptoms.

Incidentally, through a cross-cultural analysis of Australian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean online news articles, Abidin et al. (2021) explored the impact of COVID-19 on influencers, including their involvement in and reaction to it. The study looked at the attention paid to influencers in these four countries, as well as the sociocultural implications of this attention. With COVID-19, uncertainty is high, and people turn to opinion leaders for information and guidance. Physical social interaction is limited, so people turn to entertainment for solace, and the utility and impact of influencers becomes especially important across national markets. As a result, governments and healthcare organizations are looking to form partnerships with influential parties to help with COVID-19 recovery efforts and to promote global unity.

1.3.5.1 Misinformation, Privacy, and Individual Rights

Mass media content, including misinformation, has hampered efforts to address the current pandemic. Using the systematic review approach, this study examined 35 research articles concerning misinformation as a major concern during

past endemics and the current pandemic. Xenophobia, violations of LGBTQ+ rights, and psychological disorders among the masses were found to be caused by myths and rumors spread via traditional and new media platforms (Ali, 2020).

Due to the prevalence of contact tracing, privacy is identified as a major concern. Fahey and Hino (2020) discuss the implementation of digital contact tracing applications worldwide to limit the spread of COVID-19 and differentiate between "privacy-first" and "data-first" approaches. They warn that the lack of consensus on implementation and best practices for convincing citizens to protect their privacy may already be hampering their ability to contribute to pandemic response. On the other hand, DiMoia (2020) discusses South Korea's response to COVID-19, which initially received worldwide praise but more recently has raised concerns, especially in relation to the "Itaewon Cluster," which centers around a popular nightclub district. Due to its proximity to the US military base, Itaewon is associated with prostitution and, by extension, foreigners in general, including LGBTQ+ clubs. Although contact tracing promises to maintain the anonymity of the data collected, the significant increase in the number of incidents since May 2020 has led to calls to target foreigners, LGBTQ+ people, and English teachers. This suggests that xenophobia and social stigma remain powerful forces.

In addition to privacy, the infringement of human rights is another major concern. Gender hierarchy (which restricts women's sexuality) and heteronormativity, according to Golec de Zavala et al. (2021), are firmly rooted in the teachings of the Polish Catholic Church and form an essential part of Polish national identity. It is because of this that those who oppose the traditional rules that govern sexual relationships are seen as threats to social order and national unity. COVID-19 in Poland led to an increase in authoritarianism, the desire for national unity, and the rejection of "heretics" in a nationally representative sample of Polish participants ($N = 889$). At the end of its eight-week "circuit breaker," the Singaporean government announced the relaxation of restrictions on physical interaction over three phases. In the first phase, all physical interactions between households continued to be prohibited, with the exception of visits to parents and grandparents for the sake of mutual support between family members. Mano (2021) argues that by allowing certain types of interaction, social ties become stratified by heteronormative logic; with heteronormative kinship structures placed above others, multiple members who do not have access to or support for these kinship structures are excluded.

1.4 The Global LGBTQ+ Rights Movement, the Backlash, and Japan

The global LGBTQ+ rights movement has seen several important developments in recent decades. The global struggle to gain protections for LGBTQ+ individuals has achieved great progress (Holley, 2015), particularly in the area of

marriage equality ("Marriage Equality Around the World," HRC, n.d.). None-theless, LGBTQ+ individuals continue to experience repression, jail, and even the fear of death in a number of nations (Holley, 2015). Given the severity and pervasiveness of such abuses, campaigners and an increasing number of countries have prioritized legislation and safeguards to protect this population from legal discrimination and political, social, and economic marginalization (Angelo & Bocci, 2021).

In the 1980s, the international response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic led to a growing social debate about sexuality (see, e.g., Kelly & Kalichman, 1995). Since the beginning of the 1990s, new possibilities for communication and connectivity have spurred international solidarity among LGBTQ+ people and their allies globally (e.g., McLelland, 2006a). At the same time, although civil society organizations have pushed for such awareness, the UN's political organizations had not debated LGBTQ+ rights – that is, in terms of equality regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity – since its creation in 1945 until 1994, when the UN Human Rights Committee ruled in *Toonen v. Australia* (IGLHRC, 2003). In 2007, as violations of human rights committed against people based on their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity form an established worldwide trend of grave concern, international human rights norms and their application to sexual orientation–related issues were discussed by a group of independent experts in Indonesia. The Yogyakarta Principles were the result of their efforts, and they have since become a touchstone for LGBTQ+ rights (UNHCR, 2008).

Former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's "gay rights are human rights" speech to the UN in 2011 is often considered a crucial milestone in the international recognition and visibility of LGBTQ+ rights, especially in the West (Amnesty International USA, 2011). In delivering the speech, Clinton lobbied the UN Human Rights Council (which replaced the Human Rights Committee) to adopt a resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity as human rights. It was decided by the Council in 2016 that an independent expert panel would monitor the global implementation of these rights and urge member states to take action to prevent violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (OHCHR, 2016).

For anyone who cares about the freedom, equality, and well-being of LGBTQ+ people, it is impossible not to want LGBTQ+ rights to be human rights. Nonetheless, such safeguards are inconsistently established in law worldwide, and discrimination against people who identify as LGBTQ+ is still prevalent. Adults who "commit" consenting same-sex acts face the death penalty in 12 of the world's 70 remaining homophobic nations (Holley, 2015). In nations such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Qatar, these restrictions are rarely enforced even though they are legal, but Iran continues to execute LGBTQ+ individuals on a regular basis. Additionally, terrorist groups such as the self-declared Islamic State commit atrocities against LGBTQ+ people in places where state governments cannot intervene (Angelo & Bocci, 2021).

Even in states where same-sex sexual conduct is permitted, policymakers frequently overlook torture and murder of LGBTQ+ individuals by law enforcement agents, militant groups, street gangs, and even family members. Forcible marriages, so-called honor killings, and the use of rape to "undo" a victim's sexual orientation or gender identity continue to endanger lives in areas with minimal state capacity (Buist & Lenning, 2015). Transgender individuals are particularly susceptible to these acts of violence. Conservative interpretations of religious texts are frequently used to marginalize and legitimize discrimination against sexual minorities in certain Catholic and Muslim majority states with a history of authoritarianism. LGBTQ+ individuals experience systemic discrimination, persecution, and a high risk of violence throughout Central America, culminating in a recent increase of LGBTQ+ people seeking asylum in the US (Angelo & Bocci, 2021).

Today, 31 nations have legally recognized marriage equality, including Costa Rica in May 2020, Chile in March 2022, and Switzerland in July 2022 (HRC, n.d.). However, even among those countries that have legalized same-sex marriage, some are lagging behind in protecting LGBTQ+ people from discrimination in access to social and commercial services, education, health, and employment; only 11 countries include sexual orientation in their constitutional non-discrimination clauses. While EU countries stand out for extending protection under Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and Article 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, LGBTQ+ rights remain under attack on the continent (Angelo & Bocci, 2021).

1.4.1 The Backlash

Globalization has typically had paradoxical effects on the LGBTQ+ rights movement. While promoting the movement, it has caused a number of notable problems, including a backlash that has bolstered neoconservative projects and violence. For example, the LGBTQ+ rights movement has often been opposed in the name of national identity, religions, and traditional values. In recent years, conservative and right-wing political parties that oppose LGBTQ+ rights have gained popularity around the world, especially in (but not limited to) the non-West. This backlash also directly affects the lives of LGBTQ+ people. Although being part of a family is a basic human condition and human right, so-called traditional family values are used to justify the exclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals from their families, communities, cultures, and even countries (Newman & Muzzonigro, 1993). Additionally, problems have arisen around the "pinkwashing" of human rights, whereby the gay-friendliness of a business or political organization is promoted to downplay or soften negative aspects pertaining to the organization (Luibhéid, 2018; Pycha, 2020), as well as homonationalism – the favorable association between LGBTQ+ people or their rights and a nationalist ideology (Puar, 2007).

In Poland and Hungary, for example, reactionary political parties' use of homophobic rhetoric and legislation in 2020 prompted the European Commission to withhold funding from member states that failed to respect LGBTQ+ rights and to take steps toward including homophobic hate crimes on a list of major offenses. After more than two decades of development, the fight for LGBTQ+ rights in Latin America began to face a new form of opposition in the mid-2010s. While such opposition is not new, the current pushback in Latin America is unique in one respect: the emergence of evangelical churches as strong veto actors. Corrales (2020) addresses how religious groups, particularly evangelists, are abusing liberal democracy's institutions to obstruct progress on LGBTQ+ rights. The study employs collective action and social movement theories to explain how evangelicals have risen to prominence as the most influential players in impeding such progress (Corrales, 2020).

On a global scale, South Korea is a center for conservative and evangelical Protestantism. As less than a third of Koreans are Protestant, South Korea sends the second most missionaries abroad and hosts 77,000 Protestant churches, which is one church for every 660 Koreans (Lee, 2014). In this country, up to 95% of Protestants adhere to traditional theological viewpoints (Lee, 2006). As the most Confucian nation in the world, South Korea is also known for its emphasis on family-hierarchical ideals (such as filial piety) in many parts of society, including religious institutions (Min, 2010). A standout feature of South Korea's April 2016 general elections was the prominence given to anti-gay political discourse, particularly by the Christian Liberal Party (CLP), an ultra-conservative Protestant political party founded in March 2016. Conservative Protestant forces have been especially harsh to minorities in South Korea, including sexual minorities, immigrants, and temporary migrants. Conservative Protestants and homophobic political leaders have even connected LGBTQ+ equality to terrorism and radical Islam, as seen by recent CLP slogans such as "No to homosexuality, no to Islam, and no to anti-Christianity," all in the name of national security (Han, 2016, pp. 6–7).

1.4.2 The Politics of Gay Identity

Furthermore, in today's increasingly globalized society, the Western model of the LGBTQ+ movement has become hegemonic and problematic, as the "global" reference appears to be tantamount to the West as a place of "correct" sexuality, which is normative, modern, and progressive, while the non-Western or "local" represents a place of backward, oppressed, traditional, or *hentai* sexuality. For instance, Puar sees "homonationalism" as a point of cultural distinction between perceived Western and Arab cultures, suggesting that international LGBTQ+ organizations adhere to a right-wing nationalist ideology (Puar, 2007; Puar & Rai, 2002, pp. 1–36). Progressive international LGBTQ+ groups have thus been associated with a sort of contemporary imperialism, with scholars criticizing activists' adherence to Western concepts of identity.

In turn, the global LGBTQ+ movement tends to be perceived as leaving little room for local/non-Western queer subjectivities, reinforcing a new type of imperialism and subordination under the disguise of international humanitarian aid. One of the influential scholars in this regard, Massad (2002), calls this "the Gay International" and argues that it leads to the total destruction of local sexual identities that do not fit within the Western hegemonic categories. Massad (2002) uses the phrase to refer to a collection of non-governmental organizations, including the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the International Lesbian and Gay Association, whose mission is to achieve the worldwide acceptance of LGBTQ+ identity politics. Here, Massad refers to the process of "transforming" individuals in the area from practitioners of same-sex contact to subjects who self-identify as homosexual and gay (Massad, 2002, p. 362).

Massad asserts that international LGBTQ+ organizations are intrinsically anti-Arab and possess an "orientalist impulse" (2002, p. 362), promoting the Western form of sexual liberty as the single feasible – and globally applicable – "liberatory telos" (p. 365). This paradigm oppresses men who have sex with men in the Arab world by establishing homosexual identification in places where homosexual desire was socially recognized previously; Massad claims that homosexual identity is not indigenous to the Arab world and that "gayness" is a Western import (p. 364). In his thesis, a critical difference must be established between desire and identity: not all sexual desires become sources of identification. In turn, international LGBTQ+ organizations' visibility techniques, such as "coming out" and pride marches, constitute an "incitement to discourse" (p. 371), establishing a national discourse and sexual identity where none previously existed. Massad believes that the "sociopolitical identification of these practices with the Western identity of gayness" (p. 382) exacerbates anti-LGBTQ+ discourse in the area, resulting in "more repression, not 'liberation,' and less sexual freedom rather than more" (p. 383). Some scholars consider a similar sentiment in the Asian context; for example, Chang, a law scholar, writes on "The Postcolonial Problem for Global Gay Rights" in Singapore (2014).

The important point here is that efforts to open up space for LGBTQ+ rights by drawing on human rights is crucial, but the presumptuous universality of a human rights framework is problematic, as there can be no international agreement on the basic terms. At the same time, the presumptive coercive nature of the global LGBTQ+ rights movement is problematic, too, as transnational transfer of people, ideas, culture, and policy among others involves a dynamic process of transcultural transformation, as well as the hybridity of identities and subjectivities, as scholars of transnationalism have well demonstrated (e.g., Ortiz, 1995).

As a result of this tension, both conservatives and the LGBTQ+ community, as well as those in the middle – alike, albeit for different reasons – are extremely cautious in participating in the global LGBTQ+ movement. The persistent popularity of the notion of a LGBTQ+-friendly Japan, as well as Japan as a (heteronormative) family nation, can be understood in this global context.

1.4.3 Sochi as a Battleground for Gay Rights

Russia's government, which had decriminalized homosexuality in 1993, banned the dissemination of "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations" around children, making it more difficult for gay activists to operate and allegedly fueling an increase in anti-gay violence. At the same time, President Putin signed another law barring foreign couples who identify as gay or lesbian from adopting children from Russia. Putin later stated that gay athletes should feel "at ease" as long as they "leave the children alone," but this has done little to stop Sochi from becoming a battleground for gay rights (Friedman, 2014).

On June 28, 2021, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) expressed its concern to the UN and delivered the following statement:

> This June marks 10 years since the first resolution on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. We welcome the Expert's work and his essential role connecting the lived realities of LGBT people and communities and defenders with the UN . . .
>
> We support the Expert's intersectional approach, as well the sustained focus on identifying root causes of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. We highlight with concern the Expert's acknowledgement that "trans and gender-diverse persons suffer an unacceptable state of extrajudicial executions, forced disappearance, torture and ill-treatment, as well as systematic exclusion from education, employment, housing and health care."
>
> In the context of the growing anti-human rights movement, we witness a global backlash against the human rights of women and LGBTQI people, as well as an increase in criminalization and persecution of defenders in the context of governments' purported responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have seen increased targeting, harassment, attacks and detention specifically of trans and gender-diverse human rights defenders who are targeted because of the work they do and because of who they are. . . .
>
> The voices of LGBTQI human rights defenders must be heard in order to keep governments accountable for human rights violations, and to continue to demand that the UN system fulfill its human rights mandate. . . .
>
> Finally, we welcome the Expert's recognition of the Yogyakarta Principles and the Yogyakarta Principles plus 10, as authoritative articulations of existing international human rights law in relation to issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as their broad application in international, regional and national fora.
>
> *(ICJ, 2021)*

Due to the increasing efforts by the UN, a global backlash against LGBTQ+ human rights seems to have intensified in some parts of the world. Nonetheless,

the ICJ expresses their commitment to and support for the UN Expert's intersectional approach, insisting that to hold governments accountable for human rights violations, the voices of LGBTQ+ human rights advocates must be heard.

1.5 The Tokyo Olympics 2020 and the LGBT Act (*LGBT hō*)

1.5.1 The Olympics, Russia's Gay Propaganda Law, and LGBTQ+ Inclusivity

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Japan, the country was already in the midst of a heated public debate concerning an enactment of the nation's first anti-discrimination law to "protect" LGBTQ+ people. Despite this, the hardship its LGBTQ+ community members experienced due to the pandemic has been disregarded. In fact, the country's central government has not initiated any serious discussion concerning its own LGBTQ+ community at a national level, except for issues around transgender individuals, which culminated in the enactment of the 2003 Act on Special Measures for Persons with Gender Identity Disorder (GID Act; *Seidōitsusei shōgaisha tokureihō*), as discussed in detail in the next chapter.

In September 2013, Tokyo was selected as the host city for the 2020 Summer Olympics. However, due to the pandemic, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Japanese government postponed the games for a year. As a result, Japan had an additional year to prepare for the Games, whether desired or not. Yet, there was a twist. Incidentally, the years 2013–2014 developed as milestone years for the Olympics' LGBTQ+ inclusivity. Largely in response to Russia's so-called Gay Propaganda Law, the IOC revised its LGBTQ+ inclusive policy, making it mandatory for a host country to include LGBTQ+ anti-discrimination provisions. The three parties involved – the IOC, the Japanese Olympic Committee (JOC), and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government – all agreed to abide by the new policy.

This chain of events all started with the Russian federal law "For the Purpose of Protecting Children From Information Advocating for a Denial of Traditional Family Values," aka the "Gay Propaganda Law," which was approved by the State Duma and signed by President Putin in June 2013 before the Sochi 2014 Winter Games. In effect, this was an anti-gay law that resulted in a wave of homophobic attacks in Russia. The English-language media referred to it as an anti-gay propaganda law. On the eve of the Sochi Games, several dozen (former) Olympians and a coalition of human rights organizations – including All Out, a global not-for-profit organization focused on political advocacy for the human rights of LGBTQ+ people, based in New York and London; Athlete Ally, a non–profit LGBTQ athletic advocacy group based in the US; and Human Rights Watch, an international non–governmental organization (NGO) headquartered in New York City – called on the Russian authorities to reconsider the law (Human Rights Watch, 2018a).

Following the uproar over Russia's anti-gay legislation, the IOC stated in September 2014 that it had amended its host-city contract to include a particular anti-discrimination provision. A letter sent to potential bidders for the 2022 Winter Olympic Games informed them of the new requirement based on the Olympic Charter Principle 6: "Any kind of discrimination against a country or a person on the basis of race, religion, politics, gender, or any other factor is incompatible with membership in the Olympic movement," said the IOC's Director of Sport Christophe Dubi (Freeman, 2014).

The co-founder of All Out, Andre Banks, responded as follows:

> This is a significant step in ensuring the protection of both citizens and athletes around the world and sends a clear message to future host cities that human rights violations, including those against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, will not be tolerated. . . . This is a particularly important moment for the world's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender citizens who face discrimination and persecution not only in Russia but in countries all over the world. We will continue working to make sure this change is powerfully enforced – these new rules must prevent a replay of Sochi.
>
> *(Freeman, 2014)*

Tokyo already had a contract in place for the 2020 Summer Games, so the special anti-discrimination clause would not affect its status as host city. However, the controversy surrounding Russia's anti-gay law, as well as several highly publicized domestic incidents involving Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals (including the suicide of a university student in 2015), seems to have troubled the Japanese authorities – reminding them that neither the country nor the host city had any provisions to protect its LGBTQ+ citizens and that some LGBT-friendly (LGBT *furendorī*) measures needed to be introduced to meet the new international standard, or at least to show that they were making efforts to do so (HRW, 2021).

Advertised as celebrating "unity in diversity" (*tayōsei to chōwa*) and "passing on a legacy for the future" (*mirai heno keishō*), Japan was pressured to enact an anti-discrimination law at the national level to protect LGBTQ+ people and, of course, athletes from all over the world in line with international standards. Over 100 LGBTQ+ organizations were actively involved, running an Equality Act Japan campaign and sending a letter to the prime minister in January 2021 in support of a law to prohibit discrimination against LGBTQ+ people. Notably, the Equality Act Japan campaign was run in both Japanese and English (HRW, 2021).

Incidentally, as Japan prepared for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, the country's immigration services officially stated in 2018 that Japan had admitted its first LGBTQ+ refugee (*The Japan Times*, 2019). For a national government body to make a refugee's sexual orientation public stands as an exceptional circumstance – even more so for a government that has taken no steps to defend the fundamental

human rights of LGBTQ+ people. In this light, the government statement may be seen as a mere PR gimmick (Tamagawa, 2020).

1.5.2 Failed Attempts to Enact an "LGBT Act"

Following the IOC's revision of the Olympic Charter to clearly state the prohibition of discrimination based on "sexual orientation" as a fundamental principle in 2014, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and the JOC pledged to follow the Olympic Charter in their host-city contract. In 2018, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, where the country's conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) held a minority, enacted an ordinance for respecting human rights that explicitly prohibits discriminatory treatment related to sexual orientation and gender identity. Yet, the enactment of such a provision at the national level by the Diet, where the conservative party dominates, seems a practically impossible mission in retrospect (Matsuoka, 2021).

As the country's majority party, the LDP seemingly tried to water down the Equality Act, submitting its own bill in June 2021 (only a few weeks before the opening of the Olympics), which promised only to "Promote Understanding of LGBT" (*LGBT rikai zōshin*) rather than prevent discrimination outright. At some point, the LGBT Understanding Promotion Bill was agreed upon by the ruling and opposition parties and entered the phase of being brought back to each party for review. However, to everyone's surprise, the LDP, which had proposed the bill, announced that it would not submit the bill to the Diet during this session. The reasons given were not particularly rational, such as the contention that "discrimination is unacceptable" would "lead to a barrage of lawsuits" (Matsuoka, 2021).

In the course of Japan's efforts to enact the country's first LGBT law, a number of anti-LGBTQ+ remarks were made by LDP lawmakers, poignantly highlighting their lack of understanding of the subject matter. At the end of March 2021, at the "Women's Caucus" (*Josei gi'in hiyaku no kai*), co-chaired by Inada, Shigeuchi, president (*daihyō riji*) of the Association for the LGBT Understanding Promotion (*LGBT rikai zōshin kai*) and advisor to the LDP's Special Committee, gave a speech in which he clearly expressed his "understanding" as a source for concern. The title of Shigeuchi's lecture was "LGBT out of Control" (*Bōsō suru LGBT*). The lawmaker said that the anti-discrimination law demanded by the opposition parties was "imposed from above" and that "because the definition of discrimination is vague, some [anti-LGBTQ+] comments are cut out and denounced, fueling the division of society." Furthermore, Shigeuchi said that the term "gender identity" (*sei ji'nin*) was an idea from the opposition parties and that adopting it would mean that "if I want to be a woman now, I can be a woman. The biggest problem is people who say, 'I'm only a woman now,'" – malicious claims that ignore the reality of transgender people. Not only that, Shigeuchi presented photos of transgender women from overseas as reference materials and used words such as "grotesque" (*gurotesuku*), stating that "women's

activities and women's safety are threatened." The meeting was also attended by a transgender woman. When she asked Shigenouchi about insurance coverage for gender reassignment surgery and hormone therapy, he replied, "Since [transgender people] are already 'normal people' (*kenjōsha*), there is no need for insurance coverage. In fact, it would be desirable to have a society where people can live as they were born" (Matsuoka, 2021).

At another meeting on March 19, Diet member Yamatani said,

> There are many ridiculous things that happen, such as being allowed to use the women's restroom because you are a woman even though your body is a man, or in the United States, participating in women's track and field events and winning medals.

Ignoring the actual situation of transgender people, she made statements that clearly overlapped with the aforementioned remarks by Shigenouchi and promoted hatred and prejudice against transgender people. In addition to Yamatani, Yan made statements such as "biologically, LGBTs are against the preservation of species" at the meeting on March 20, while Nishida made a statement to the effect that "LGBTs are morally unacceptable." It was later reported by the *Asahi Shimbun* that Nishida's remarks were to the effect that "both parties [sexual minorities as well as non-sexualities] have a duty of acceptance to put up with each other and protect society" and that "if these moral values are ignored and lawsuits are filed when there is discrimination, society will be destroyed" (Matsuoka, 2021). Evidently, the Japanese LGBTQ+ community exists in a political climate that allows this kind of public bigotry and humiliation while continuing to suffer the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.6 Tolerance, Acceptance, and Human Rights

1.6.1 Tolerance (kanyō) and Invisible Subjectivity

Tolerance (*kanyō*) is often used as an excuse by both the majority and the minority for the maintenance of the status quo. Japanese lesbian writer Kakefuda eloquently expounds on the problems of "being a lesbian" in Japan:

> Traditionally, the way of thinking in Japanese society concerning minorities, and unusual people, strange people, was not to exclude them. They were allowed into society, but society would act as if they weren't there, by ignoring them, and if that didn't work, telling them to keep quiet.
>
> *(Kakefuda, 1992, cited in Chalmers, 2002, p. 1)*

In Japan, lesbians are accepted into society, but they are ignored and kept in the shadows. When marginalized groups are only partly integrated into Japanese society, such individuals have been regarded as being "tolerated" (*kanyō sarete iru*).

Even when lesbians are "tolerated," they exist only to provide amusement for straight men in Japan. For instance, several ukiyo-e print images represent female-to-female sexual interactions. Due to the arrangement of dildos and the presence of half-concealed male voyeurs, they seem to have been made and presented for a male audience (Chalmers, 2002, p. 19). Similarly, in contemporary Japanese culture, lesbians are viewed as nothing more than erotic fantasies for straight men (Kakefuda, 1992).

Kakefuda elaborates on the invisible subjectivity among Japanese lesbians in the context of the country's patriarchal social order. Because single women are viewed as only a sliver of a woman – non-fully-fledged women – and hence non-threatening to the patriarchal social order, feminine romantic intimate relationships between them are "tolerated," but lesbian subjectivity stays concealed and invisible (Kakefuda, 1992). The rhetoric of "tolerance masks the silence of lesbian existence," warns Kakefuda. (Maree, 2015). Incidentally, a number of scholars have challenged gender biases in studies of sexual minorities in Japan (e.g., Maree, 2015). Because of the dominance of male viewpoints, lesbians in Japan have received less attention (Suganuma, 2015). Horie, a lesbian academic and activist in Japan, claims that the binary paradigm of homosexuality/heterosexuality obscures the differences between gay men and lesbians in the country. Horie also believes that the rhetoric of "tolerance" erases Japan's "lesbian existence" by removing references to lesbian sexual practices (Horie, 2006).

1.6.2 Tolerance and Acceptance

Various criticisms of "tolerance" have been leveled, beginning with Altman in the 1970s. According to Altman (1971), along with persecution and discrimination, tolerance is one of the three forms of oppression that non-heterosexual people experience. According to Altman's paradigm, tolerance is an internalized psychological disposition or attitude from an ideological societal point of view. A limited, falsely liberated, and constrained set of permissions is used to channel seeming freedom to act in a certain way. According to this viewpoint, tolerance is not just oppressive but also repressive, because it does not completely recognize non-heterosexual people as valuable and deserving human beings.

One way this affects non-heterosexual people is by creating stereotypical homosexual bodies that are the embodiment of tolerance, as noted by Altman (1971). This leads to repressive discontentment among men with their own and their lovers' bodies' inevitable flaws; they are rendered less able to perceive any beauty in those unlike the current stereotype. The neoliberal capitalism of today flourishes because of the commodification of sex and sexuality, namely, the tolerance of homosexual people through commodification. This commodification obscures the critique of how tolerance persists within and through labor and consumption.

Tolerance has become a political objective and a framework for obtaining political rights in today's queer politics, actively requesting or demanding only

the elimination of discriminatory or persecutorial legal practices while main-taining the social structures that support the dispositions of "putting up with" homosexual and other non-heterosexual people. Because of this, heterosexuality continues to be the normative framework for sexuality, relationships, and the factors that determine kinship categories in non-legislative and policy contexts (Cover, 2013).

In his definition of tolerance, Altman outlines the differences between accep-tance and the liberating battle for acceptance through social reform. Acceptance implies the "equal validity" of alternative ways of existence, whereas Altman (1971) believed that, through pity, the superior bestows upon the inferior a gift of tolerance (p. 59). For Altman, inclusion and/or protection within a political, legal, or policy framework are insufficient to constitute acceptance:

> Homosexuals can win acceptance as distinct from tolerance only by a transformation of society, one that is based on a "new human" who is able to accept the multifaceted and varied nature of his or her sexual identity. That such a society can be founded is the gamble upon which gay and women's liberation are based.
>
> *(p. 241)*

To achieve this acceptance, activists must challenge "the foundation on which society is organized" and call for a "fundamental transformation in our social framework" (Altman, 1971, p. 242).

Others have argued that the term "human rights" is being misused. Bauman, for example, criticizes the problematic use of the term as a demand for recogni-tion of the "right to remain different," and argues that within the normative framework of tolerance, a human rights approach does not solidify any form of social solidarity, but instead targets various forms of connection and discon-nection among people, which when combined will have political power (Bau-man, 2011). According to Butler, every topic is left in its isolated corner with its own perspectives by the "tolerance model," which accepts the premise that they are all unique and dismisses the possibility of some form of true discussion or style of cultural translation that would allow contact (in Bell, 2010, p. 146). As Scott (1995) explains, group differences are depicted categorically rather than relationally, as distinct entities rather than interconnected structures or systems generated by recurring processes of enunciation of difference, which ignores the terminology and framework historically used to create and reproduce power asymmetries.

1.6.3 *Japanese (Non-)Understanding of Human Rights*

The rhetoric of tolerance seems to overshadow the legitimacy of LGBTQ+ rights as human rights in Japan. According to a global survey on human rights by Ipsos (2018), Japanese participants responded as follows: to the question "How

much, if anything, would you say you know about human rights generally?", only 18% of Japanese participants – the lowest out of 28 countries – responded "a great deal" or "fair." (The next lowest were Belgium and Russia, at 38%.) At the same time, 65% of Japanese participants (the highest comparatively) answered "not very" or "nothing" to the same question. To the statement "It is important to have a law that protects human rights in Japan," 62% of Japanese participants – the third lowest after Belgium with 58% and Saudi Arabia with 61% – responded "strongly agree" or "tend to agree." To the question "When it comes to human rights, which of the following statements comes closest to what you believe?", 56% of Japanese participants – the third lowest after Belgium with 48% and Poland with 52% – selected "There is such a thing as human rights." To the question "What difference, if at all, do you think laws protecting human rights make to your life?", only 27% of Japanese participants, the lowest of all the countries surveyed, answered "very positive difference" or "fairly positive difference," while 54% (the highest) answered "no difference." To the statement "The only people who benefit from human rights in [country] are those who do not deserve them, such as criminals and terrorists," 16% of Japanese participants, the lowest, answered "strongly" or "tend to agree." To the statement "Everyone in Japan enjoys the same basic human rights," 44% of Japanese participants – more than the average across the countries (43%) – replied "strongly" or "tend to agree." To the statement "Human rights are important for creating a fairer society in Japan," 49% of Japanese participants – the third lowest after Poland (43%) and Belgium (48%) – responded "strongly" or "tend to agree" (Ipsos, 2018).

A recent survey study by the author revealed some interesting trends among Japanese LGBTQ+ expats overseas concerning human rights. Several participants expressed concern over Japan's (lack of) knowledge of human rights. Prior to leaving the country, however, many believed that LGBTQ+ people in Japan were lucky (*shiawase*); nevertheless, after learning about the conditions of their counterparts in the West, they discovered "a world of difference." One of the participants (FtM/X [Female-to-Male/X-gender], 25–34) noted "a low degree of recognition of harassment, neglect, or verbal abuse," which is an insightful comment given Japan's exceptionally low acceptance rate of asylum seekers, as well as the general inability of Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals to comprehend the violation of their basic human rights (Tamagawa, 2020). Many participants believed that LGBTQ+ individuals in Japan were subject to bullying and discrimination and that their basic human rights were not recognized or protected. At the same time, they feel that the situation for LGBTQ+ people in Japan has not changed and is unlikely to improve in the foreseeable future. Many expressed negative opinions in this respect, stating that even if and when the human rights of LGBTQ+ individuals are legally guaranteed, they do not foresee much development. Some participants commented that the difficulties faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in Japan are not limited to the legal protection of their human rights but are deeply rooted in the country's relentlessly conservative and heteronormative culture (Tamagawa, 2020).

1.7 The South Korean COVID-19 Outbreak, a Gay Cluster, and Japan's Media

With the advent of the information superhighway, the people of Japan in general seem to have been well informed of and constantly updated with new advances in the global village (McLuhan & Powers, 1992), including the global LGBTQ+ rights movement. In fact, Japan was well ahead of the rest of the world in introducing digital communications, including social media. In reality, however, due not only to a conservative response to further westernization (in fact, Americanization) of the country, as well as its LGBTQ+ community, Japan seems to have been caught in an intricate situation. Does Japan exist more as an ethnic enclave than a global village partner in this seemingly interconnected world, remaining outside of and uninvolved in current world affairs?

While Western media, as well as activists and scholars, have warned of the precarious situation and hardship that their LGBTQ+ communities find themselves in (due, for example, to a lack of family support and the collapse of an inclusive healthcare system), the Japanese LGBTQ+ community has hardly received any media attention, if at all, during the pandemic. However, one instance in which the Japanese media paid unusual attention to sexual minority issues related to the pandemic was the COVID-19 outbreak in May 2020 in Itaewon in Seoul, South Korea (Reuters, 2020). The incident centered on a South Korean male individual who had visited multiple entertainment venues, including gay bars and clubs (NHK News, 2020). Due to its geographical and cultural proximity, the Japanese media, including TV stations, newspapers, online news sites, and news magazines, followed developments closely and released a large volume of news articles and updates throughout the month. However, various Japanese, South Korean, and Western media outlets reported the news differently, especially in terms of culturally sensitive topics such as LGBTQ+ issues, sexuality, and privacy. Although some subtle variations could be observed among the media outlets, Japan's mainstream media appeared reluctant or cautious to report anything sexual in nature – and topics concerning homosexuality in particular – to the extent that their news coverage did not make sense or remain consistent in its message.

On the other hand, social media users seem to have found amusement in the sexuality of the person involved in the South Korean incident (i.e., a gay man as the culprit of a COVID-19 outbreak). The fact that it took place in South Korea also added another easy pretext for Japanese social media users to get involved online. In a number of threads and thousands of comments on the incident, social media users talk about homosexuality and engage in discussions that are explicitly sexual in nature, unlike in the traditional news coverage. Their comments, however, reflect stereotypes and prejudice not only against gay people and the Japanese LGBTQ+ community but also against Koreans, which do not usually surface in everyday life in Japan, where everyone is expected to be respectful of others.

Toward the end of May 2020, an unsettling story emerged concerning one of the major hotel chains in Japan, APA Hotels, and was widely circulated among social media users. According to the story, which appeared on 2channel, blogs, and Twitter, APA Hotel rooms had turned into *hatten* sites (gay cruising spots), especially those in close proximity to Shinjuku Ni-chōme, the country's hub for LGBTQ+ entertainment venues, and a few others in the Greater Tokyo Metropolitan area. Tweets were shown with a room number and an explicit photograph, supposedly taken on-site, looking for a quick sexual encounter; blogs reported specifics with photographic evidence mimicking investigative journalism; and heated discussion broke out on a wide range of related topics (including gay sex) on 2channel. In contrast, Japan's mainstream media did not report the story at all; the only exception was an interview nearly a month later in one of the major business magazines in Japan, in which the president of APA Hotels was asked about the "rumor," which she completely denied.

1.7.1 Infringement of Privacy and Misinformation

As previously noted, privacy is a concern during the pandemic due to contact tracing. DiMoia (2020) discusses South Korea's response to COVID-19, which was initially praised but has since raised concerns, especially in the "Itaewon Cluster," a popular nightclub district. Itaewon is associated with prostitution, foreigners, and LGBTQ+ clubs due to its proximity to a US military base. The Itaewon Cluster to which DiMoia refers is the topic of concern for the present study. Mass media content, including misinformation, has hampered efforts to address the current pandemic. Using the systematic review approach, a researcher in Pakistan also examined 35 research articles concerning misinformation as a major concern during past endemics and the current pandemic. Xenophobia, violations of LGBTQ+ rights, and psychological disorders among the masses have been caused by myths and rumors spread through traditional and new media platforms (Ali, 2020).

1.7.2 Diversity in Japan's Old and New Media

Japanese society emphasizes harmony, and almost every aspect of Japanese life seems to be constrained by peer pressure, as seen in *sekentei*, a Japanese term for public appearance. *Deru kui wa utareru* [The nail that sticks out gets hammered down] is the way of life in Japan. However, or because of this, some alternative venues for Japanese people to express themselves have always existed, at least since the turn of the last century, including *manga*, *gekiga* [dramatic pictures], and *dōjinshi* [fanzines]. This section looks at both old and new trends in Japan's new media, including social media, as well as some of the unique developments in Japan, such as the media mix and Galapagos syndrome.

1.7.2.1 Alternative Voices in Japan's Old Media

Manga is one of the most influential media in Japan. It is not just for children; it is enjoyed by a great range of readers. Despite (or possibly due to) the relentlessly conservative foundation of Japanese cultural politics, several notable examples of manga have emerged as alternative media in contemporary Japanese history: *newspaper manga* [comic strips] in the early 20th century, *gekiga* [dramatic pictures] in postwar Japan, and *dōjinshi* [fanzines] in the 1970s (Kinsella, 2000).

Under the influence of the Taishō democracy, when various Western democratic ideas were introduced, political comic strips for adult readers began to appear in Japanese newspapers. Sharon Kinsella, author of *Adult Manga: Culture and Power in Contemporary Japanese Society* (2000), explains the historical background:

> New popular culture and serious literature and working class and feminist movements influenced by Marxism emerged in the cities. Economic inequality and political injustice became the target of bitter criticism.
>
> *(pp. 21–22)*

Manga was associated with revolution in the views of Marxist manga artists, such as Shimokawa (1892–1973; Ishiko, 1980, p. 21).

Originally developed as entertainment for the urban young working class, *gekiga* [dramatic pictures] is a genre of manga that caters to the interest of a sociopolitically conscious readership. Unlike mainstream manga (e.g., Tezuka's manga, which has been seen as a healthy form of entertainment for children), *gekiga* was identified with undereducated urban youth and anti-establishment politics (Kinsella, 2000). Incidentally, although perceived as mainstream, Tezuka's manga is often critical of the country's sexual norms, as previouslydiscussed, which is probably why manga has the potential for social criticism. Manga artists and fans began to print their own amateur manga *dōjinshi* as the commercial manga industry expanded and low-cost offset printing and photocopying became available, first slowly in the 1970s and then rapidly in the 1980s. This was especially true at Comic Market, also known as *Comike*, a manga convention where amateur manga could be purchased and sold (Kinsella, 2000). The majority of *Comike* participants were young Japanese in their mid-teens and mid-twenties who came from low-income families, were typically raised in large suburban housing projects, and attended lower-ranking colleges or were without higher education (Kinsella, 2000). *Dōjinshi*, in this sense, is an example of "media convergence," even before the development of digital media, as I will discuss later.

Additionally, during the early stages of Comic Market's existence, it became clear that printed amateur manga offered an unanticipated new entry point for Japanese women into the manga medium. Boys' and adult magazines dominated commercial manga, and these publication categories remained the backbone of the medium and the publishing sector well into the 1990s. After the foundation

of Comic Market, the number of women creating *dōjinshi* expanded rapidly. *Dōjinshi* artists coined the term *yaoi* to refer to their manga style, which is prevalent in both parody and original works. This word is a three-syllable anagram, *ya-o-i*, composed of the first syllables of the three phrases *yama nashi*, *ochi nashi*, *imi nashi*, which mean no build-up, no foreclosure, and no meaning, respectively, and are frequently used to describe the near-complete absence of narrative structure that characterizes amateur manga, typically about a romantic relationship between *bishōnen* (beautiful boys), from the mid-1980s onward (Kinsella, 2000).

1.7.2.2 Major Trends in New Media: Media Convergence and the Prosumer

The term "media convergence" (Jenkins, 2008) refers to the process by which a great number of media are merged to function as a single medium. The best illustration of this would be how conventional media firms took advantage of the Internet's unrestricted usage. The means by which we interact with one another have been increasingly altered in recent years. Distance is irrelevant to the Internet. When social media and sharing sites enable consumers to take media into their own hands in the global village (McLuhan & Powers, 1992), absorbing them and then crafting their own interpretations, the media become consumer driven – in other words, a prosumer market. Jenkins (2008) states that when individuals take control of their media, the outcomes may be very innovative, but they can also be disastrous for everyone involved. True, it may be amazing when the contributions of individuals from all corners of the globe to an original music score are combined to create something unique. Yet this comes with the potential for bad news, since information on the Internet may be viewed by anyone online, and certain parties may be able to exploit valuable information against them. Certain unscrupulous users may even fabricate "fake news" to promote negative views.

1.7.2.3 Media Mix

Media mix (*media mikkusu*) is a Japanese advertising term originally used to describe a method of combining multiple media with different characteristics when advertising or commercializing a product, thereby increasing awareness and stimulating purchase intentions through complementary and synergistic effects between the media. It has since become a marketing term as well: when a certain entertainment product (commercial work) has or is expected to have a certain market, especially in the field of novels, movies, comics, animations, and computer games, it is possible to expand fan service and product promotion by producing a large number of products derived from the original product through several types of entertainment media (Ōtsuka, 1989).

Media mix or character franchising in Japan can be related to Jenkins' notion of media convergence in the US; some key contrasts should be noted. The focus

in the media mix is not on the unfolding of a cohesive narrative or universe across media forms – the "transmedia storytelling" Jenkins refers to in *The Matrix* – but on the franchising of characters who may live concurrently in divergent narratives and realities (Steinberg, 2012). Ōtsuka, a Japanese cultural critic, explains that someone creates a "world" through media creation, which he also refers to as a "great narrative" (canon) or underlying order; inside this world, "variety" happens, which he also refers to as "little narratives." Ōtsuka proposes that while media corporations frequently provide worlds, small narratives within these worlds may include not only episodes of an anime series but also fan creations (e.g., fanzines) that tell alternate stories using existing characters or original characters that could exist in a given world. Ōtsuka (1989) does this by equating the effort of creation in media worlds between "professionals" and "amateurs."

1.7.2.4 Galapagos Syndrome

Galapagosization (*Galapagosu-ka*) is a Japanese business term that refers to the fact that if a product or service is significantly optimized in an isolated environment (i.e., the Japanese market), it will not only lose compatibility with external (foreign) products and become isolated and left behind, but it will also be in danger of being eliminated when products and technologies with high adaptability (versatility) and viability (low price) are introduced from the outside. Also known as the Galapagos phenomenon, or Galapagos syndrome, it is a cautionary tale analogous to the Galapagos Islands ecosystem in evolutionary theory.

The situation of Japanese new media in the early 2000s can be inferred from the following quotation from Quora, an American social question-and-answer website, describing Japan's technologies in 2004, which the writer thought were "way ahead of time":

> When I studied in Japan, in the distant 2004, one of the things that really impressed me was my new Japanese phone. One of the functions that I loved was the ability to send emails like sms [short message service]. You could choose between sending a sms or email. At that time only Blackberry was doing that. It was a specialized, expensive phone with a special service to be able to use. Not my Japanese phone. It cost 1 dollar to buy and about 20$ monthly charge.
>
> *(Nyamdavaa, 2021)*

The Quora contributor continues and talks about "many other features" that were years ahead of any other country. "Japanese have already built their own cyber mobile universe where the only requirement is to use Japanese language."

A number of new media examples are probably not well-known outside Japan. Aside from the development of personal computers in the 1980s, toward the end of the last century, communication in Japan increasingly became digitalized, and new technologies and devices were introduced one after another

(Kanbara & Kakuda, 2021, pp. 31–56). The *pokeberu* (pager) was first introduced to the Japanese telecommunication market in the 1980s and became widely used until the late 1990s, especially among young high school girls, who invented the *kaomoji* (emoticon) to communicate for fun (Kanbara & Kakuda, 2021, pp. 106–107). Another important development was the *keitai denwa*, or *keitai* (portable phone), which dominated the Japanese telecommunication market until the arrival of the iPhone in 2008. The Internet service i-mode by DoCoMo of Nippon Telegraph and Telephone (NTT) was particularly noteworthy in that it was one of the dominant venues among Japanese Internet users, particularly among non-business users. Japanese i-mode users enjoyed various services online from the late 1990s to the early 2000s on their *keitai* screens. Some notable services included mixi, the country's first social networking service from 1999 and the online bulletin board 2channel (or 2chan) from 2000 (Kanbara & Kakuda, 2021, pp. 108–122).

When Apple's iPhone arrived in Japan in 2008, followed by Twitter and Facebook the following year, some of the country's unique technologies and devices declined, most notably *keitai*, which was replaced with *sumaho* (smartphone). However, the vast majority of Japanese online services continued to thrive in the Japanese new media market, further diversifying the country's new media world (Kanbara & Kakuda, 2021, pp. 123–144). Additionally, Japan's 311 (March 11, 2011) marks the country's major shift from mass media to new media as its reliable news media. Frustrated by the lack of information in the aftermath of major earthquakes and nuclear disasters, Japanese users found new media to be more up-to-date and reliable than mass media. In this context, as an alternative to mass communication, LINE, a Japanese app for instant communications, was introduced in June 2011 (Kanbara & Kakuda, 2021, pp. 152–170).

1.7.3 Social Media and Hate Speech

1.7.3.1 Hate Speech

Hate speech is a term for any offensive material, whether verbal or nonverbally conveyed, that is used to humiliate and degrade members of a specific social group based on their membership in that social group (Simpson, 2013). Discriminatory speech, hate speech, and incitement to hatred, terrorism, or genocide are all examples of hate messages that are classified according to the intensity of the feelings involved (Ghanea, 2012). Individuals and groups may suffer psychological harm as a result of hate speech (Maitra, 2012) to provoking violence (Müller & Schwarz, 2018). A person's dignity is violated, his or her autonomy is intruded upon, and emotional anguish is caused as a result of hate speech. Hate speech also harms the democratic process by devaluing cultural diversity (Brown, 2015). In the short term, exposure to hate speech can cause mood swings, anger, loneliness, and anxiety; in the long term, it can erode social trust, lead to radicalization, and sustain extremist views (Foxman & Wolf, 2013). According to empirical studies,

as a result of verbal abuse, LGBTQ+ people suffer significant psychological damage. (Walters et al., 2017). When compared to non-transgender LGBTQ+ people, transgender people are likelier to feel threatened and vulnerable and to lack support from close family and friends (Walters et al., 2017).

Hate speech is based on homophobic, transphobic, racist, xenophobic, and sexist views (among others) and leads to victimization (Alkiviadou, 2018). Hating victimization begins with preconceptions being formed, then prejudice, exclusion, marginalization, and de-prioritization of the target, and finally victimization (Judge & Nel, 2018). Hate speech is particularly harmful, since it attacks one's self-respect (Seglow, 2016). Furthermore, hate speech and hate action are mutually reinforcing, showing how the discursive and material elements of homophobia are intertwined (Judge, 2017). To maintain the hate, hate group websites often feature fantasy elements and abusive language directed at the hated categories of individuals (Duffy, 2003; Hirvonen, 2013). Some of the recurring themes emphasized by hate groups include the fantasy of a new and better world and the idea that only a few selected people must fight for fairness (Duffy, 2003). To justify the need for action, the hated groups are frequently depicted in a derogatory manner, and a harrowing depiction of their plight is frequently created. Even children are vilified to justify the animosity toward the group (Hirvonen, 2013).

1.7.3.2 Hate Speech's Psychological Effects

Hate speech can have a significant negative impact on the mental health of victims. Online racial discrimination is highly linked to anxiety and sadness (Tynes, 2006). Hate speech has both immediate and long-term effects on the mental health of its victims (Brown, 2015). The consequences of hate speech can result in extreme mental suffering exhibited as worry, panic, embarrassment, or dread in the short term. Hate speech can have comparable consequences to hate crimes, such as psychological suffering or community repercussions (Gerstenfeld, 2017). Hate speech also has long-term consequences, such as stress, psychosomatic diseases, anxiety, depression, and alcoholism (Brown, 2015). Another serious feature is the development of disordered coping mechanisms by hate speech victims. Ineffective coping mechanisms include emotional suppression and transference. Another prominent phenomenon is cognitive dissonance (Brown, 2015). Hate speech victims adopt maladaptive coping methods to disregard the abuse they face to prevent significant emotional anguish. However, this method has negative consequences for victims' well-being (Brown, 2015).

A study has shown that victims of anti-Muslim hate speech suffer heightened dread (Awan & Zempi, 2016). Victims of this form of abuse are constantly concerned because they imagine that threats made online could manifest in person at any time. Furthermore, because threats are made anonymously, the victims are afraid that they may be attacked, increasing their urge to withdraw from society. Overall, the negative consequences of Internet hate speech are numerous. Stress,

anxiety, sadness, and desensitization can all result from exposure to hate speech. Hate speech can also be a precursor to hate crimes and violence.

1.7.3.3 Hate Speech on Social Media

Using social media to spread hate is a serious matter that has serious consequences. Hate speech spreads more easily on social media because of its low-cost, high-speed broadcast method. In a comparison of online and offline hate speech, Brown (2017) concluded that Internet-based hate speech has greater consequences because it occurs in front of a larger audience, making victims feel even more humiliated. A person's identity is not revealed when making a hateful comment on a social media platform like Facebook or Twitter. It is easier for people to express hatred online because they do not have to take responsibility for what they say (Brown, 2018). It has been established that anonymity and hate speech have a beneficial relationship. Hate speech against race and sexual orientation is more likely to be posted anonymously than other forms of hate speech (Mondal et al., 2017). For people to become entangled in echo chambers populated by like-minded individuals who share and reaffirm their convictions and worldviews through the consumption of hate speech on social networking sites is not an increase in exposure to online hate, but rather an increase in the risk of becoming trapped in echo chambers (Costello et al., 2018). Additionally, while cyberbullying focuses on a specific individual, hate speech is directed at a group and is used to disparage it in a variety of ways. This includes verbal remarks and nonverbal messages like symbols, images, and memes (Simpson, 2013).

A person can respond to hate speech in one of four ways: passivity, deletion, counter-speech, or initiating campaigns to school social media users (Citron & Norton, 2011). Victims of hate speech are more likely to accept the abuse and avoid reporting it, making it more difficult for authorities to intervene (Hubbard, 2020). This factor contributes to the spread of Internet hate speech. In addition, it is widely agreed that punishing people for spreading hate speech online violates their right to freedom of expression (Mathew et al., 2019). As a result, under free speech rights, virtually anyone with Internet access may theoretically make, publish, and circulate malicious content, affecting a large number of people almost instantaneously.

1.7.3.4 The LGBTQ+ Community

Despite the efforts of different social networking platforms to prevent hate speech, the LGBTQ+ community continues to be a target for those who spread hatred online. Before delving into the psychological impacts of hate speech on the LGBTQ+ community, it is important to note that LGBTQ+ people are likelier to have mental health issues. LGBTQ+ people are more likely than heterosexuals to suffer from poor mental health and alcohol and

smoking–related issues, according to previous research on the subject (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2013). In addition, compared to non-transgender members in the LGBT community, transgender people are more prone to developing depression symptoms and experiencing stress (Fredriksen–Goldsen et al., 2014). Hate crimes are also more common among transgender people (Walters et al., 2017).

Online hate speech targets LGBTQ+ activists, and this form of harassment has various psychological consequences. The interviewees in a study on the damaging impacts of hate speech on LGBTQ+ activists in Moldova and Ukraine claim that online hate content results in a slew of negative symptoms, including emotional anguish, depression, sleep disturbances, weariness, panic attacks that interfere with daily tasks, terror, or a desire for social isolation (Nyman & Provozin, 2019). As a protection mechanism, hate messages greatly influence victims' decisions to remove or close their social media accounts. Indirect hate speech also has a detrimental impact comparable to blatant hate speech (Nyman & Provozin, 2019).

People who are bullied online have a negative impact on their mental health because of insults and threats (Hubbard, 2020). Online violence has a variety of negative psychological effects on the LGBTQ+ community, including rage, despair, anxiety, melancholy, stress, shame, self-blame, and social isolation. Online abuse victims sometimes feel guilty for belonging to the LGBTQ+ community, isolating themselves to avoid encountering hate speech. Suicidal ideation is influenced by online abuse (Hubbard, 2020). Post-traumatic stress symptoms, such as increased avoidance behaviors, are strongly linked to verbal and physical abuse based on sexual orientation (Dragowski et al., 2011). Abused people are likelier to avoid specific places, people, and situations that may trigger unpleasant thoughts and sensations, as well as response strategies (Parekh & Egan, 2021).

Since LGBTQ+ people are likelier than straight people to receive heinous communications on a regular basis, they internalize unfavorable sentiments regarding their community (Ghafoori et al., 2019). The LGBTQ+ community's constant stigmatization may result in internalized homophobia, with serious consequences for depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Wootten, 2018). Disguising one's gender identity or sexual orientation as a form of self-protection is a common response to these attitudes (Ghafoori et al., 2019). The frequency of online hate speech directed at the LGBTQ+ community encourages victims to adopt self-censorship techniques and to push for social acceptance of their gender identity or sexual orientation (Berecz & Devinat, 2017). A person's mental health suffers as a result of maintaining a false identity and having to put their true sexual orientation or gender identity out of the public eye (Berecz & Devinat, 2017). It is important to note that transgender people face challenges in this area, as the bodily changes that occur throughout the transition period are difficult to conceal. When it comes to hate speech, this component may explain why transgender persons feel more intimidated, vulnerable, and nervous (Walters et al., 2017).

It has been discovered that a number of characteristics make LGBTQ+ people more susceptible to depression (Polders et al., 2008). Only a low sense of self-worth and a proclivity for hearing hate speech are strongly linked to depression vulnerability among the LGBTQ+ population, according to their findings. The link between hate speech and depression vulnerability should be brought to the public's attention, in particular, since the suicide rate in the LGBTQ+ community is substantially greater than in the overall population (Berecz & Devinat, 2017). Hate speech has negative psychological consequences for victims, and its online prominence can lead to desensitization (Soral et al., 2018), reducing the number of abuses that are reported and then banned. People who have been subjected to hate speech may come to accept it as a normal part of life and resort to avoidance as a way to cope (Hubbard, 2020). Further study on the effects of desensitization and normalization should be prioritized, as they only serve to perpetuate online abuse. Hate speech, on the other hand, is notoriously difficult to detect and suppress, whether through the use of computers or humans. A more proactive approach based on a collective intelligence solution to identify and combat harmful information is needed to prevent online hate speech.

1.7.3.5 Measures Against Hate Speech

The serious consequences of online hate speech have prompted the development of ways to combat it, particularly through the use of algorithms. Hate speech and user accounts that post this type of messaging are restricted and eliminated using techniques developed by social media companies (Mathew et al., 2019). The EU Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online (2020), which was developed as a result of an agreement between the European Commission, Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter, and YouTube, is one example of the development of countermeasures in the Internet environment. In accordance with their anti-hate code of conduct, reported hate messages are deleted. This method removes a large percentage of hateful messages, demonstrating the effectiveness of the initiative, yet social media companies are still drawing criticism for not doing enough to eradicate online hate speech. Such a law does not exist in Japan.

In June 2022, Japan's Ministry of Justice launched the "Stop! Hate Speech" (*Heito supīchi, yurusanai*) campaign to "promote an understanding that 'hate speech' should not be tolerated." However, its scope is narrowly defined as hate speech toward foreign nationals:

> Recently, discriminatory speech and behavior intended to exclude people of certain ethnic groups or nationalities has become a public concern as so-called "hate speech." In June 2016, the "Act on the Promotion of Efforts to Eliminate Unfair Discriminatory Speech and Behavior against Persons with Countries of Origin other than Japan" was enforced. Such discriminatory speech and behavior not only causes a feeling of anxiety or repugnance, but could also violate human dignity or generate a sense of discrimination.

Therefore, in addition to awareness-raising activities focusing on human rights of foreigners ("Respect the Rights of Foreign Nationals"), the human rights bodies of the Ministry of Justice are carrying out human rights awareness-raising activities for promoting an understanding that "hate speech" should not be tolerated, and are conducting human rights counseling and investigation and remedy activities for human rights violations including damage due to hate speech.

(Ministry of Justice of Japan, n.d.)

In the eyes of the ministry, it would seem that LGBTQ+ people are not considered a hate speech target group. Despite their efforts to eliminate hate speech, social networking sites continue to allow for humor, satire, and social commentary on these themes (Gagliardone, 2015). Public insults or derision of members of certain groups may be motivated by fear, alienation, boredom, attention seeking, and the desire to be controversial (Brown, 2017).

1.8 Intersectionality of Sexuality

Audre Lorde, author of *Sister Outsider* (2007), was one of the earliest scholars to recognize the importance of social differences and to advocate for an intersectional approach as a necessary step. She describes herself as a Black, lesbian, feminist, poet, warrior, suggesting that her perspective is an amalgamation of every disparity and that recognizing this helps us realize that there are common goals. As such, praxis is an integrated part of every intersectional approach.

On the notion of difference, Lorde writes:

Scratching the Surface: Some Notes on Barriers to Women and Loving

- Racism: the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance.
- Sexism: the belief in the inherent superiority of one sex and thereby the right to dominance.
- Heterosexism: the belief in the inherent superiority of one pattern of loving and thereby its right to dominance.
- Homophobia: the fear of feelings of love for members of one's own sex and therefore the hatred of those feelings in others.

The above forms of human blindness stem from the same root – an inability to recognize the notion of difference as a dynamic human force, one which is enriching rather than threatening to the defined self, when there are shared goals.

(Lorde, 1978, p. 31; bullets added for clarity)

According to Lorde, demographic differences are "a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic" (Lorde & Clark, 2007, p. 111); "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde & Clark, 2007, pp. 110–114). Lorde's work, which focuses on the Black lesbian experience, can aid future generations of LGBTQ+ researchers to readdress their diverse experiences and reconceptualize their strategies, objectives, and goals.

Intersectional study of sexuality has been approached from various combinations of pertinent perspectives. Commonly integrated are race, gender, religion, migration, rurality, and others. Among them, race stands out as a commonly intersected standpoint, with viewpoints further subdivided into Black, Latino, Asian, and so on. Aside from Lorde's, they include a nonfictional coming-of-age story by a Black homosexual son of a White mother and an absent Black father that highlights the significance of his experience arising from his sexuality, race, class, and religion (Cane, 2017); case studies contextualizing the relationship between the Global North and the Global South and examining "the processes of sexualization rooted in the imaginaries of the Global South," thereby shedding light on transnational human rights and the relationship between sexualities and migration, which "uncovers multiple ways in which immigration and the mainstream portrayal of migrants in the Global North reflect problematic stereotypes rooted in the racist pathologizing of migrants are brown 'Others'" (Vidal-Ortiz et al., 2018, p. 20); the feminine homosexual Asian men in American popular culture as a racist fetishism (Manalansan et al., 2021); Asian–American ethnic communities that grant gay men gender privilege but are homophobic (Han, 2015); transnational experiences of Japanese LGBTQ+ diasporas in the US, Canada, and Australia that illustrate the intersectionality of migration, sexuality, and gender (Tamagawa, 2020); and the lives of "queer people of color," focusing on their sense of belonging and sociopolitical participation, including involvement in gay communities, racial or ethnic communities, communities of color, and LGBT communities of color (Pastrana et al., 2018).

Intersectionality involving migration has also been examined. Some notable examples are foreign policies that enforce emigration as a last resort, heteronormative immigration policies that put LGBTQ+ immigrants into an unwarranted state, the plight of LGBTQ+ asylum seekers, and increasingly restrictive LGBTQ+ asylum policies (Brown et al., 2020). A cross-cultural ethnographic study of Mexican gay men in American cities depicts their lives before and after migration, focusing on how transnational migration has changed their sexuality and emphasizing changes in their sexual and romantic interactions with American men (Carrillo, 2018). The shifting heteronormative and racialized norms of US immigration policy, the sociopolitical circumstances for gays and lesbians in Mexico, and the development of the gay Latino community have also been studied (Cantú, 2009). Other mechanisms of control are apparent in these people's lives, such as economics, gender, national origin, racialization, and class, which are important beyond sexuality and migration (Luibhéid, 2005).

In lieu of metronormativity, some studies have shed light on rural LGBTQ+ experiences: the need to reassess conceptions of "coming out" and "being in the closet," the legacy of Matthew Shepard, the reproduction of heteronormativity at a local youth organization, and sexual encounters in rural America (Gray et al., 2016), as well as the experiences of rural LGBTQ+ young people and their negotiations in a politics of visibility. Rural LGBTQ+ adolescents are investigating and creating online venues to create their new queer identities, while addressing the limits of the public places accessible to them (Gray, 2009). Some studies offer insight into how the body intersects with sexuality. Fat Gay Men (Whitesel, 2014), for example, tackles the pain of being assigned to a lower rank in the LGBTQ+ hierarchy while also celebrating the ways in which certain gay men use carnivals, camping, and play to reposition the shame of fat stigma.

Finally, published before same-sex marriage was legalized in the US, Suzanna Danuta Walters' keen cultural critique of the situation of LGBTQ+ rights in the country is a fascinating addition. Although several positive developments have been observed in views toward the LGBTQ+ community in American politics and society, with many appearing to expect the advent of a new rainbow euphoria, Walter denies it. The call for tolerance, she posits, is a watered-down ideal that has hampered the integration of LGBTQ+ individuals into American society, including full civil rights. She questions conventional terminology that places sexuality in biology, such as "born this way" and "God created me that way." Ultimately, tolerance is a dead end, not a destination (Walters, 2014).

This book examines and demonstrates the situation surrounding the Japanese LGBTQ+ community through an intersectional lens as praxis. Intersectional analysis explores the complex, interdependent relationships between various identity categories, such as sexuality, gender, race and ethnicity, and nationality, as well as external attributes, such as geography and digital communications, thereby making the experiences of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community visible – especially the multiple concerns of social justice that have been rendered invisible by the existing theory. One experiences social power relations not on the basis of isolated categories of identity but on the basis of how these interactive, rather than simply additive, categories intersect and reinforce the influence of power in various subject positions. In other words, intersectionality allows us to understand the various implications of power. It also allows us to see LGBTQ+ rights in relation to other struggles, including the interactive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, I suggest avenues in which LGBTQ+ rights can potentially build bridges of mutual empowerment among various minority groups in Japan. By doing so, I believe that Japanese public awareness of human rights will be raised, and sexual equality in Japan will become closer to a reality. In this sense, I believe that intersectional analysis is more of a theoretical intervention than a methodological one.

1.9 LGBTQ+ Experiences in the US, the UK, and the EU

Outside Japan, a number of comprehensive studies – in the US (Pew Research Center, 2013b), the UK (Government Equalities Office of the UK, 2018), and the EU (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014, 2020) – are useful in comparatively situating the conditions of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community. Similar studies in other parts of the world, which could be extremely valuable, do not appear to exist. These studies asked similar questions and collect data from various populations in these countries and regions. The US study seems a little outdated, however, considering that the country legalized same-sex marriage in 2015, two years after the study was published. Nonetheless, the current Japanese situation could be comparable, as Japan does not permit same-sex marriage, and the debates continue around the feasibility and desirability of bringing marriage equality to the country. The surveys asked questions on various topics, including same-sex marriage, social acceptance and the public's perspective, the coming-out process, views of issues, leaders, institutions, self and country, religion, community identity and engagement, and LGBTQ+ adults online, among others. A comparative analysis of the results of the present study highlights the situations surrounding the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, as will be discussed in Chapter 8.

1.10 Research Objectives, Methods, and Theoretical Implications

1.10.1 Research Objectives

The main goals of this research project are as follows:

1   To document the diverse experiences among the Japanese LGBTQ+ community during the pandemic through a close examination of the results of an online survey ($N = 358$) conducted in May and June 2021.
2   To explore in depth their experiences at healthcare services, at home, and with the media.
3   To discuss participants' assessment of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, human rights in Japan, and the most important problems faced and their possible remedies, through a close examination of Japanese media.
4   To detail a close examination of Japanese discourse on the South Korean COVID-19 outbreak via three interrelated content analyses of the media, paying particular attention to how each of them addressed culturally sensitive topics (e.g., homosexuality and privacy), a cross-cultural analysis of media reporting of the incident by select South Korean and Western media outlets, and the diversity of reporting among the Japanese media, as well as Japanese social media responses, revealing a multilayered, complex situation, which may be undiscoverable through a traditional research method alone.

5   To demonstrate and analyze the intersectionality of their experiences in detail.
6   To identify some of the urgent problems facing the community through a rigorous comparative analysis of the findings. After carefully examining the findings, the conclusion offers suggestions and recommendations for policy-makers and LGBTQ+ activists.

1.10.2 Methodology

Two distinct sets of data were collected for this study: (1) quantitative and quali-tative data from an online survey concerning Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, among others; and (2) news articles on the South Korean COVID-19 outbreak in May 2020, as well as comments col-lected from various social media platforms.

1.10.2.1 Method 1: "The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Japanese LGBTQ+ Community" – A Survey

The first dataset for this study was collected from an online project I conducted on "The COVID-19 pandemic and the Japanese LGBTQ+ community" from March 29 to June 16, 2021. The project surveyed LGBTQ+ individuals of any nationality currently living in Japan or having lived in Japan at any time during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals, including special permanent residents of Japan and Japanese immigrants living overseas.

The survey questionnaire was prepared in both Japanese and English. The methods of recruitment varied: most was done by indirect solicitation through social network services and the remainder through and with the help of vari-ous Japanese LGBTQ+–related groups, including non-profit organizations and college clubs. The bilingual online survey allowed me to reach a wide range of individuals who are an integral part of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community in Japan, as well as overseas. The participants were encouraged to comment on or explain their answers in their own words throughout the survey questionnaire. This allowed me to collect a wider range of responses than would have been pos-sible through closed-ended questions alone. Participants who indicated a desire to elaborate further received follow-up questions.

1.10.2.1.1 Participants

In total, 339 valid survey responses were collected: 260 (76.7%) Japanese nation-als currently living in Japan, 59 (17.4%) non-Japanese nationals currently living in Japan, 12 (3.5%) Japanese nationals or immigrants currently living over-seas, and 8 (2.4%) non-Japanese nationals currently living overseas. Of the 320 respondents currently living in Japan, 37 of the 47 prefectures were represented. Notably, 96 participants (28.3%) responded that they lived in Tokyo, while 59 (24.7%) responded "Rather not say" or skipped the question. The 60 non-Japanese respondents currently living in Japan hailed from 15 different countries,

including 16 individuals from East Asia (Taiwan, China, and Mongolia), 16 from North America (US and Canada), 10 from the EU (France, UK, Sweden, Germany, and Ireland), 5 from South East Asia (Thailand, Philippines), 5 from South America (Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Peru), 3 from Oceania (Australia and New Zealand), 3 from former Soviet states (Russia and Belarus), and 1 from South Asia (Nepal). Of the 12 Japanese nationals or immigrants currently living overseas, 10 were Japanese nationals living in the US, Canada, or Australia, and the remainder were Japanese immigrants in the US or Canada. The non–Japanese nationals currently living overseas were 8 individuals from five continents/regions of the world.

While the majority of participants were Japanese (244, 72%), the racial makeup of the sample varied greatly: other East Asian (21, 6.2%); Southeast Asian (9, 2.7%); South Asian (4, 1.2%); Pacific Islander (1, 0.3%); White/European (29, 8.6%); Latinx (3, 0.9%); Arabic (1, 0.3%); Black/African (1, 0.3%); mixed/multiple racial/ethnic groups (17, 5.0%); and others including those who responded "Rather not to say" (9, 2.7%). Approximately half of the participants were gay (152, 44.8%), 31 (9.1%) were lesbians, 23 (6.8%) were bisexual men, 21 (6.2%) were bisexual women, 16 (4.7%) were transgender MtF/X, 37 (10.9%) were transgender FtM/X, 3 (0.9%) were pansexual men, 17 (5.0%) were pansexual women, 3 (0.9%) were asexual men, 12 (3.5%) were asexual women, 7 (2.1%) were other queer men, and 17 (5.0%) were other queer women. The average age was 35 years old: 34.8 for Japanese nationals currently living in Japan; 34.2 for non–Japanese nationals currently living in Japan; 40.1 for Japanese nationals or immigrants currently living overseas; and 40.1 for non–Japanese nationals currently living overseas. The average number of years of education was 15.4 years: 15.1 for Japanese nationals currently living in Japan; 16.7 for non–Japanese nationals currently living in Japan; 15.4 for Japanese nationals or immigrants currently living overseas; and 15.1 for non–Japanese nationals currently living overseas. For employment, 155 participants responded that they were "Employed full-time for wages," 61 "Students," 49 "Employed part-time," 32 "Self-employed," 12 "Dispatched employees," six "Homemakers," and 10 "Other" employment status. Among those who were not currently in the labor force, 14 responded "Unemployed," 9 "Unable to work," and 2 "Retired." In addition, 14 responded "Rather not say."

1.10.2.1.2 Participants by Nationality and Place of Residence

One of the major characteristics of the survey is its inclusiveness and its representation of the following four groups of LGBTQ+ individuals based on their nationality and current place of residence: Japanese nationals currently living in Japan (JJ), non–Japanese nationals currently living in Japan (FJ), Japanese nationals or immigrants overseas (JO), and non–Japanese nationals overseas (FO). Tables 1.1 and 1.2 show a comparison of a number of sociodemographic characteristics of these groups. The 339 valid survey responses were classified as follows: 260 JJ, 59 FJ, 12 JO, and 8 FO responses. Of note, the survey was in large part

TABLE 1.1 Sample Descriptive Statistics (*N* = 339)

	F	*%*
Gender at birth (N = 339)		
Male	203	59.9
Female	136	40.1
Age group (N = 338)		
18–24	85	25.1
25–34	108	31.9
35–44	74	21.8
45–54	49	14.5
55–64	16	4.7
65–74	5	1.5
75 or older	1	0.3
Highest level of education (N = 323)		
Elementary school	1	0.3
Middle school	4	1.2
High school or equivalent	71	20.9
Technical/vocational school	26	7.7
Associate degree	8	2.4
Some college	13	3.8
Bachelor's degree	134	39.5
Some graduate school	4	1.2
Master's degree	46	13.6
Doctorate degree	13	3.8
Would rather not to say	3	0.9
Nationality and current residence (N = 339)		
Japanese nationals currently living in Japan	260	76.7
Non-Japanese nationals currently living in Japan	59	17.4
Japanese nationals or immigrants currently living overseas	12	3.5
Non-Japanese nationals currently living overseas	8	2.4
Race and ethnicity (N = 339)		
Japanese	244	72.0
East Asian (other than Japanese)	21	6.2
Southeast Asian	9	2.7
South Asian	4	1.2
Pacific Islander	1	0.3
White/European	29	8.6
Latinx	3	0.9
Arabic	1	0.3
Black/African	1	0.3
Mixed/multiple race/ethnicity	17	5.0
Other racial/ethnic group, don't know, rather not to say	10	3.0
Marital status (N = 339)		
Single	170	50.1
Married (same sex)	6	1.8
Married (opposite sex)	22	6.5
Partnership	10	2.9

	F	*%*
Living with a partner	57	16.8
In a relationship but not living together	62	18.3
Divorced/separated	7	2.1
Widowed	4	1.2
Other	1	0.3
Living situation (N = 339)		
Living alone	120	35.4
With parent(s) and/or grandparent(s)	114	33.6
With a spouse or partner	91	26.8
***Employment status (N = 339)**★ Select all that apply*		
Employed full-time for wages	155	45.7
Dispatched employee	12	3.5
Employed part-time	49	14.5
Self-employed	32	9.4
Student	61	18.0
Homemaker	6	1.8
Other employment	10	2.9
Unemployed	14	4.1
Unable to work	9	2.7
Retired	2	0.6
Rather not to say	14	4.1
LGBTQ+ identity (N = 339)		
Gay	152	44.8
Lesbian	31	9.1
Bisexual man	23	6.8
Bisexual woman	21	6.2
Transgender MtF/X	16	4.7
Transgender FtM/X	37	10.9
Pansexual man	3	0.9
Pansexual woman	17	5.0
Asexual man	3	0.9
Asexual woman	12	3.5
Other queer man	7	2.1
Other queer woman	17	5.0

distributed through major social networking sites (SNS) and conducted in Japanese and English. I believe that, due partly to the varied accessibility of the SNS internationally and the limitations imposed by the languages, the numbers of participants across the groups varied greatly. Since the majority of the FO participants skipped a large number of questions, they were excluded from certain analyses.

Some significant differences were observed based on chi-square tests of independence for certain characteristics across the groups, while differences in gender ratio and average age were not statistically significant at p = .051 and .283,

TABLE 1.2 Sample Descriptive Statistics by Nationality and Place of Residence (N = 338–339)

		Japanese Nationals in Japan (N = 260)	Non-Japanese Nationals in Japan (N = 59)	Japanese Nationals or Immigrants Overseas (N = 12)	Non-Japanese Nationals Overseas (N = 7–8)
Gender at birth[1]	Male	113 (43.5%)	15 (25.4)	6 (50)	2 (25)
	Female	147 (56.5)	44 (74.6)	6 (50)	6 (25)
Sexuality and gender★[2]	Gay	111 (42.7)	32 (54.2)	6 (50)	3 (37.5)
	Lesbian	24 (9.2)	5 (8.5)	1 (8.3)	1 (12.5)
	Bisexual man	14 (5.4)	8 (13.6)	–	1 (12.5)
	Bisexual woman	14 (5.4)	6 (10.2)	1 (8.3)	–
	Male-to-female/X	11 (4.2)	2 (3.4)	–	3 (37.5)
	Female-to-male/X	33 (12.7)	1 (1.7)	3 (25)	–
	Pansexual man	3 (1.2)	–	–	–
	Pansexual woman	17 (6.5)	–	–	–
	Asexual man	1 (0.4)	2 (3.4)	–	–
	Asexual woman	11 (4.2)	1 (1.7)	–	–
	Q+ (other) man	7 (2.7)	–	–	–
	Q+ (other) woman	14 (5.4)	2 (3.4)	1 (8.3)	–
Identify as transgender★[3]		46 (17.7)	3 (5.1)	3 (25)	3 (37.5)
Relationship status★★[4]	Single	139 (53.5)	24 (40.7)	2 (16.7)	5 (62.5)
	Married (same sex)	3 (1.2)	–	3 (25)	–
	Married (opposite sex)	14 (5.4)	6 (10.2)	2 (16.7)	–
	Partnership	7 (2.7)	1 (1.7)	1 (8.3)	1 (12.5)
	Living with a partner	41 (15.8)	13 (22.0)	2 (16.7)	1 (12.5)
	In a relationship but not living together	47 (18.1)	14 (23.7)	1 (8.3)	–
	Divorced/separated	6 (2.3)	1 (1.7)	–	–
	Widowed	2 (0.8)	–	1 (8.3)	1 (12.5)
	Other	1 (0.4)	–	–	–
Race and ethnicity★★[5]	Japanese	232 (89.2)	1 (1.7)	11 (91.7)	–
	Other East Asian	5 (1.9)	16 (27.1)	–	–
	Southeast Asian	2 (0.8)	6 (10.2)	–	1 (12.5)

	South Asian	2 (0.8)	2 (3.4)	–	–
	Pacific Islander	–	1 (1.7)	–	–
	White/European	3 (1.2)	22 (37.3)	–	4 (50)
	Black/African	–	–	–	1 (12.5)
	Latinx	1 (0.4)	2 (3.4)	–	–
	Arabic	–	1 (1.7)	–	–
	Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	10 (3.8)	6 (10.2)	1 (8.3)	–
	Others (don't know or rather not to say)	5 (1.9)	2 (3.4)	–	2 (25)
Middle Eastern (Abrahamic) religions★★[6]		29 (11.2)	9 (15.3)	–	4 (57.1)
Current employment status	Employed full-time for wages★★[7]	113 (43.5)	37 (62.7)	4 (30)	1 (12.5)
	Dispatched employee	9 (3.5)	3 (5.1)	–	–
	Employed part-time	43 (16.5)	3 (5.1)	3 (25)	–
	Self-employed	26 (10)	5 (8.5)	1 (8.3)	–
	Unemployed★★[8]	10 (3.8)	1 (1.7)	–	3 (37.5)
	Homemaker★★[9]	4 (1.5)	–	2 (16.7)	–
	Retired★★[10]	1 (0.4)	–	1 (8.3)	–
	Student	44 (16.9)	12 (20.3)	2 (16.7)	3 (37.5)
	Unable to work	8 (3.1)	–	–	1 (12.5)
	Other	9 (3.5)	–	1 (8.3)	–
	Rather not to say	11 (4.2)	1 (1.7)	1 (8.3)	1 (12.5)
Select occupations – current	Distribution/retailing	19 (7.3)	2 (3.4)	–	–
	Travel	1 (0.4)	2 (3.4)	–	–
	Service	46 (17.7)	9 (15.3)	1 (8.3)	–
	Medical and welfare	20 (7.7)	2 (3.4)	3 (25)	–
Select occupations – before pandemic	Same as current industry	139 (53.5)	31 (52.5)	7 (58.3)	2 (25)
	Distribution/Retailing	20 (7.7)	3 (5.1)	–	–
	Travel	3 (1.2)	3 (5.1)	1 (8.3)	–
	Service	51 (19.6)	10 (16.9)	–	–
	Medical and welfare	19 (7.3)	2 (3.4)	–	3 (37.5)

(*Continued*)

TABLE 1.2 (Continued)

		Japanese Nationals in Japan (N = 260)	Non-Japanese Nationals in Japan (N = 59)	Japanese Nationals or Immigrants Overseas (N = 12)	Non-Japanese Nationals Overseas (N = 7–8)
Supplemental labor experience		70 (26.9)	8 (13.6)	3 (25)	3 (37.5)
Living situation	Alone★★[11]	80 (30.8)	35 (59.3)	3 (25)	2 (25)
	With a (grand)parent(s)★★[12]	108 (41.5)	4 (6.8)	2 (16.7)	–
	With a spouse/partner★★[13]	63 (24.2)	19 (32.2)	8 (66.7)	1 (12.5)
Means					
	Age[14]	34.8	34.2	40.1	40.1
	Years of education★★[15]	15.1	16.7★★[16]	15.2	15.1
	Current annual income (in 10,000 yen)	373.3	461.1[17]	372.2	216.7
	Income difference (in 10,000 yen)	−9.8	19.0[18]	−25.0	−29.2

Notes:

1 X^2 (3, N = 339) = 7.762, p = .051

2 X^2 (33, N = 339) = 53.548, p = .013

3 X^2 (3, N = 339) = 9.143, p = .027

4 X^2 (24, N = 339) = 71.140, p = .000

5 X^2 (36, N = 339) = 312.333, p = .000

6 X^2 (3, N = 338) = 15.386, p = .002

7 X^2 (3, N = 339) = 11.698, p = .008

8 X^2 (3, N = 339) = 23.954, p = .000

9 X^2 (3, N = 339) = 16.604, p = .001

10 X^2 (3, N = 339) = 12.853, p = .005

11 X^2 (3, N = 339) = 18.149, p = .000

12 X^2 (3, N = 339) = 31.944, p = .000

13 X^2 (3, N = 339) = 12.296, p = .006

14 $F(3, 334)$ = 1.275, p = .283 (ANOVA)

15 $F(3, 321)$ = 8.395, p = .000 (ANOVA)

16 $t(323)$ = −5.010, p = .000 (M = 1.526, SD = 0.305)

17 $t(279)$ = −1.711, p = .088 (M = −91.94812, SD = 53.72929)

18 $t(277)$ = −1.684, p = .093 (M = −29.87037, SD = 17.73580

★Significant at 0.05, ★★ at 0.01, and ★★★ at 0.001 (two-tailed))

respectively. First, when asked about their sexual orientation and gender identity, JJ participants responded with a greater variety of choices on the sexuality spectrum beyond the typical LGBT categories. For example, while none in the other groups did so, 20 JJ participants (7%) responded that they were pansexual: 17 women (6.5%) and 3 men (1.2%). Close to a quarter of FJ participants (23.8%) responded that they were bisexual: 8 (13.6%) women and 6 (10.2%) men, with just over 10% of JJ counterparts responding the same. Another notable difference was that greater proportions of JJ and JO than FJ participants responded that they were gender minorities: 11 (4.2%) MtF/X and 33 (12.7%) FtM/X for JJ, 3 FtM/X (25%) for JO, and 2 (3.4%) MtF/X and 1 (1.7%) FtM/X for FJ participants. Incidentally, more than a third of FO participants (37.5%) identified as MtF/X. Significantly, although the statistics for transgender identity seem similar, due to the prevalence of X-gender (a Japanese precursor to non-binary gender identification), JJ participants who responded as MtF/X or FtM/X did not necessarily identify themselves as transgender. It could be harder for transgender individuals to come to Japan than cisgender individuals.

The participants' relationship statuses differed significantly across the groups: $X^2(24, N = 339) = 71.140, p = .001$. More JJ and FO than other participants responded that they were single, at 139 (53.5%) and 5 (62.5%), respectively. A small minority − 3 (25%) JO and 3 (1.2%) JJ participants − responded that they were in a same-sex marriage; none did so among their FJ and FO counterparts. Across the groups, 22 (6.5%) participants were married to someone of the opposite sex: 14 (5.4%) JJ, 6 (10.2%) FJ, and 2 (16.7%) JO participants. About a quarter of the FJ and 47 (18.1%) JJ participants were in a relationship but not living together. Participants' living situations also significantly differed across the groups: living alone, $X^2(3, N = 339) = 18.149, p = .001$; with one or more (grand)parents, $X^2(3, N = 339) = 31.944, p = .001$; or with a spouse or partner, $X^2(3, N = 339) = 12.296, p = .006$. About 60% of FJ participants lived alone, which is about twice as many as those in other groups; more than 40% of JJ participants lived with one or more (grand)parents; and two-thirds of JO participants lived with their spouse or partner, while less than a quarter of JJ and about a third of FJ participants did so.

Racial/ethnic identities of participants significantly differed across the groups: $X^2(36, N = 339) = 312.333, p = .001$. Needless to say, among the JJ and JO participants, the majority identified as Japanese: 232 (89.2%) and 11 (91.7%), respectively. More than 10% of JJ participants identified as other than Japanese: 5 (1.9%) participants as other East Asian, 2 (0.8%) as Southeast Asian, another 2 as South Asian, 3 (1.2%) as White/European, 1 (0.4%) as Latinx, and 10 (3.8%) as mixed/multiple ethnic groups. The racial and ethnic backgrounds of FJ participants varied greatly: 22 (37.3%) White/European, 16 (27.1%) other East Asian, 6 (10.2%) Southeast Asian, another 6 mixed/multiple ethnic groups, 2 (3.4%) South Asian, another 2 Latinx, and 1 (1.7%) each Arabic, Pacific Islander, and Japanese.

The current employment statuses of participants also significantly differed across the groups, including employed fulltime for wages ($X^2[3, N = 339] = 11.698$,

$p = .008$), unemployed ($X^2[3, N = 339] = 23.954, p = .001$), and homemaker ($X^2[3, N = 339] = 16.604, p = .001$). More than 60% of FJ participants responded that they were employed full-time for wages, while significantly lower proportions of participants in other groups answered the same. More than one-third of the FO participants were unemployed. There were 4 JJ and 1 JO homemakers, but none among the other groups. The FO participants probably left Japan during the pandemic due to some major difficulties and, seemingly, their lives still have not recovered, even in their new home countries.

In addition, while the average (mean) years of education across four groups differed significantly ($F[3, 321] = 8.395, p = .001$) and the average years of education among FJ participants (16.7) were significantly higher than the other groups ($t[323] = -5.010, p = .001$ [$M = 1.526, SD = 0.305$]), the differences in average current annual income and income before and during the pandemic across the four groups were not significantly different. Although the mean annual income and income differences among FJ participants were considerably higher, their standard deviation values were high, indicating great variation in these areas among FJ participants. FJ have higher education and income, and their income even went up during the pandemic.

1.10.2.2 Methods 2: Breaking News From South Korea – A Media Analysis

The second dataset for this study was collected from news articles on the South Korean COVID-19 outbreak in May 2020 by various (old and new) news media outlets in Japan and abroad, including South Korea, the US, the UK, and France. The Japanese news media include a wide variety of outlets, such as digital editions of and online-only content from national, local, and sports newspapers and news magazines, TV news programs broadcast on YouTube through its commercial channels, as well as online-only news (relay) outlets, such as Yahoo! News Japan, and news tweets that most of the news outlets utilize. Additionally, to assess news readers' reactions, comments were collected from various social media platforms, including YouTube, Twitter, blogs, and 2channel, among others.

1.10.2.2.1 News Media

The Japanese news media closely examined includes the following: 24 news transcripts from five Japanese national TV stations – NHK (14), Nippon TV (4), TBS (3), Fuji TV (8), and TV Asahi (6); 17 newspaper articles from five national newspapers – *Yomiuri Shimbun* (1), *Sankei Shimbun* (8), *Asahi Shimbun* (5), *Nikkei Shimbun* (3), and *Mainichi Shimbun* (1); 8 news digests from two Japanese news agencies – Kyodo News (3) and Jiji News (5); news transmissions from special-interest websites, including Wow! Korea (1); news magazine articles, including 2 from the *Weekly Bunshun* (*Shūkan Bunshun*). The vast majority were released immediately after the news broke on May 8, 2020. Some were accessed through

their websites, others through their official social media posts, or both. They were selected based on the number of responses on social media platforms; the same criteria were applied to the selection of news by non-Japanese news media.

The non-Japanese news media examined were as follows: 14 newspaper articles from three South Korean national newspapers – *Chosunilbo* (*Chōsen nippō* in Japanese; 3), *Hankyoreh* (*Hangyore*; 1) and *JoongAng Ilbo* (*Chūō nippō*; 4), 2 from *Sports Seoul*, a sports newspaper, and 4 from Yonhap News (*Rengō nyūsu*), a news agency; a news briefing from Reuters and a news transcript from the BBC (UK); 1 from AFP (France); and 4 from the US (1 from CNN, 2 from *Bloomberg News*, and 1 from *Newsweek Japan*). The non-Japanese news media were available in Japanese for Japanese readers. Substantially more news articles on the South Korean COVID-19 outbreak were transmitted by non-Japanese news media outlets, although the vast majority of them did not receive a significant number of responses from Japanese social media users. For example, although Reuters transmitted 11 news briefings on the topic, only one received more than 100 responses, and this was a great deal more than the others.

1.10.2.2.2 Social Media

The social media platforms selected for this study were NewsPicks, YouTube, and 2channel. NewsPicks is a popular online social economic media and news site in Japan established in 2015. It features the ability to read news with comments added by celebrities and experts in various fields. It was voted the number one news app in Japan in terms of satisfaction in 2015. The number of member users, including free users, was approximately 4.7 million as of December 2019. NewsPicks users typically identify themselves by their real name and company affiliation.

YouTube, which is a social media service based in the US, is a social networking and video-sharing service founded in 2005. It is the world's second-most viewed website behind Google and is owned by Google. While individuals create the majority of YouTube content, including partnerships between YouTubers and business sponsors, established media corporations have also created and expanded their corporate YouTube channels to advertise to a wider audience. The majority of YouTube videos allow viewers to submit comments, which have garnered attention for their content.

2channel is one of the largest electronic, anonymous bulletin board sites in Japan. As its slogan suggests, the topics covered range from "hacking" to "what's on the menu tonight." 2channel has a longer presence in Japan's social media scene than those mentioned previously. It was established in May 1999 by an Internet user who calls himself Hiroyuki. Additionally, a key feature of 2channel is its anonymity. While possible, most users choose not to use even a unique alias that distinguishes them from others – a common practice on other social media platforms. For example, multiple users often participate in the same thread on 2channel under the same username.

1.10.3 Theoretical Implications

Theoretically speaking, this book contributes to the continuing debate between international LGBTQ+ scholars and activists who seek to promote LGBTQ+ rights using the rights–based model prevalent in the West and opponents who believe that the imposition of Western standards for LGBTQ+ rights on non-Western societies constitutes yet another example of imperialism and subordination – from an Asian perspective, it focuses on the Japanese LGBTQ+ community and the country's current stance on sexual equality. I believe that the findings will contribute to the continuing cultural debate concerning the global LGBTQ+ movement in non-Western (particularly Asian) countries, offering valuable and necessary insights into an intersectional analysis of the conditions of LGBTQ+ communities, making the invisible visible as a praxis, and thereby demonstrating Japanese LGBTQ+ rights as human rights as a necessary step toward the full integration of LGBTQ+ individuals into Japanese society.

From a media standpoint, although they seem never to be congruent with one another, it can be observed that the mainstream media and social media are, in fact, different sides of the same coin: Japanese cultural ignorance and insensitivity toward minorities. On the surface, it appears as if discrimination against minorities does not exist in Japanese society; however, deep down, stereotypes and prejudices prevail. This is a one-way system, and as long as the mainstream media does not acknowledge the problem, discrimination remains. Denial not only prevents problems from being solved but also leads to the spread of existing stereotypes and prejudices.

Homophobia and transphobia are causes of some of the major problems facing the Japanese LGBTQ+ community. As demonstrated previously, there are several studies that attest to the effect of homophobia and transphobia, as well as a number of stories by LGBTQ+ individuals themselves. Yet, few studies shed light on the ways in which expressions of hate speech are manifested differently in multilayered media, in particular mainstream media and social media. Drawing on findings from a close analysis of multilayered Japanese media, as well as experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic among the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, I will further argue that yet another type of homophobia exists in Japan, one that tacitly but thoroughly excludes LGBTQ+ people from public discourse as if they do not exist or are inappropriate to even mention. I refer to this type of homophobia as "passive systemic homophobia." Its implicit nature obscures the fact that LGBTQ+ people are ostracized from (rather than overtly discriminated against in) Japanese society; as a result, LGBTQ+ people are systemically excluded, as if by unspoken agreement. In contrast to the West, where homophobia is frequently justified by religion, the same logic does not apply to Japan. Instead, I contend that the cult of the heteronormative family, which reveres the traditional Japanese family as the cornerstone of Japanese society and culture, serves as a theoretical justification for the marginalization of LGBTQ+ people in Japan. Ultimately, I show that Japan is not LGBTQ+–friendly.

Through an intersectional analysis, I argue that the rights of Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals should be protected by law. The findings reveal that an anti-discrimination law in employment, for example, is a bare necessity, not a privilege, as in the Equal Employment Opportunity Law of 1985, which prohibits discrimination against women in employment. The legalization of same-sex marriage is another necessary step to stabilize the lives of same-sex couples in various ways, including their finances and mental health. Additionally, given the Japanese cultural emphasis on conformity, the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals must first be acknowledged and written into law by the central government, mirroring the process of the status of postcolonial citizens concerning their immigration status and requirements.

1.11 Overview of the Book

One of the major objectives of the present study is to see and understand the Japanese LGBTQ+ community as an integral part of the world around it. To further situate the Japanese LGBTQ+ community in relation to some of the world's major developments, Chapter 2 first discusses in detail a number of pertinent topics concerning the Japanese LGBTQ+ community in recent history, including the adaptation of Western sexology at the beginning of the last century, the AIDS crisis of the 1980s, the international gay movement in the 1990s, and the LGBT boom and legalization of same-sex marriage around the world in the 2010s. This is followed by a sociological review of the major topics affecting the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, including the country's unyielding heteronormativity and its manifestations in various facets of contemporary Japanese culture and society. These topics include Japanese LGBTQ+ towns and entertainment venues, in particular Shinjuku Ni–chōme and the *hattenba* (gay cruising spots); Japanese attitudes toward gender and sexual diversity; laws concerning the Japanese LGBTQ+ community; heterosexism at work and in academia in Japan; sexual and gender diversity in Japanese culture; familial homo/transphobia and invisibility; and issues in school education, including bullying and suicides, among others. Another important feature of the present study is the examination of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community through an intersectional lens. As such, some key social issues in contemporary Japanese society have also been surveyed, including the casualization of labor, minority groups, the traditional Japanese family, and Japanese women.

Focusing on the results of the quantitative analysis, Chapters 3 and 4 provide an overview of how the pandemic affected the LGBTQ+ community in Japan, presenting a number of important findings from the survey on the following topics: health concerns and impact, mental health, financial concerns and impact, disruption of daily life, perception of threat, impact of social distancing measures, family conflict related to participants' sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and reduced connection in the LGBTQ+ community. The results also illustrate participants' experiences of public healthcare services and at

home – two domains of their lives that were deeply affected by the pandemic. Many participants responded that they avoided visiting healthcare services unless urgent for various reasons, some of which were related to COVID-19 and others to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. However, a significant proportion of participants still used healthcare services during the pandemic. Nonetheless, their experiences revealed some of the major problems with Japan's healthcare services facing LGBTQ+ individuals, which they felt were unbearably difficult, particularly during the pandemic.

The results concerning participants' experiences at home will also be demonstrated. Due to the social distancing order, many participants spent a considerable amount of time at home, where the majority of them had not disclosed their sexual orientation and/or gender identity unless they lived with their partners. Some experienced hearing their parents' homo/transphobic comments compulsorily; some were subject to verbal, physical, and/or sexual harassment, but incident reporting was relatively uncommon for various reasons. Additionally, the results of the survey questions concerning participants' general impressions of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, their perceptions of human rights, and the most important problems they face and their possible remedies will be illustrated. Some of the questions elicit participants' perceptions of the types of discrimination in Japanese society, LGBTQ+ discrimination and social acceptance, LGBTQ+ identity, homo/transphobia, and laws protecting the human rights of LGBTQ+ individuals, among others. In addition, to move forward with the issues facing the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, the survey also asked a series of questions about what would make their lives more comfortable and what would make Japanese society more accepting of the LGBTQ+ community. Their responses are presented in detail.

As noted previously, a great number of participants shared their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as their thoughts on some pertinent aspects of Japanese society in writing throughout the survey, as well as via email. Chapter 5 focuses on the experiences of non-Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals living in Japan during the pandemic and presents the experiences of 12 individuals as a case study. One of the main goals of the chapter is to use the words of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community to illustrate their diasporic experiences during the pandemic. While the findings from the quantitative analysis show overall trends, their ethnographic accounts of their lived experiences as LGBTQ+ people during the pandemic are a necessary and invaluable addition. Their narratives fill the gaps that statistical analysis alone cannot explain, thus offering a holistic account of their community and experiences together. These individuals consisted of a wide spectrum of people from various parts of the world. Their experiences as non-Japanese LGBTQ+ people in Japan during the pandemic offer great insights into some of the major problems facing the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, as well as Japanese society as a whole.

While the majority of participants reduced or lost connections to the LGBTQ+ community during the pandemic, the media played a major role in

their lives in various ways. As a case study, Chapter 6 closely follows and comparatively analyzes the Japanese media reporting of the COVID-19 outbreak in Itaewon, Seoul, South Korea, in May 2020. According to the news reports, the outbreak originated from a gay club in the area, and the South Korean authorities alleged that several thousand individuals were in close contact with a man suspected of creating a "gay" cluster and called for them to take a COVID-19 test without delay. However, the incident raised concerns about privacy violations by the South Korean authorities, such as the "corona outing," which involved the disclosure of one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity via cluster tracing. The Western media paid particular attention to the possible mass infringement of the privacy of sexual minority individuals, where homophobic views prevail. On the other hand, Japan's mainstream media evaded coverage of anything relating to sexuality, even as far as not using the word "gay" (*gei*) in their reporting, thus obscuring the fact that negative attitudes toward sexual minorities were a threat to the safety of society.

In stark contrast, Japan's social media users responded to the news very differently. Although some variations were observed among Japan's social media platforms, the majority seemed aware that the venue in the spotlight was a gay club and expressed their mistrust of the country's mainstream media. At the same time, unlike the mainstream media, social media channels were awash with homophobic comments, as well as hate speech against Koreans. Through a close examination of various reactions in the multilayered social media, Chapter 7 reveals the multifaceted realities that the Japanese LGBTQ+ community faces. In the meantime, it was rumored among social media users that the APA Hotel Shinjuku Kabukichō, located near the well-known Ni–chōme, Japan's mega gay district, was an ad hoc *hattenba* (gay cruising spot). Even though this could be seen as just another silly joke, especially in light of what happened in South Korea, a close look at the comments on social media shows another side of how Japanese people feel about gay sexuality: homophobic comments about gay people who share everyday space.

The concluding chapter discusses some of the key findings in depth, including the effects of social distancing measures enforced by the Japanese authorities utilizing Japanese cultural ethos, such as *sanmitsu* [the Three Cs], *jijo* [self-help], and *fuyō fukyū* [nonessential, nonurgent]. Such measures, prescribed on the assumption of the heteronormative family, further pushed sexual minorities into a corner of society. Mental health issues are a major concern, with loneliness being a major contributor. While LGBTQ+ social and entertainment venues vanished, many LGBTQ+ people were forced either to live together with their parents, who do not understand their sexuality or gender identity, or to endure a solitary life. Nationality/place of residence, relationship status and living situation, work and employment, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and race and ethnicity will all be examined through an intersectional lens. In particular, the experiences of non-Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals in Japan, who are not generally considered members of the community, will be discussed in detail. I will

also elaborate on the state of Japan's media, both traditional and social, in the context of important media theories and the global LGBTQ+ rights movement.

To assess the relative conditions of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, the final chapter also discusses findings concerning participants' assessment of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, human rights in Japan, and its most salient problems in close comparison to findings from similar studies in the UK, the US, and the EU. Findings from the international comparative analysis, as well as cross-cultural analysis, will further illuminate some of the major problems facing the Japanese LGBTQ+ community and in Japanese society, including Japan's passive systemic homophobia, limited Japanese understanding of human rights, and the cult of the heteronormative family in lieu of religion, which is often used as a rationale for homophobic views. Finally, I will discuss suggestions and recommendations for policymakers and LGBTQ+ activists, including the passing of an understanding promotion bill, the establishment of anti-discrimination and protective measures at the national level, and the legalization of same-sex marriage, which many see as a necessary and important step toward sexual equality in Japan. In closing, some of the study's limitations, as well as suggestions for future research, will be discussed.

2

THE JAPANESE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY AND THE WORLD

2.1 Introduction

One of the main objectives of this study is to examine the Japanese LGBTQ+ experience, as an integral part of the world around it, through an intersectional lens. As such, it covers a great number of topics, some of which may not seem to be obviously related, but in fact, they are, as I will discuss later in Chapter 8. Crucially, these categories are not additive; they intersect and reinforce the influence of power in various subject positions. Topics to be included are the Japanese LGBTQ+ community in relation to some of the major developments in the world in recent history; LGBTQ+ venues in Japan, which, although an integral part of the country's LGBTQ+ community, had not been adequately covered prior to this study; major issues concerning the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, due largely to the country's unyielding heteronormativity and its manifestations in various facets of contemporary Japanese culture and society; and a number of pertinent societal issues in contemporary Japan that are important in understanding the Japanese LGBTQ+ experience, including supplemental labor classes, minority groups, and women's issues in contemporary Japanese society and culture.

2.2 The Japanese LGBTQ+ Community and the World in Recent History

2.2.1 Dōseiai *and* Hentai

The European concept of homosexuality (*dōseiai*) was introduced to Japan as a translation in the Taisho era (1912–1926). Homosexuality has been widely discussed in the country as one of the "perverted sexual desires" (*hentai seiyoku*)

that need to be clarified (Furukawa & Lockyer, 1994, pp. 114–121). The term "homosexuality" introduced various novelties to the Japanese. By separating "healthy" sexual desires from "abnormal perverted" sexual desires, homosexuality becomes a pathological subject. This new term also allowed sexuality between women and their desires to be expressed (Furukawa & Lockyer, 1994, pp. 114–116), albeit as a *hentai* desire.

2.2.2 The AIDS Panic

Some Japanese researchers and activists have dubbed the 1980s AIDS epidemic the "AIDS panic" (Kawaguchi & Kazama, 2010). During the AIDS crisis, discriminatory measures like hospital visitation bans were used to show that American homosexual couples' relationships were not legally recognized (Chauncey, 2005, pp. 87–136). Japan was hit by the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the mid-1980s; however, government officials and the media portrayed it as an American disease, giving it a patriotic tone (Kawaguchi et al., 1997). Therefore, in retrospect, Japan's AIDS panic failed to make gay men visible or galvanize the gay rights movement and spark same-sex marriage, as seen in the US.

2.2.3 The Gay Boom (gei būmu) of the 1990s

The gay boom of the 1990s witnessed diverse media, including magazines, novels, television series, and feature films, reporting on and showing male homosexuality on a scale that was unparalleled and remains unmatched to the present day. Ultimately, however, the gay boom seems to have been a media phenomenon. For example, these films were not really about gay men. Rather, they were media fantasies that capitalized on the popularity of male homosexuality among young women to boost box office receipts (McLelland, 2000). Nonetheless, according to McLelland (2000), the gay boom meant that, for the first time, information on Japan's "gay scene" became readily accessible in the mainstream media, and a variety of imported words for addressing sexuality became more extensively disseminated. One journal article, for example, included a glossary of English "gay vocabulary," such as homophobia (*homofobia*), coming out (*kamingu-auto*), and acceptance (*akuseputansu*). The imported words *gei* and *rezubian* became generally accepted in society as a consequence of the boom and have since come to be used in a way similar to the English identification categories "gay" and "lesbian" (McLelland, 2000), as were academic terms such as "gay liberation" (*gei riberēshon*), "sexuality" (*sekushuarithi*), and "lesbian and gay studies" (*rezubian/gei sutadīzu*; p. 36). Japan saw an increase in the number of prominent LGBTQ+ events, including the Tokyo International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival (since 1992; Kawaguchi & Kazama, 2010) and the Tokyo Lesbian Gay Parade (since August 1994). In 1996, the first edition of *Kuia sutadīzu* [*Queer Studies*] was published.

2.2.3.1 The Fuchū Youth House Trial

In 1990, the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education refused to allow the Association for the Lesbian and Gay Movement (OCCUR) to use the Fuchū Youth House facility on the grounds that it would have a negative impact on young people. The group filed a lawsuit for damages in the Tokyo District Court, claiming that the metropolitan government's decision constituted an infringement of its right to freedom of assembly and learning, winning the case in both the first and second instances. This became known as the "Fuchu Youth House Trial" (*Fuchū seinen no ie saiban*) and was the first lawsuit in Japan to address the human rights of homosexual men and women (Kazama, 2016). While the majority of the gay community at the time praised OCCUR's lawsuit against the Tokyo Metropolitan Government as a step toward the "acquisition of basic human rights for homosexual men and women," there were also those, including members of the LGBTQ+ community, who openly criticized it, including those who feared losing the benefits of tolerance from a heterosexist society by attempting to gain human rights through coming out. Those who subscribed to this view criticized OCCUR's actions as being "beyond the limits of modesty necessary to receive the benefits of tolerance.

   Kakefuda insightfully commented on the trial as follows: "I give it credit where it's due. It is a case of discrimination against homosexual men, despite the use of the term 'homosexuals'" (Kakefuda in Kazama, 2019, p. 73). The differences between lesbians and gays, as Kakefuda puts it, are threefold. The first is that "homosexual men have been treated with contempt, oppression, or praise, while homosexual women have been almost completely ignored." Second, "lesbians are surrounded by discrimination against women even before discrimination against homosexual people." The third is that "there seems to be no attack on privacy" for lesbians, as exemplified by the fact that "women are allowed to live together and be overtly intimate with each other because it is a moratorium" (pp. 73–74). Kakefuda points out the possibility that men who support discrimination against homosexual people may treat gays and lesbians differently based on gender norms – it is because the discrimination was directed at gay men that this trial was possible. Because they are men, they can stand in the same field as the men who support the discrimination.

2.2.4 The LGBT Boom (LGBT **būmu**)

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender groups are collectively referred to as LGBT. The initialism, as well as some of its popular variations, has been in use since the 1990s and serves as a catch-all phrase for sexual orientation and gender identity in the US (Parent et al., 2013). In Japan, the initialism came to be widely used in Japan in the early 2010s. For example, "*Hāto wo tsunagō*" [Let's connect our hearts], a welfare information program, was aired from April 2006 within the framework of NHK Educational Television's Fukushi [Welfare] Network.

For the four years that followed, a series of programs were broadcast on the subject of gender and sexual diversity: gender identity disorder (*seidōitsusei shōgai*; 2008), gays and lesbians (*gei, rezubian*; 2008), and LGBT (*LGBT*; 2010).

In 2012, the Dentsu Diversity Lab published a study showing that Japan's population was 5.2% LGBT (Ishida, 2019, p. 226), although the validity of this figure has been questioned by experts. Economic magazines now started talking about the LGBT market and corporate diversity strategies. A look at the economic magazines of around this time shows that the size of the LGBT market and its utilization were featured in articles such as "*Shirarezaru kyodai shijō, Nihon no LGBT*" [Japan's LGBT, an unknown giant market] *in Shūkan Tōyō keizai* [*Eastern Economy Weekly*] in July 2012 and "*Kokunai shijō 5.7 chō-en "LGBT shijō" wo kōryaku seyo!*" [Conquer the 5.7 trillion yen "LGBT market" in Japan!] in *Shūkan daiamondo* [*Diamond Weekly*] in February 2013. The term "executive gay" was also coined in 2016 by Hakuhodo, a major advertising agency. The Japanese agency named "executive gays" as gay individuals with a monthly disposable income of 200,000 yen or more, extensive friendships, and a high ability to disseminate information. Their main goal was to survey the consumption styles of this emerging demographic (Tada, 2016). It is important to note that, like the gay boom of the 1990s, which was arguably promoted by the media, the LGBT boom in Japan has been greatly influenced by marketing and the emergence of the "LGBT market."

2.2.4.1 LGBTQ+ Anti-discrimination Acts – Local Governments

Japan's local governments have also begun implementing their own LGBT-friendly initiatives. One of the earliest examples of LGBT discrimination law by a Japanese city or ward government is Bunkyō-ku in Tokyo, which enacted an ordinance prohibiting discriminatory treatment and human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity in September 2013. In January 2014, a similar ordinance was passed by Tama City in Tokyo (Research Institute for Local Governments, n.d.). The Tokyo Metropolitan Government became the first prefectural government to enact laws prohibiting discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals, which went into effect in April 2019 (Human Rights Watch, 2018b). At the time of writing, around 40 city or ward governments and five prefectural governments – Tokyo (effective from 2019), Ibaraki (2019), Osaka (2019), Mie (2021), and Tottori (2021) – have issued ordinances prohibiting discriminatory treatment of sexual minority people based on sexual orientation and gender identity (Research Institute for Local Governments, n.d.).

Japan has not legalized same-sex marriage. At the same time, around 150 municipalities have introduced a same-sex partnership system (*Dōsei pātonāshippu seido*) whereby a certificate is issued, which presumably gives similar rights to marriage. This partnership system started in Shibuya-ku (April 2015) and Setagaya-ku (November 2015), both in Tokyo, and the number of Japanese municipalities with similar systems is growing (Research Institute for Local

Governments, n.d.). However, such systems have some major drawbacks. Most importantly, the certificate is not legally binding, and same-sex couples are not recognized as partners by law.

2.2.4.2 The Same-Sex Marriage Movement in Japan

Marriage for All Japan (*Kekkon no jiyū wo subete no hito ni*) is a public interest incorporated association established by lawyers and PR professionals in 2019 to bring about same-sex marriage in Japan. The Marriage for All lawsuit was filed simultaneously by plaintiffs in the Sapporo, Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka District Courts on February 14, 2019, followed by the Fukuoka District Court in September 2019. On March 17, the Sapporo District Court handed down a landmark ruling that the current Civil Code and Family Registration Law provisions that do not legally allow same-sex couples to marry "violate Article 14, Paragraph 1 of the Constitution." However, it is still unclear when the law will be revised to allow same-sex couples to legally marry (Marriage for All Japan, n.d.). At a press conference immediately after the Sapporo District Court's ruling, Chief Cabinet Secretary Kato stated, "The government does not believe that the Civil Code's provisions on marriage are contrary to the Constitution," and the government has yet to show any positive attitude toward resolving the issue (*Asahi Shimbun*, 2022). On June 22, 2022, the Osaka court ruled that since same-sex unions are not considered "freedom of marriage" under the 1947 constitution, forbidding same-sex marriage is not unconstitutional. Judge Doi stated that marriage for heterosexual couples is a system created by society to safeguard a bond between men and women who conceive and raise children, and that same-sex relationships are still a topic of public discussion. Aside from Marriage for All Japan, some other groups have been working to bring same-sex marriage to Japan, including EMA Nihon (Japan), a non-profit organization established in 2014 (EMA Nihon, n.d.).

2.2.4.3 The Backlash

In the August 2018 issue of *Shincho 45*, a conservative monthly magazine for middle-aged and older readers by Shinchōsha, Sugita, an LDP lawmaker, contributed an article titled "Too much support for 'LGBT'" (*'LGBT' shien no do ga sugiru*) (*Shincho 45*, 2018). In the article, Sugita contends that LGBTQ+ people are not so discriminated against and raises the question, "Is there any support for using taxpayer money for LGBT couples?" In response, she writes, "They do not have children, so they are not 'productive' (*seisansei ga nai*)," thus questioning the move to expand LGBT rights (*Asahi Shimbun*, 2018b). Criticisms soon poured in from people in Japan and overseas, LGBTQ+ groups, support groups for people with intractable diseases, support groups for people with disabilities, several Diet members inside and outside the LDP, ministers, lawyers, university professors, entertainers, and other prominent figures (*Asahi Shimbun*, 2018a).

As a response to the criticism, a special feature titled "*Son'nani okashii ka 'Sugita Mio' ronbun*" [Is the Sugita Mio article so strange?] was published in the magazine's October 2018 issue. The special issue once again drew widespread criticism, for example, with writer Hirano blaming Shinchosha, saying, "Why are they involved in such vile discrimination?" (@Hiranok, 2018). In response, the publisher issued a comment in the name of President Sato on September 21, admitting problems with the content of the feature. On September 25, it was announced that the publisher would cease the publication of *Shincho 45* (*Asahi Shimbun*, 2018c).

A certain proportion of Japanese gays and lesbians may also share some conservative and potentially nationalistic views of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community. According to some, the global LGBTQ+ rights movement, which includes the legalization of same-sex marriage, is causing Japan's culture to westernize further. Contrary to the legal struggles seen in the West, some contend that Japan's LGBTQ+ rights movement must develop its own path that fits the unique features of Japanese society. In an article titled "Americanized LGBT Human Rights: The Narrative of Progress and the Speech 'Gay Rights are Human Rights'" (*Amerika-ka sareru LGBT no jinken: "gei no kenri ha jinken dearu" enzetsu to "shinpo" toiu nara-thibu*; 2013), the author investigates the recent mainstreaming of LGBTQ+ rights in North American and European nations, as well as its consequences. Human rights and LGBTQ+ politics centered on the US have been ingrained as normative standards in society, notably by the mass media, which had previously given LGBTQ+ concerns in Japan scant attention. While ignoring the context of Japanese society and the history of LGBTQ+ activism in Japan, the normalization of LGBTQ+ rights can lead to politically problematic depictions of LGBTQ+ rights as simply the "Americanization of Japanese society."

2.3 Gay Towns, Businesses, and Cruising Grounds

2.3.1 LGBTQ+ Entertainment Venues

Shinjuku Ni-chōme in Tokyo and Dōyamachō in Osaka are known as the two largest gay towns in Japan. In addition, there are a number of smaller ones across the cities, and several towns across the country have a relatively large number of gay bars. The size of gay towns is generally proportional to the city's population. In Japan, gay towns tend to be located in front of major terminal stations or at a certain distance from the city center. There are two main types of bars in question: cross-dressing bars (*josō bā*), where cross-dressing men or transgender or transsexual women mainly serve straight male clients; and gay bars (*gei bā*), where gay people gather without cross-dressing. Although there is no strict definition, gay bars nowadays often refer to the latter and are also called "homo bars" (*homo bā*). The bars themselves are known for their great variety: bars featuring a unique master (*masutā*) or proprietress/manageress (*mama*) who serves customers over the counter, which are the majority; bars that gather by

body type or age, for example, *tai'ikukai-kei* [sports club type] where gays who like sportsmen and machos gather, or *gachimuchi-kei* [chubby type] for those who like chubby body types; bars that gather by hobbies, sports, or music preferences; bars that have their own unique theme; and bars with a wide range of customers including straight men and women, which are often called "tourist bars" (*kankō ba*). Foreigner-specialty (*gaisen*) bars also attract many foreign gay customers and Japanese peers who are attracted to them (*Geibā*, n.d.). In addition, many lesbians gather at a corner in Shinjuku Ni-chōme known as *L-dōri* [L lane] or *L-rōdo* [L road], because of its L-shaped curve, for the entertainment venues there (Shinjuku Ni-chōme, n.d.).

2.3.1.1 *Gay Fūzoku* **and** *Hattenba*

Sex entertainment businesses that cater to homosexual men are called *gei fūzoku*. In some cases, such a business is registered as an adult entertainment business among the sex-related special businesses under the Entertainment Establishments Control Law (*Fūzoku eigyō torishimari hō*). In many cases, however, the bar-style business is registered as a restaurant business offering alcoholic beverages late at night. Because the interactions are between men, the Anti-Prostitution Law (*Baishun kinshi hō*) does not apply ("*Gei-muke fūzoku-ten*," n.d.). *Hattenba*, literally meaning "development site" (and "cruising ground" in English), is a meeting place for gay men. It was named as such in the sense that gay men come together, and their meetings can "develop" (*hatten suru*) into sexual acts. There used to be very few places for gay men to meet in Japan, and although there were at least some gay bars in each major city across the country, they were predominantly cross-dressing bars where cross-dressing men served straight clienteles. Therefore, for gay men who needed a place to meet, *hattenba* were naturally formed (*Hattenba*, n.d.). *Yūryo hattenba* [fee-based development site] refers to a sex entertainment business that provides gay men with a place to meet and have sex for a fee (*Yūryō hattenba*, n.d.).

2.3.1.2 On Shinjuku Ni-chōme

Shinjuku Ni-chōme, the epicenter of Tokyo's LGBTQ+ subculture, is home to one of the world's largest concentrations of gay bars, with over 300 gay pubs and nightclubs crammed into an eight-block area (McNeil, 2010). These bars exist as venues for LGBTQ+ people to spend time apart from their daily lives (Sunagawa, 2009) – more comparable to a gay theme park or Edo Japan's floating world (*ukiyo*), an amusement district that contains brothels and stands apart from the world of daily living and duty (Screech, 1999). Japanese gays and lesbians, including closeted salarymen and university professors, visit the Shinjuku Ni-chōme neighborhood to enjoy its diverse entertainment options, which include cafes, restaurants, saunas, love hotels, massage parlors, and gay book and video stores (McNeil, 2010), before returning to their families.

Despite its transient nature, a sense of community has developed in Shinjuku Ni-chōme. Sunagawa (2015) describes this community formation through his observation of the process of organizing the Rainbow Festival, including the formation of the "Shinjuku Ni-chōme Promotion Association" (*Shinjuku Ni-chōme shinkōkai*) by gay store owners and gay bar masters and *mamas*, and the creation of various networks with this association as the core. He points out that

> the unique characteristic of the Rainbow Festival is, above all, that not a few of the people who gather there are strongly aware of their sexual minority status, such as being gay, and that they build close relationships with each other, making this an important basis of community.
>
> *(p. 58)*

Sunagawa adds that, through festivals, "identity is sensitively confirmed" (p. 67). He highlights that "the function of gay men's bars as spaces where partnerships may be found or where partnerships may be approved may be tied to a sense of community" (p. 323).

Elsewhere, in his study of the connections within the Japanese gay community, Moriyama (2012) sheds light on the divergence among gay men and expounds on the "inability" of some gay men in Japan to follow things that are very Shinjuku N-chōme or gay community–like. At the same time, while Shijuku Ni-chōme is frequently portrayed as a "safe space" for homosexual and bisexual men and women from across metropolitan Tokyo to gather and seek support from an overwhelmingly heteronormative society, Baudinette's (2021) research demonstrates that it may not be as welcoming as previously idealized and depicted in the literature. Rather, Baudinette reveals via fieldwork observation and interviews that Ni-chōme is extremely stratified, favoring "hard" male identities as the sole valid expression of homosexual desire while rejecting any men who allegedly "fall short" of these hegemonic gendered standards.

Shinjuku Ni-chōme does not represent the entire Japanese LGBTQ+ community. Although not true for all regional cities, the regional core city "X" depicted in Kawaguchi's study (2016) can be said to be an area where the resources for living as a sexual minority are not as well developed as in metropolitan areas. Even in this situation, sexual minorities have created various means to cope with difficult situations, as well as places to live as sexual minorities.

2.4 Japanese Attitudes

2.4.1 Toward Sexual and Gender Diversity

In "The Global Sexual Divide on Homosexuality Persists," an updated report of "The Global Divide of Homosexuality" (Pew Research Center, 2013a), released in June 2020, 68% of Japanese respondents answered that homosexuality should be accepted, compared to 54% in both 2002 (the first year of the survey) and

2013. Even though younger people are more likely than older people to believe that society should accept homosexuality, the gap between the two age groups in Japan is second only to that of South Korea (where 92% of 18- to 29-year-olds believe that society should accept homosexuality, compared to 56% of those 50 and older) in terms of magnitude (Pew Research Center, 2020). In addition to generational differences, other sociodemographic characteristics explain the differences in attitudes toward homosexuality.

In "*Nihon ni okeru dōseiai ni taisuru kanyōsei no kakudai*" [Increasing tolerance of homosexuality in Japan], Ishihara (2013) conducted an analysis of the World Values Survey to understand which socioeconomic attributes underlie the growing tolerance of homosexuality in Japan since the 1990s and the values associated with such support. This study confirmed that women's tolerance was always higher than men's. After 1990, tolerance increased among young women in the early 1990s, followed by young men in the late 1990s and middle-aged women in the early 2000s. In contrast, the expansion of tolerance among middle-aged and older men was slight, and it showed a fixed trend in the 2000s. Ishihara (2013) also tested other hypotheses that differences in tolerance by socioeconomic attributes are caused by differences in values across multiple dimensions. Specifically, the gender difference and the age effect are affected by "gender symmetrical consciousness." The generation effect involves "acceptance of the de-standardized family," and the residence, education, and occupation effect is explained to some extent by "tolerance of heterogeneous others" (Ishihara, 2013).

2.4.2 The Stance of Japan's Ruling Party

Japanese politics has been dominated by a single party, LDP, since its inception in 1955, when two similar conservative parties merged: the Liberal Party (*Jiyū tō*) and the Democratic Party (*Minshu tō*) (Jiyūminshu-tō, n.d.). According to a survey conducted on the occasion of the 47th General Election of the House of Representatives in 2014 by Rainbow Pride Ehime, an LGBTQ+ group in Shikoku, the LDP responded as follows:

- What do you think about addressing sexual minorities, such as homosexuals and people with gender identity disorder, as a human rights issue? *No need to address it as a human rights issue.*
- The need for measures to protect the human rights of sexual minorities: *Policies for people with gender identity disorder are necessary, but not for homosexuals.*
- Same-sex marriage: *The system should be for opposite-sex couples, not specifically necessary.*
- Same-sex couples becoming foster parents: *The decision should be made from the perspective of the child's upbringing.* (Rainbow Pride Ehime, 2019)

According to the study, the LDP's responses greatly differ from those of opposition parties, which seem to value human rights while being wary of any potential

pinkwashing. Of note, only a handful of current politicians in Japan are openly LGBTQ+. Although she lost her seat in 2021, Otsuji, the first member of the Diet to come out as a lesbian in 2005, was the only one out of over 700 in national politics. Ishikawa was elected as a gay member of the Toshima Ward Assembly in 2011 and became the first gay member of the Diet in 2019 (Policy Information Center of LGBT, 2022).

2.4.3 At Work

Discrimination against LGBTQ+ people at work remains an important issue. "*LGBT ni kansuru shokuba no ishiki chōsa*" [A survey on workplace attitudes toward LGBT] (2016) was conducted online by the General Federation of Trade Unions of Japan from June 30 to July 4, 2016, to understand the attitudes toward sexual minorities in the workplace among 1,000 workers 20 to 59 years old across the country. Of the sample surveyed, 8% were LGBTQ+ workers, of whom 3.1% identified as LGB, 1.8% as transgender, 2.6% as asexual, and 0.5% as other. Some of the notable findings were as follows: more than 80% responded that discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in the workplace should be eliminated, and more than 80% answered that no one had come out to them, and they had not heard of anyone around them who has come out. More than 20% of participants had experienced, seen, or heard LGBTQ+-related harassment in the workplace. Among those who personally know LGBTQ+ people directly or indirectly, the rate fell to around 60%. About 60% of respondents also said that discrimination and prejudice were the causes of harassment. Managers (those in administrative positions) tend to have a higher level of awareness and acceptance, but also a slightly higher level of resistance (General Federation of Trade Unions of Japan, 2016).

Heterosexism is pervasive in academia, and there is no exception. Sexuality is a legitimate and necessary academic subject, but Japanese academics have been slow to incorporate it. For example, as discussed in Chapter 1, *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation* (1971) is a seminal work on the conceptual foundations of Western gay liberation movements, outlining some of the important differences between tolerance and acceptance; however, this work was not translated into Japanese until 2010. Furthermore, "Lesbian studies in the literal sense of the study of lesbian topics by lesbians has never been seriously considered on the Japanese academic agenda," as Maree (2007, p. 293) notes.

2.4.4 On Same-Sex Marriage

An international online poll conducted in 2013 found that support for same-sex marriage in Japan was significantly low. When asked, "Which of the following best describes your personal opinion on the subject of the rights of homosexual couples?" One-quarter of those polled in Japan agreed that same-sex marriage should be legal for couples. Poland was the only other country to have a lower level of support for same-sex marriage than Japan. About half (51%) of Japanese

and Hungarian respondents support "some kind of legal protection." Japanese respondents were the second fewest in the world, with only 5% reporting that they have a "close friend" or "relative" who is gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender" (Ipsos, 2013).

The findings of these studies reveal the complexity surrounding homosexuality and same-sex marriage in contemporary Japanese society, which stems primarily from the configuration of the family institution. Shintoism and Buddhism, the country's two major religions, have no explicit prohibitions against homosexuality (Kawaguchi & Kazama, 2010). Christianity has never taken hold in Japan, so the religious guilt associated with homosexuality that persists in the West does not exist. No religious groups target the LGBTQ+ community in Japan (Kawaguchi et al., 1997, pp. 109–112). Notably, according to Japanese Government Statistics, there were 1,915,297 Christians and 7,335,572 people who believed in other religions apart from Shintoism and Buddhism in Japan in 2021 (Statistics of Japan, 2021).

2.4.5 The Derogatory Term "Okama" and Others

Despite the allure of LGBTQ+-friendly Japan, the country has a plethora of derogatory terms against members of the LGBTQ+ community, such as "*okama*," "*onabe*," "*homo*," and "*onē*," which are often used by people in various walks of life. According to *Nico Nico Daihyakka* [*Nico Nico Encyclopedia*], a Japanese equivalent of Wikipedia, with fewer restrictions:

> The term "*okama*" refers to homosexual men. The term "*okama*" is used to describe people who are male but female at heart, or who enjoy cross-dressing. . . . The opposite of "*okama*" is "*onabe*" who are female but male at heart, dress as men, and like women.
>
> *(Okama, n.d.)*

Okama is the Japanese equivalent of "faggot." The *Nico Nico Daihyakka* entry adds a note of caution: the word "homo" is often used as a joke, derogatory term, or discriminatory term.

> The term "homosexual" originally referred to both male-to-male and female-to-female homosexual people. However, when it is abbreviated to "homo," at least in Japan, it is used to refer to male-to-male homosexual people.
>
> *(Homo, n.d.)*

Incidentally, "*rezubian*" [lesbian] is defined as follows:

> It can be abbreviated as "*rezu*" or "*bian*," but the nuance varies depending on how it is abbreviated. The word "*rezu*" has a pejorative nuance to it, so

> it is sometimes rude to call a lesbian a *rezu*. In this case, it is more appropriate to call her "*rezubian*" or "*bian*" instead.
>
> *(Rezubian, n.d.)*

During the 1990s, the term "*onē*" was coined to replace the word "*okama*," partly because homosexual men voiced that "*okama*" was a discriminatory term (Fujii et al., 2011). An "*onē tarento*" [TV personality] is a celebrity who speaks with a female gesture and/or tone of voice, even though their body is male, regardless of whether they have had a sex reassignment operation. Not all "*onē tarento*" are homosexual. There are some who use "*onē kotoba*" [*onē* language] for their work on television (Maree, 2013, pp. 21–30).

2.4.5.1 On *Okama*

Of these terms, the most common and problematic is probably "*okama*." The word was originally a slang term in the Edo period, meaning "anus," and was later used to refer to male prostitutes who dressed in women's clothing and sometimes engaged in anal sex. The term was first used as a derogatory term for a non-cross-dressing feminine gay man in 1971, when Togo ran for national office for the first time. The term was first used by Togo in his speeches and campaign publicity programs, such as "I'm Togo Ken, an *okama*" (*Okama no Togo Ken desu*); it was later taken over by twins Osugi and Peeco (a film critic and a fashion critic) who made their debut in 1975 and spread the term to the TV audience with the phrase "We're *okama*s" (*Watashitachi wa okama desu* ; Mitsuhashi, 2010a).

From the late 1980s onward, as the derogatory term spread and gay people, magazines, and organizations began to voice their protests, the media became more cautious about using the term "*okama*." However, with the "*onē* boom," MtF transgender TV personalities who call themselves "*okama*" have been appearing in the media, and it is believed that they have revived the derogatory term "*okama*." In 2001, a controversy arose over the use of the word "*okama*" in an article in the weekly magazine *Shūkan kinyōbi* [*Friday Weekly*] titled "*Densetsu no okama: aiyoku to hangyaku ni moeru*" [Legendary *okama*: Burning with lust and rebellion], in which the aforementioned Togo was discussed.

Some celebrities have commented on the persistence of the term. In the words of Mitsuhashi (2010b), a cross-dresser and researcher on the history of sexual society:

> People are becoming more careful about using various derogatory and discriminatory terms that refer to *buraku* discrimination, discrimination against Korean residents of Japan, discrimination against women, etc., but only "*okama*" is still used without hesitation, and only for sexual minorities. "*Okama*" is the last remaining discriminatory category in Japanese society. It is the last discriminatory category in the media.

Kitamaru, a journalist and translator based in New York who translated the musical *Alter Boyz* for the Japanese production, recalls a "pitiful" experience while visiting Japan:

> When the Japanese version of the play premiered in 2009, the young Japanese male actor who played Mark said to the audience at the after-performance talk, "I really don't like this kind of *okama* role." . . . There were many of his fans in the audience, and the comment was probably passed off with laughter as his usual, normal attitude. At that time in Japan, [. . .] the word "*okama*" was still in common use, and it was not widely recognized as a discriminatory term. "*Okama*" was a second-class creature to be made fun of in that way.
>
> *(2021, pp. 119–120)*

Perhaps what Kitamura experienced is only the tip of the iceberg, and conversely, it may have become the norm.

2.4.6 Homophobias, Coming Out of the Closet, and Invisibility

In Japanese society, two distinct kinds of homo/transphobia exist: quiet (*otonashii*; Kawaguchi et al., 1997) and familial (*uchi*) homo/transphobias (Tamagawa, 2016). Although heteronormative ideology dominates the public domain, homo/transphobic attitudes are seldom publicly stated owing to the Japanese cultural focus on keeping a "good" public stance (*tatemae*) – comparable to Goffman's "working consensus" (Goffman, 1959). By comparison, familial homo/transphobia is directed against one's own family members, as well as those in one's inner circle. The more intimate an inner group becomes, the more profound family homo/transphobia may become (Shulman, 2009), and the less known it may become outside the inner circle. In Japanese, *uchi* is used to denote one's identity – for instance, one's own or that of one's family, school, organization, or country. Simultaneously, *uchi* serves as a forum for the expression of one's own beliefs, personal thoughts, or true reasons, including homo/transphobia. As Shulman (2009) explains what she terms "familial homophobia," the Japanese household is a hotbed of homo/transphobia.

Various quantitative studies have confirmed the effects of familial homo/transphobia. Another study conducted by the author investigated the reasons why Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals felt unable to come out, particularly to their parents, using online survey data from 136 LGBTQ+ individuals in Japan. The data showed that (1) the majority of Japanese people see coming out as a desirable choice; (2) coming out to parents is significantly more difficult than coming out to coworkers or classmates, though experiences at work and school may not always be favorable; (3) coming out to mothers is significantly less pleasant than coming out to fathers; and (4) coming out is significantly more difficult for MtF/X participants than others, with the most painful coming-out being

to their mothers and the easiest one to their schoolmates among all participants (Tamagawa, 2017, 2018).

Some choose to liberate themselves while in the closet. Maekawa's (2017) study examines the formation and acceptance of male homosexual (*dansei dosēiaisha*) identity in postwar Japan from a historical sociological perspective. Through his analysis, Maekawa reveals the process by which Japanese gay men choose to "come out in the closet" (*kurōzetto heno haihō*). In other words, due to societal discrimination and prejudice, Japanese gay men choose to liberate themselves by forming and enriching their own closed media and communities rather than as a part of society. Lesbians in Japan are uncomfortable with the word "*rezubian*" [lesbian]. Horie discusses one of the challenges lesbians in Japan face when coming out in her essay "(Im)possibility of Coming Out of the Closet" (*Kurōzetto kara deru koto no fu/kanōsei*, quoting Kakefuda (1992; in Horie, 2008).

2.4.7 Issues at Schools: Lack of Sexual Diversity Education, Suicide, and Bullying

Imbued with the country's heteronormative norms, Japanese schools are one of the institutions that constantly instill its ideals. LGBTQ+ children face several key challenges in school settings: being divided by gender, feeling unseen, being unable to access the right knowledge, having no one close to them to ask for advice, and having difficulty envisioning how they live their lives (Mitsunari, 2017). The honorific titles (*kun* for boys and *san* for girls), the colors of personal belongings (blue for boys and red for girls), the roster and seating order, the restrooms, and rooms on school trips are all assigned based on gender. It is assumed that every child is comfortable with his or her gender and heterosexuality. The lack of sex education, including gender and sexual diversity, from teachers, staff, and parents, can lead to self-denial. Sexual minority children tend to feel isolated, and their problems become more serious when they feel that they cannot ask for help due to a lack of understanding from those around them, or when they are denied help when they do ask. Due to a lack of role models, it is difficult to envision their future; they cannot imagine what they will look like as adults, or whether they will even be able to become adults (Mitsunari, 2017).

Arguably, the educational situation regarding LGBTQ+ students in Japan has changed in recent years with initiatives by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), including the notice "On the implementation of detailed measures for students with gender identity disorder," issued by the MEXT in 2015. Based on this notice, in 2016, a document titled "Implementation of Detailed Response to Students with Gender Identity Disorder, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (for Teachers and Staff)" was released (Watanabe, 2019). The actual intentions and effects of these initiatives by the central government are debatable, as discrimination and prejudice were still prevalent among the politicians in the late Abe administration (2012–2020). This was epitomized by the 2017 revised educational guidelines. In the previous

guidelines for elementary school, it was stated that "developing interest in the opposite sex" as a change of puberty should be understood as "a phenomenon that occurs in everyone and brings them closer to an adult body." *Chūgakkō gakushū yōryō: hoken tai'iku* [*The Junior High School Courses of Study: Health and Physical Education*] also stated that "interest in the opposite sex may increase." In response, many public comments requested that these statements be eliminated and that sexual minorities be included. However, the MEXT rejected the request, saying that it would be difficult to include LGBTQ+ issues in the curriculum, considering the lack of understanding concerning the issues among parents and the public (Exite News, 2017).

The term "LGBT" appeared in some high school textbooks for the first time in 2017, but if students are taught from elementary school that heterosexuality is normal, it will be difficult to deepen their understanding of sexual diversity. This decision by the Ministry of Education was compounded by the perception of the minister in charge, Matsuno. In response to a request by Nishimura, a member of the Minshin Party, that the revised curriculum guidelines should include LGBTQ+ content, Matsuno said, "Scientific knowledge on LGBT has not yet been established, so it is problematic to cover it in class." In response to this answer, Nishimura said,

> It is said that the risk of suicide is six times higher for children who have problems with their sexual orientation or gender identity than for those who do not. In such a situation, can the fact that scientific knowledge has not really been established be a reason not to mention this in schools?
>
> *(Exite News, 2017)*

The results of a 2013 survey of LGBTQ+ students at school, sponsored by the White Ribbon Campaign, revealed the following: when asked if their school-mates or classmates made offensive LGBT jokes or teased them between elementary and high school, 84% of respondents said that they had seen or heard of this in some way. When asked about their experiences of bullying or violence, 68% of respondents had experienced "physical violence," "verbal violence," "sexual violence," or "being ignored or ostracized." The most common response was "verbal bullying or violence" (53%), followed by "being ignored or ostracized" (49%). Of the students who said they had experienced verbal bullying or violence, 78% reported verbal violence, 48% reported physical violence, and 23% reported sexual violence (White Ribbon Campaign, 2014).

Many gay participants in the author's study (2020) described their traumatic experiences with bullying, which few systematic studies have so far documented, especially in English. LGBTQ+ people, especially gay people, are frequently and persistently singled out, mocked with the hateful terms *okama*, *kimochi warui* [gross], or the name of an *onē* TV talent, then left alone and afraid (Tamagawa, 2020). The Hitotsubashi University Outing Incident in April 2015 is a case in which a gay student at the university's law school took his own life after

confessing his romantic feelings toward a heterosexual schoolmate, who, being troubled by their subsequent mutual friendship and the gay student's behavior after his confession, revealed it to several friends and others in a group (Watanabe, 2016).

2.5 Laws

2.5.1 Lack of Laws Targeting or Protecting LGBTQ+ Individuals or Couples in Japan

When comparing the legal systems of various countries related to sexual minorities, three characteristics of Japanese law become apparent. First, the Japanese Penal Code does not have a provision for the punishment of sodomy, with the exception of the *Keikan-hō* (1872–1880; Tamaki, 2011), which restricted only anal intercourse. Compared to the history of European countries, where human rights have been recognized from the point of view of the state's intervention in private matters, the same starting point does not exist in Japan. The second characteristic is the weakness of the legal system in prohibiting discrimination and protecting human rights. Japan does not have any laws that protect LGBTQ+ individuals and couples at the national level (Tamagawa, 2016), nor is there any comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in the country. The third characteristic is the lack of progress in legislating relationships between people of the same sex. The one major exception to this is the Gender Identity Disorder Act of 2003, the enactment of which I discuss in detail in what follows.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Freedoms has recommended that same-sex couples be covered *de facto* and provisionally in public housing laws and domestic violence prevention laws (2008, 2014; in Taniguchi, 2016). In addition, the Covenant on Civil Liberties has recommended that comprehensive anti-discrimination measures, including SOGI, be incorporated into public housing laws and domestic violence prevention laws (2014; in Taniguchi, 2016). It is important to note that the international community has been working on the human rights of LGBTQ+ individuals. Indeed, as a member of the UN Core Group on LGBTQ+ issues, Japan has taken a leading role in this topic. It voted in favor of the UN Human Rights Council's SOGI human rights resolution that triggered the issue, and it was one of the sponsors of a series of joint statements that supported the resolution. It was also a proposing country in the joint statement. While promoting the SOGI human rights guarantee in the international community, it would be a breach of international trust to continue to act in a manner that differs from the standards established there (Taniguchi, 2016, p. 21).

2.5.2 The Gender Identity Disorder (GID) Act

The Act on Special Cases in Handling Gender Status for Persons with Gender Identity Disorder (GID Act; *Seidōitsusei shōgaisha no seibetsu no toriatsukai no tokurei*

ni kansuru hōritsu), which was enacted on July 10, 2003, became effective one year later. The GID Act allows transgender individuals to change their gender in their legal documents. Article 2 of the Act defines a person with gender identity disorder as:

> A person who has a persistent conviction that his/her gender is the same as that of the other gender (hereinafter referred to as the "other gender") and has the intention to physically and socially adapt him/herself to the other gender, and whose diagnosis is consistent with that of two or more physicians who have the knowledge and experience necessary to make an accurate diagnosis based on generally accepted medical knowledge.
>
> *(e-gov, n.d.)*

Article 3 defines the conditions that must be met. The person must be 20 years of age or older, not currently married, not currently have a minor child, have no gonads or permanently lack the function of the gonads, and have a bodily appearance similar to that of the genitals of the body pertaining to the other sex (e-gov, n.d.). Significantly, the third condition was altered from "have a child" to "have a minor child" in 2008.

The cost involved in transitioning poses a major problem for transgender people. While it is possible to change the gender of one's family register if the requirements stipulated by law are met, the hormone therapy and gender reassignment surgery required for this purpose are not covered by health insurance (gid.jp, 2018). At the same time, the importance of recognizing the diversity among transgender people, including those who do not wish to undergo surgical procedures, has become more visible. Harima and Sōma's (2004) study, for example, included the narratives of those who did not undergo surgical procedures or hormonal treatments. As Moriyama (2017) argues, it would be desirable to de-pathologize gender identity disorder by separating gender identity from body mismatch and the pain associated with it and to move toward the idea that transgenderism in the broad sense is one of the diverse ways of being sexual, like homosexuality or bisexuality, rather than a disease.

2.5.3 Strategies for Legalizing Same-Sex Relationships

In Japan, homosexual couples have the option of using the traditional (*futsū*) system of adoption (adopting an adult) as an "alternative" (Sunagawa, 2009) or to "bypass" (Maree, 2004) the current legal framework, which does not allow same-sex marriage. This system has been used by Japanese homosexual couples, primarily gay couples, to legally establish their relationships and protect themselves (Maree, 2004). They frequently view it as their only option. In doing so, they are entitled to receive and enjoy certain privileges as a family (Maree, 2004), such as the use of the same family name, mutual assistance responsibilities, and inheritance rights (Watanabe, 2006). According to a family law scholar, it is a

feasible practical means for same-sex couples to expand their families (Tamaki, 2011, p. 262).

The announcement that Japan would issue a marriage eligibility form (*Kekkon yōken gubi shōmeisho*) to individuals wishing to marry foreign partners of the same sex in nations where same-sex marriage was legal stunned the LGBTQ+ communities in Japan and abroad in 2009 (Kyodo News, 2009). However, there are currently no laws protecting the rights of same-sex couples in Japan. Despite the fact that same-sex couples have been living together as married couples for a long time, their relationships are not officially recognized as common-law marriages (*jijitsukon*), which are still only permitted for heterosexual unions (Sunagawa, 2009).

2.5.4 Japan's Constitution, Civil Code, and Sexual Equality

Article 24 of the 1947 Constitution and Book IV of the Civil Code include the Japanese laws governing marriage (amended in 1947). Marriage is defined as follows in Article 24: "Marriage shall be based only on the mutual consent of both sexes and it shall be maintained through co-operation with the equal rights of husband and wife as a basis." Although some Japanese law scholars argue differently, the majority of family attorneys in Japan believe that "both sexes" refers to "a man and a woman"; thus, marriage in Japan is restricted to opposite-sex couples (Tamaki, 2011). However, the language of the Civil Code is ambiguous in its portrayal of marriage as occurring exclusively between a man and a woman (Tamaki, 2011; Tanamura, 2007; Watanabe, 2006), despite the fact that gender-specific terms such as "husband-wife couple" (*fūfu*), "husband" (*otto*), and "wife" (*tsuma*) are frequently used to justify the exclusion of homosexual couples (Hoshino, 1994, 1997). As will be described in more detail later, the Civil Code regulates the family registry system, which is the source of the discriminatory marriage system. To marry legally in Japan, an entry in the family registry system is necessary (Tamaki, 2011). Incidentally, same-sex marriage is not legally recognized but not prohibited Tamaki, 2011); unlike the US and Australia, Japan has not sought to alter its laws to restrict marriage to heterosexual couples.

2.6 Sexual and Gender Diversity in Japanese Culture

Japan's mainstream media is notoriously "*hentai*," a common umbrella term for those with "abnormal" sexuality (McLelland, 2006b), or "queer" (Miller, 2000). *Onē tarento* (MtF transgender, often transsexual TV personalities) are regularly used as entertainment pawns on variety programs, whereas more realistic and varied LGBTQ+ identities are glaringly missing (McLelland, 2000). Speaking of *onē tarento*, Maree (2020) explains that the *onē* persona or "queerqueen" is sometimes a "cross-dressing cross-speaking" media figure who uses his "original masculinity" to play a queen persona through his fashion and words. They employ "queen-talk" (*onē-kotoba*), defined by its reliance on exaggerated intonation,

pitch, and stress, as well as "scathing wit" achieved through the appropriation of hyper-feminine speech, indexing gentleness, and elegance juxtaposed with crude, sexual, and vulgar language.

Cross-gender performance is the foundation of many Japanese cultural traditions, such as kabuki for elderly men and the Takarazuka Revue for prepubescent girls. The former has roots that go all the way back to the early 17th century, making it one of the nation's traditional theaters. Male impersonators (*onnagata*) portray female characters using highly stylized movements and extensive makeup in this all-male production (Robertson, 1998). The latter, in contrast, is a 1910s-era Western-style musical with an all-female cast. All roles are played by women, and the male role (*otokoyaku*) depicts the idealized perfect man through the body of a woman who is especially devoid of negative masculine traits like roughness and autocratic tendencies (Robertson, 1998). Additionally, during the 1990s gay boom, a rich history of *nanshoku* (male color), a premodern Japanese cultural practice of male–male sexual relationships, was rediscovered (Moriyama, 2012). *Nanshoku* is a term that refers to an intimate relationship between a younger adolescent boy and a more mature adult man. This is comparable to ancient Greece's pederasty (Leupp, 1995).

Japan also boasts several LGBTQ+-inclusive subcultures, most notably manga and sometimes anime and literature. It is commonly known that Japanese manga and anime often include "homosexual and pseudo-gay themes" (Drazen, 2002, pp. 78–103). Since the 1970s, *yaoi* [*Boys Love* or *BL*] comics have become popular among young schoolgirls, particularly the so-called *fujoshi* [the rotten girls]. *Yaoi* has developed into a significant subgenre of manga (Zangellini, 2009). Less popular than the former, *yuri* [*Girls Love*] comics focus on personal relationships between young women (Nagaike, 2010).

2.7 Social Issues in Contemporary Japanese Society

2.7.1 Supplemental Labor Classes

A number of social issues are deeply related to the well-being of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community. In addition to permanent regular workers, which the great majority of Japanese companies fill solely with new graduates, typically after high school or college, Japan's economy is currently run by several different classes of supplemental temporary workers. First, a great number of Japanese companies began hiring increasingly dispatched employees (*haken shain*) through temporary employment agencies (*jinzai haken kaisha*) after the oil crises of the 1970s (Smith, 2017).

Since the collapse of the bubble economy in 1991, a significant proportion of new Japanese graduates have never been able to secure permanent regular work, which most of them expect – particularly men, due partly to the myth of salaryman masculinity. According to this myth, to become a fully-fledged member of Japanese society, Japanese men are expected to secure a permanent

regular position immediately after completing their education, get married, have children, and take care of the family (Dasgupta, 2005). As Japan entered its post-bubble years, unemployment increased, and many long-term workers lost job security and perks, with the young discovering that many doors of opportunity had been irrevocably closed to them (Rahman, 2006). Yet another class of supplemental labor is the "freeters" – individuals whose only source of income is a series of part-time and seasonal occupations. Rather than making a deliberate decision to adopt the lifestyle of a freeter, many people who had lost their lifelong jobs and possessions were forced to become freeters during the economic meltdown (Yoshitaka, 2005). Due to the stigma attached to not being a regular worker, a great number of irregular workers and those who are unemployed, particularly men, may not be able to carry on their social lives fully. *Hikikomori*, meaning "social withdrawal," are individuals who spend significant periods of their lives in isolation. *Hikikomori* seldom leave their rooms, not even for work, school, or social activities. As a result, they devote all of their time to hobbies, such as listening to music, watching television and movies, and browsing the Internet (Kato et al., 2019).

Additionally, the country's Foreigner Technical Internship Program (*Gaikokujin ginō jisshūsei seido*) adds another class of supplemental laborers: temporary workers from overseas. The system was created in 1993 as a response to the country's labor (particularly unskilled labor) shortages. These workers are typically interns from underdeveloped countries in Asia with prepaid liabilities. As such, they work for a Japanese company to learn and acquire skills; however, their technical internships are in name only in most cases. Numerous cases of abuse of the system have been reported (e.g., no training, no payment or underpayment of wages, and verbal or physical abuses, including sexual abuse and assault). As a result, this system has been accused of operating as a kind of contemporary slavery (Kamata, 2008). For non-Japanese citizens, other trajectories exist to enter and work in Japan (e.g., as an English teacher at one of the large number of English-language schools across the country). The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (*Gaikokugo seinen shōchi jigyō*), commonly known as the JET Programme (*Jetto Puroguramu*), for example, is a Japanese government initiative that invites college or university graduates to Japan to work as assistant language teachers and sports education advisors in Japanese schools, or as international relations coordinators in local governments and boards of education (JET Programme, n.d.).

2.7.2 Minority Groups

Japan's central government has long denied discrimination against its minority groups, claiming that the country is racially and ethnically homogenous. According to the Japanese Statistics Bureau (*Tōkeikyoku*), around 98% of Japan's population was identified as "Japanese" in 2018 (Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2018). On the contrary, several racial and ethnic groups in Japan have been

widely recognized and discriminated against. Koreans, Chinese, Brazilians (many of whom are *Nikkeijin*, or Brazilians with Japanese ancestry), Filipinos, Taiwanese, Ainu indigenous to the country's Northeast and Hokkaido, and Ryukyuans indigenous to Okinawa and other islands between Kyushu and Taiwan are the nine largest minority groups in Japan. Additionally, the Burakumin, literally "people of a community," are an outcast group at the bottom of Japan's feudal system (Lie, 2004; Weiner, 2008). According to the Statistics Bureau of Japan (Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2022, January 14), looking at the respective population changes of Japanese and foreigners, the number of Japanese people decreased by 1,783,000 (−1.4%) compared to 2015, while the number of foreigners increased by 835,000 (43.6%). While the number of Japanese has continued to decrease since 2010, and the rate of decrease continues to grow, the number of foreigners continues to increase. Overall, the share of foreigners in the total population has increased from 1.5% in 2015 to 2.2%, and the growth rate of foreigners (43.6%) from 2015 to 2020 is especially high compared to recent years.

The Burakumin reside in, or are originally from, a discriminated community (*hisabetsu buraku*). There are two types among them: the Eta ["many impurities"] and the Hinin ["non-human"], depending on their original designation during the Edo period, such as occupations that were considered unrespectable, for example, in line with Buddhist doctrine. Despite the passage of centuries, they have been and are still discriminated against in contemporary Japanese society due to the family registry (*koseki*), which lists the permanent address of every Japanese citizen, and blacklists, which circulate behind the scenes and are widely used to identify one's geniture. Although the Burakumin are considered "invisible," they experience discrimination in various facets of their lives, including education, employment, and marriage (Neary, 2008).

The majority of Koreans in Japan are *Zainichi* Koreans, often referred to as *Zainichi* (Japan residents) – the country's permanent ethnic Korean residents. Many Korean residents of Japan, known as Zainichi Koreans, hesitated to naturalize and become Japanese citizens due to anti-Korean prejudice in the country. In accordance with the law that went into effect in Japan in November 1991, Zainichi Koreans were granted the status of Special Permanent Resident (Yajima, 2020). Thus, the term "Zainichi Korean" only refers to long-term residents of Korea in Japan who can trace their ancestry to Korea under Japanese rule, setting them apart from the later wave of Korean migrants who arrived mainly in the 1980s and from premodern immigrants dating all the way back to antiquity, who may have been the ancestors of the Japanese people. They are distinct from the South Koreans who immigrated to Japan following the end of World War II and the division of Korea. As a result of many Koreans assimilating into the Japanese population, they are now the second-largest ethnic minority group in Japan, after Chinese immigrants (Weiner & Chapman, 2008).

The Ministry of Labor of Japan began issuing visas to ethnic Japanese from South America to come to Japan and work in its factories in the 1980s, when the developing economy of Japan was experiencing a labor shortage in its three "K" occupations (*kitsui* [difficult], *kitanai* [dirty], and *kiken* [dangerous]). They are called *Nikkeijin*, or people of Japanese descent. About 300,000 people – the largest portion – came from Brazil, with a sizable contingent from Peru and other Latin American countries (Tsuda, 2008). According to the Ministry of Justice figures, 192,655 technical interns were present in Japan at the end of 2015, a small increase over the previous year. China was the largest supplier of interns in 2017, accounting for about half of the total, followed by Vietnam at approximately 30% and the Philippines at about 10% (Ministry of Justice of Japan, 2017). In December 2019, 328,360 foreign employees were enrolled as technical trainees. According to one 2018 news story, nearly 1 in every 10 young residents of Tokyo is a foreign national (*Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 2018).

2.7.3 Mental Health

In Japan, the prevalence of mental disorders is quite low. For example, a recent study reported that 7.9% (296) of 3,753 participants suffered from mental disorders based on the percentage of participants who scored at least 10 on the Patient Health Questionnaire–9 (PHQ-9; Hoshino et al., 2018). The prevalence of mental disorders in Japan is significantly lower than 24.6%, an estimate based on a meta-analysis of 44 primary studies from January 1, 2000, to May 9, 2018, with a total of 9,242 participants around the world (Levis et al., 2020). A possible explanation for Japan's low frequency is the stigma associated with mental health in Japanese society. Japanese culture has conditioned its citizens to think that mental illness is embarrassing and indicates a lack of effort (Kasahara-Kiritani et al., 2018). As a consequence of Japan's widespread stigma, individuals suffering from mental illness often do not seek treatment. This indicates that the mental disorder prevalence rate in Japan is likely to be higher in reality owing to the underreporting of mental illnesses. Additionally, certain Japanese cultural values, such as *gaman* [perseverance] and *ganbaru* [doing one's best], impose additional strain on those suffering from mental health issues (Jones, 2015).

Incidentally, Japan offers mandatory national healthcare to Japanese citizens who do not have health insurance through employment, as well as non–Japanese residents if they are staying in the country for more than three months (Chigasaki City, 2019; Health Insurance Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan, 2019). It is a comprehensive system with some problems in common with many national healthcare systems around the world, such as long wait times. Additionally, the system requires a high level of Japanese language proficiency most of the time, especially when outside the major cities, as some of the participants in the present study testified.

2.8 Japanese Women and (Hetero)sexism

2.8.1 The Traditional Japanese Family, Koseki, and Heteronormativity

The Meiji Constitution (1890) established the Confucian-based traditional Japanese family as the fundamental institution of Japanese society, imposing specific familial obligations on its members based on their gender and seniority (Sano & Yasumoto, 2014). Japan's traditional family has survived despite the dissolution of the previous system following the adoption of the new constitution in 1947, largely because of the "*koseki*" national family registry (Horie, 2010). All Japanese families are required to register their members in accordance with the traditional family structure, per the country's family registry, which has hardly changed since it was established. Each family record is hierarchical in structure, which marginalizes LGBTQ+ people and oppresses women (Tamagawa, 2016). Additionally, it mandates that every member of the family take on the same family name (White, 2014), maintaining the patriarchal and heteronormative nature of the family as the fundamental institution of Japanese society (Tamagawa, 2016).

Sociologists claim that modern Japanese society lacks some characteristics associated with the "second demographic shift," such as cohabitation, extensive use of childcare facilities, unmarried women giving birth, and non-marriage (Rindfuss et al., 2004, p. 838). Needless to say, it is a result of continuous maintenance of the "traditional" family through ideological as well as materialistic means. For instance, on November 18, 2015, a "meeting for exchanging opinions" (*iken kōkan kai*) was held to discuss the "100 million people active society" (*Ichioku sōkatsuyaku shakai*), a plan proposed by the late Abe administration (The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan, 2015). At the meeting, Kato, a professor at Meiji University, asserted that the "traditional view of the family" (*dentōteki kazokukan*) was the norm that would save Japanese society. The content of his "traditional view of the family" is as follows: (1) it is not a desirable way of life to be single all one's life; (2) femininity and masculinity are necessary to some extent in any society; (3) it is natural to sacrifice half of one's own personality and way of life for the sake of the family after marriage; (4) after marriage, the husband should work outside the home and the wife should take care of the home; (5) after marriage, one should have children; and (6) once married, a couple should not break up over a personality disagreement. To realize the "100 million people active society" and the desired birth rate of 1.8, it was deemed essential to thoroughly propagate this "traditional view of the family" to the Japanese people (Yamaguchi, 2015).

2.8.2 Women's Work

Since the second half of the 1980s, many Japanese women have advanced to entering the workforce thanks to the Equal Employment Opportunity Law

(*Danjo koyō kikai kintō-hō*) of 1985. In fact, according to the World Bank, women made up 43.6% of the workforce in Japan in 2018 (World Bank, 2022). However, according to the *Economist* (2014), women hold 77% of part-time or temporary jobs in Japan, and there is a sizable wage gap between men and women there. Japanese women typically earn 40% less than Japanese men. At the same time, women hold less than a tenth of managerial positions (Soble, 2015). The OL ("office lady"), a pink-collar worker tasked with serving tea and carrying out secretarial or administrative tasks, is a common profession for young women (Ogasawara, 1998). Japanese women are frequently expected to quit their jobs and stay home after marriage. They resume part-time employment as middle-aged women to avoid interfering with their responsibilities to their families (Ueno, 1994). This sexist cultural system is reinforced through the country's tax laws, particularly the "spousal exemption." Based on the spouse's annual income alone, the spouse is eligible for a spousal deduction of up to 1,030,000 yen, and if the income exceeds 1,030,000 yen, the deduction switches to a special spousal deduction, thus discouraging women to make more than that limit. If the income exceeds 2,010,000 yen, the deduction is no longer available (National Tax Agency of Japan, 2021).

2.8.3 Female Sexuality

Japanese women's sexuality has not been sanctioned because they are culturally assigned the role of mothers (Chalmers, 2002). Japanese married couples tend to have fewer sexual encounters than their Caucasian counterparts (Cain et al., 2003). Notably, many Japanese women see sexual activity as a means to an end, while its recreational aspect is considered humiliating, if not disgusting, which explains why the inability to achieve orgasm is seldom a cause for worry. Many Japanese women have a negative attitude about sexual relations and perceive them as a burden. The overwhelming majority of Japanese women who experience sexual aversion may stem from these deeply ingrained societal views that demonize sexual intercourse as a sinful act (Ozaki et al., 2015).

2.8.4 Japanese Feminist Criticism of the Traditional Japanese Family

One of the main targets of feminist criticism in Japan has been the Japanese family system, with its enduring patriarchal tradition, as well as the family registry that supports it legally. The family registry and the Japanese institution of marriage are "hotbeds" (*onzonsuru sōchi*; Horie, 2010, p. 50) of gender discrimination in Japan (Shida, 2009). The ability to view someone else's basic information is provided by a number of vulnerabilities, despite the fact that authorization is needed to view individual family registry data (Tsuchiya, 2004). Family registry information is frequently used to discriminate against particular people, especially "illegitimate children," or children born outside of marriage.

Young people from the Buraku minority are stigmatized as unsuitable marriage partners. Due to the lack of entries in the nation's family registry, which is a requirement to legally marry, foreigners, including non-naturalized residents, are practically nonexistent in Japan (Horie, 2010). Additionally, due to the way divorce is recorded in the family registry, the term "one crossed-out" (*batsu-ichi*) is a derogatory term used to describe divorced people (Tsuchiya, 2004). Due to the requirement to register in this way, marriage in Japan is frequently derisively referred to as "entering one's family registry" (*nyūseki*; Sato, 2004). This criticism of the Japanese traditional family is shared by some lesbian feminists in Japan. Many lesbian feminist scholars and activists have emphasized the need to take into account Japan's distinct form of familial identity when discussing the possibility of same-sex marriage (Horie, 2010).

3

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND THE JAPANESE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter demonstrates results of survey questions concerning participants' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, including COVID-19 infection, health and financial impacts, life disruption, perception of a threat, effect of social distancing measures, and family conflict and connection to the LGBTQ+ community. Participants' experiences are further explored through an intersectional analysis, including sociodemographic characteristics, such as gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, and nationality. Likewise, participants' experiences at home and healthcare services, mental health, assessment of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, human rights, as well as the most important problems and possible remedies, will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

3.2 Experience of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The survey asked 12 questions in five groups concerning the participants' general experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first group of questions asked the participants regarding their experiences related to COVID-19 infection, health, and financial impacts of the COVID-19 experience: Have you been infected with COVID-19? (CP1). To what extent are you worried about your health condition during the COVID-19 pandemic? (CP2). To what extent are you worried about your financial situation during the COVID-19 pandemic? (CP3). To what extent is your health condition affected by the COVID-19 pandemic? (CP4). And, to what extent is your financial situation affected by the COVID-19 pandemic? (CP5).

The second group of questions asked about life disruption: How often has your daily routine been disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic? (CP6). And,

if you are infected with COVID-19 and quarantined, are you prepared to live in quarantine for two weeks? (CP7).

The third group of questions asked about participants' perceptions of a threat: How much of a threat is COVID-19 to you/your family/your local community/ racial and ethnic minorities/immigrants/older adults (aged 65+)/members of LGBTQ+ community? (CP8).

The fourth group of questions related to the effect of social distancing measures: As an LGBTQ+ person, to what extent has your life been affected by social distancing measures, including stay-at-home orders, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic – in general (CP9) and in eight different areas of life, such as at home or family-related matters, at work or work-related matters, at school or school-related matters, at healthcare facility or concerning healthcare-related matters, opportunities to meet your partner, opportunities to meet LGBTQ+ friends, opportunities to use LGBTQ+ social services, opportunities to use LGBTQ+ entertainment venues (CP10).

The final group of questions concerned participants' connection to the LGBTQ+ community, as well as their experience at home, during the pandemic: How often have you experienced family conflict related to your sexual orientation or gender identity during the COVID-19 pandemic? (CP11). And, how often have you reduced connection to the LGBTQ+ community during the COVID-19 pandemic? (CP12).

3.2.1 Have You Been Infected With COVID-19? (CP1)

3.2.1.1 Age

As Figure 3.1a demonstrates, there were 9 participants who responded "yes" to this question, 285 "no," 40 "don't know," and 1 "rather not say." While the size of the subsample is a small to considerable extent, the results indicate certain sociodemographic characteristics of those participants who were infected with COVID-19, according to a close statistical analysis. As Figure 3.1b shows, it was revealed that 2 of 8 participants (25%) were older than 65 years of age, which
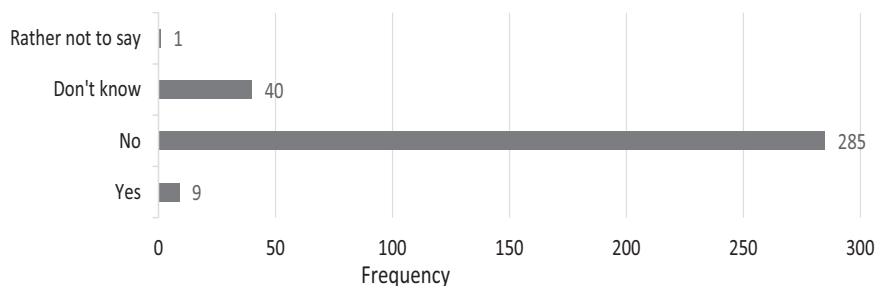
FIGURE 3.1a Have You Been Infected with COVID-19? ($N = 335$)

Have you been infected with COVID-19?

2. How old are you?* [1]

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75≤	Total
Yes	1 (12.5%)	3 (37.5)	2 (25)	.	.	1 (12.5)	1 (12.5)	8 (100)
No	73	93	60	39	14	4	0	283
Total	74 (25.4)	96 (33.0)	62 (21.3)	39 (13.4)	14 (4.8)	5 (1.7)	1 (.3)	291 (100)

3. What is your current relationship status? * [2]

	Single	Same-sex marriage	Opposite-sex marriage	Partnership	Living with a partner	In a relationship but living apart	Others	Total
Yes	1 (11.1%)	1 (11.1)	3 (33.3)	1 (11.1)	2 (22.2)	1 (11.1)	.	9 (100)
No	141	5	10	8	45	55	10	9 (100)
Total	142 (48.6)	6 (2.1)	13 (4.5)	9 (3.1)	47 (16.1)	56 (19.2)	10 (3.4)	283

4. Nationality and place of residence * [3]

	JJ	FJ	JO	FO	Total
Yes	6 (66.7%)	1 (11.1)	2 (22.2)	.	9 (100)
No	225	47	9	2	283
Total	231 (79.1)	48 (16.4)	11 (3.8)	2 (.7)	292 (100)

5. Japanese race/ethnicity identity (Japanese nationals living in Japan) * [4]

	No	Yes	Total
Yes	3 (50%)	3 (50)	6 (100)
No	18	207	
Total	21 (9.1)	210 (90.1)	225

6. Living alone * [5]

	No	Yes	Total
Yes	9 (100%)	.	9 (100)
No	182	101	
Total	191 (64.5)	101 (34.6)	283

7. Living with a spouse or partner * [6]

	No	Yes	Total
Yes	3 (33.3%)	6 (66.7)	9 (100)
No	208	75	
Total	211 (72.2)	81 (27.7)	283

Figures in parentheses show row percentages.
*Significant at 0.05, ** at 0.01, and *** at 0.001 (2-tailed)

Notes:
[1] X^2 (6, N = 291) = 43.083, p = .001
[2] X^2 (8, N = 292) = 17.390, p = .026
[3] X^2 (3, N = 292) = 8.801, p = .032
[4] X^2 (1, N = 231) = 12.474, p = .001
[5] X^2 (1, N = 292) = 4.911, p = .027
[6] X^2 (1, N = 292) = 7.020, p = .008

FIGURE 3.1b Continued

constitutes about 2% of the sample. A chi–square independence test showed that there was a significant association between participants' viral infection and age, X^2(6, N = 291) = 43.083, p = .001.

3.2.1.2 Relationship Status and Living Situation

There were a few more sociodemographic variables that show a statistically sig-nificant association with the viral infection, as Figure 3.1b demonstrates. Besides

participants' age, the relationship between participants' viral infection and relationship status was statistically significant, $X^2(8, N = 292) = 17.390$, $p = .026$. Seven participants were either married to someone of the opposite sex ($F = 3$), living together with a partner ($F = 2$), married to someone of the same sex ($F = 1$), or in a partnership ($F = 1$), while only one of the single participants reported being infected with the virus. It seems that the findings suggest that the less interaction participants had with others, the less likely they were to be infected. In addition, none of the nine participants lived alone. Two-thirds of the 6 infected participants lived with a spouse or partner, but they account merely for a little more than a quarter of the sample. Chi-square tests of independence showed that participants' viral infection and these two variables concerning living situation, living alone or not, and living with a spouse or partner or not were also significant, $X^2(1, N = 292) = 4.911$, $p = .027$ and $X^2(1, N = 292) = 7.020$, $p = .008$.

3.2.1.3 Nationality/Place of Residence and Racial/Ethnic Identity Among Japanese Nationals Living in Japan

Participants' nationality/place of residency and Japanese race/ethnicity identity were found to be associated with COVID-19 infection. Of the participants, 6 were JJ, 1 was FJ, and 2 were JO. In other words, about 2.6% of JJ, 2% of FJ, and 18% of FO participants were infected with the virus. On the other hand, half of the 6 JJ participants identified themselves as Japanese race/ethnicity, while the other half did not, which translates to 1.4% of JJ participants who identified as Japanese race/ethnicity and 10 times higher (14.2%) among JJ participants who did not identify as Japanese race/ethnicity. Chi-square tests of independence showed that COVID-19 infection and these variables were significant, $X^2(3, N = 292) = 8.801$, $p = .032$ and $X^2(1, N = 231) = 12.474$, $p = .001$. Needless to say, neither participants' nationality/place of residency nor their non–Japanese race/ethnicity identity was a direct cause of COVID-19 infection. Implications of these findings will be discussed later.

3.2.2 To What Extent Are You Worried About Your Health Condition During the COVID-19 Pandemic? (CP2)

3.2.2.1 Educational Level

Figure 3.2 shows that of 332 participants, 201 (62.4%) responded that they were worried about their health condition to a "large extent" (5%), a "considerable extent" (18.6%), or a "moderate extent" (35.7%). At the same time, participants who responded "not at all" to this question account for less than 10% of the sample. Since the great majority of participants seemed to be very much concerned and equally worried about their health condition, there was only one sociodemographic variable that shows a significant relationship with the extent
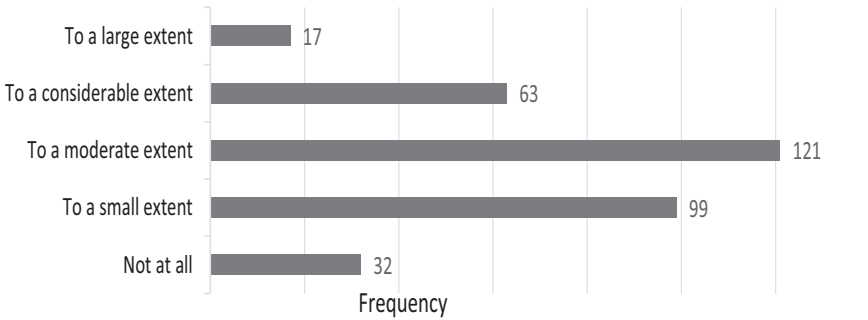
FIGURE 3.2   To What Extent Are You Worried about Your Health Condition During the COVID–19 Pandemic? (*N* = 332)

of participants worrying about health condition. The results of a Spearman's rank-order correlation indicated that there was significant positive association between the extent of their worrying about health condition and level of education, $r_s(314) = .151$, $p = .007$. The more educated participants are, the more they are concerned about their health status during the pandemic.

3.2.3 To What Extent Are You Worried About Your Financial Situation During the COVID-19 Pandemic? (CP3)

Participants were asked how concerned they were about their financial situation. Figure 3.3 demonstrates that 176 out of 333 participants (52.9%) responded that they were worried about their financial situation to a "large extent" (7.5%), "considerable extent" (15.9%), or "moderate extent" (29.4%). Although results indicate that participants on average seemed to worry less about their financial situation than their health condition, there were some noteworthy trends. Participants' responses were widespread: 78 (23.4%) were worried about their financial situation to "a large extent" (7.5%) or "considerable extent" (15.9%), while 71 participants (21.3%) were not worried about their financial situation at all.

3.2.3.1 Supplemental Labor Experience and Occupational Status

Two work–related variables, namely, experience of supplemental labor and current occupational status, were associated with participants' worrying about their financial situation. Sixty-five participants with no experience of supplemental labor (25.9%) responded that they did not worry about their financial situation at all, while 6 participants with supplemental labor experience (7.3%) responded the same. At the same time, 28 participants with supplemental labor experience (34.1%) responded they were worried about their financial situation to a "large" or "considerable extent," while 40 participants with no experience of supplemental labor (15.9%) responded the same. A chi–square of independence test indicated that
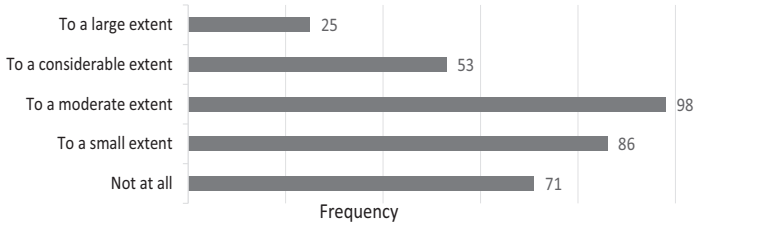
	Supplemental labor experience **[1]		Total
	No	Yes	
To a large extent	16 (6.4%)	9 (11.0)	25 (7.5)
To a considerable extent	34 (13.5)	19 (23.2)	53 (15.9)
To a moderate extent	71 (28.2)	27 (32.9)	98 (29.4)
To a small extent	65 (25.9)	21 (25.6)	86 (25.8)
Not at all	65 (25.9)	6 (7.3)	71 (21.3)
Total	251 (100)	82 (100)	333 (100)

To what extent are you worried about your financial situation during the COVID-19

Note:
[1] $**X^2$ (4, $N = 333$) = 15.801, $p = .003$

FIGURE 3.3 To What Extent Are You Worried About your Financial Situation During the COVID-19 Pandemic? ($N = 333$)

the relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(4, N = 333) = 15.801$, $p = .003$. The extent of worrying about their financial situation considerably varied across different occupational statuses, $X^2(36, N = 318) = 87.336, p = .001$. Out of 148, 23 participants employed full-time for wages (15.5%) responded that they were worried about their financial situation to a "large" or "considerable extent," with 10 out of 37 participants employed part-time (27.0%), 14 out of 31 participants self-employed (45.2%), 7 out of 12 participants unemployed (58.3), and 6 out of 8 participants unable to work (75%) responded the same.

3.2.4 To What Extent Is Your Health Condition Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic? (CP4)

This question asked to what extent the participants' health status was affected by the pandemic. As Figure 3.4 illustrates, more than one-third of participants responded that their health condition was not affected at all by the pandemic. Combined with those who responded "to a small extent," it seems that the health of about three-quarters of participants ($F = 250$) were not significantly affected by the pandemic, which was greatly more than the proportion of participants who were worried about their health condition during the pandemic "to a small extent" or "not at all." Likewise, participants whose health condition was affected by the pandemic to a "considerable" or "large extent" ($F = 25$) account for noticeably fewer than those who were worried about their health condition ($F = 80$).
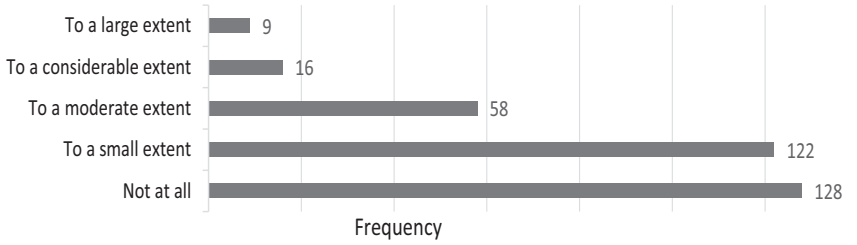
Statistically Significant Results:

Level of education: $r_s(318) + .160$, p = 004
Occupational status: $X^2(36, N = 318) = 71.876, p = .001$

FIGURE 3.4 To What Extent Is Your Health Condition Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic? ($N = 333$)

3.2.4.1 Educational Level and Employment Status

A number of statistical tests were run to determine whose health condition was more affected by the pandemic than others. A Spearman's rank-order correlation was run to determine the relationship between the effect of the pandemic on participants' health conditions and education level. There was a positive correlation between these scores, which was significant, $r_s(315) + .160$, $p = .004$. The higher the level of education, the more participants responded that their health was indeed affected by the pandemic. A further examination of the results revealed that participants who answered "not at all" account for almost half (46.3%) for those with less than a bachelor's degree, while about one-third of those with a bachelor's degree or higher answered the same. In order to investigate the relationship between the effect of the pandemic on participants' health condition and employment status, a chi-square of independence test was performed. The relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(36, N = 318) = 71.876$, $p = .001$. Participants whose health condition was more affected by the pandemic than others include those who were unable to work, homemakers, unemployed, and self-employed. Five out of eight participants who were unable to work responded that their health condition was affected to a "considerable" or "large extent." Of the participants, 60% of homemakers, 50% of unemployed, and 35.5% of self-employed responded that their health condition was affected to a "moderate," "considerable," or "large extent," which was much more than the overall figure for the sample (25.5%). In contrast, participants whose health condition was less affected by the pandemic were those who were employed full-time for wages, dispatched employees, those employed part-time, retired workers, and students.

3.2.5 To What Extent Is Your Financial Situation Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic? (CP5)

Participants reported to what extent their financial situation was affected by the pandemic.

As Figure 3.5 demonstrates, more than one-third of participants responded that their financial situation was not affected at all by the pandemic. Combined with those who responded "to a small extent," it seems that the financial situation of about two-thirds of participants ($F = 217$) were not actually affected by the pandemic, which was much more than the proportion of participants who were worried about their financial situation during the pandemic to a "small extent" or "not at all." Likewise, participants whose financial situation was affected by the pandemic "to a considerable or large extent" ($F = 54$) account for noticeably fewer than those who were worried about their health condition ($F = 78$). Additionally, between health conditions and financial situations overall, participants were more concerned about and had larger effects on their financial situation than on health condition.

3.2.5.1 Relationship Status

Being legally married most often provides financial stability. A chi-square independence test was performed to examine the relationship between the effect of the pandemic on participants' financial situation and relationship status. The relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(32, N = 333) = 46.193$,
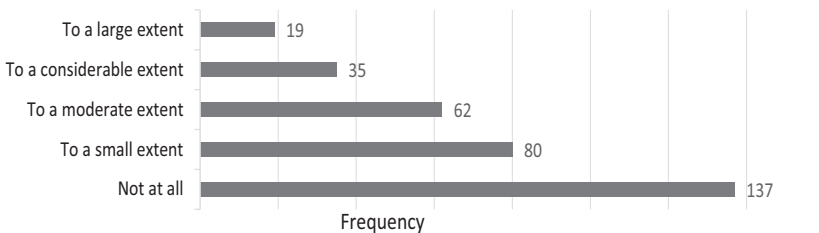
Statistically Significant Results:

Relationship status: X^2 (32, $N = 333$) = 46.193, $p = 050*$
Service sector: X^2 (4, $N = 333$) = 9.298, $p = .054$; $F(1, 331) = 7.164$, $p = .008**$
Supplemental labor experience: X^2 (4, $N = 333$) = 11.596, $p = .021$; F (1, 331) = 13.790, $p = .002**$
Occupational status: X^2 (36, $N = 318$) = 93.774, $p = .001$
Annual Income: $r_s(277) = -.329$, $p = .001***$

FIGURE 3.5   To What Extent Is Your Financial Situation Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic? ($N = 333$)

$p = .050$, yet barely. The results show that, while 17.5% of participants who were not in a legal relationship (i.e., single, living with a partner, or in a relationship but not living together) responded that their financial situation was affected by the pandemic to a "considerable" or "great extent," none in a legal same-sex relationship (same-sex marriage or partnership) responded the same. In fact, all participants in a same-sex marriage responded that their financial situation was not affected by the pandemic at all.

3.2.5.2 Occupational Status and Supplemental Labor Experience

Some work-related variables are relative to the degree of financial stability.

In order to assess the relationship between the effect of the pandemic on participants' financial situation and occupational status, a chi-square independence test was performed. The relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(36, N = 318) = 93.774$, $p = .001$. The results show that participants who were employed part-time, self-employed, unemployed, or unable to work responded that their financial situation was more affected by the pandemic than others including those employed full-time for wages. While more than one-third of participants who were employed part-time, self-employed, unemployed, and unable to work responded that their financial situation was affected by the pandemic to a "considerable" or "great extent," 8.1% of participants who were employed full-time responded the same. More than half of participants who were employed full-time for wages responded that their financial situation was not affected by the pandemic at all; however, among participants who were employed part-time, self-employed, unemployed, and unable to work, less than 1 in 5 participants answered the same.

A chi-square independence test was conducted to compare the effect of supplemental labor experience on the impact of participants' financial situation. There was a significant effect of supplemental labor experience on participants' financial situation, $X^2(4, N = 333) = 11.596$, $p = .021$. About a quarter of participants who had supplemental labor experience responded that their financial situation was affected by the pandemic to a considerable or great extent, while 13.5% of participants who did not have supplemental labor experience responded the same. Additionally, while nearly half of participants who did not have supplemental labor experience responded that their financial situation was not affected by the pandemic at all, about a quarter of participants who had supplemental labor experience responded the same.

In addition, a chi-square independence test was conducted to compare the effect of being a service sector worker on the impact of participants' financial situation. Although statistically not significant, it seems that there was some effect of being in the service industry on participants' financial situation, $X^2(4, N = 333) = 9.298$, $p = .054$. A quarter of participants who worked in the service industry responded that their financial situation was affected by the pandemic to a considerable or great extent, while 14.4% of participants who did not work

in the service industry responded the same. Additionally, while more than two-thirds of participants who did not work in the service industry responded that their financial situation was not affected by the pandemic at all, a quarter of participants who worked in the service industry responded the same.

3.2.5.3 Annual Income

Concerning participants' annual income, a Spearman's rank-order correlation was run to determine the relationship between the effect of the pandemic on participants' financial situation and annual income. There was a negative correlation between these scores, which was significant, $r_s(277) = -.329, p = .001$. The higher the annual income of participants, the less the financial situation of participants was affected by the pandemic. The income of 5,000,000 yen annually seems a critical point in determining the financial situation among participants. A little more than one-fifth of participants who made less than 5,000,000 yen annually responded that their financial situation was affected to a considerable or great extent; only 1 among 72 participants who made 5,000,000 JPY or more annually responded the same.

3.2.6 How Often Has Your Daily Routine Been Disrupted During the COVID-19 Pandemic? (CP6)

The survey asked a question concerning participants' perception of life disruption caused by the pandemic. As Figure 3.6 shows, nearly half of participants
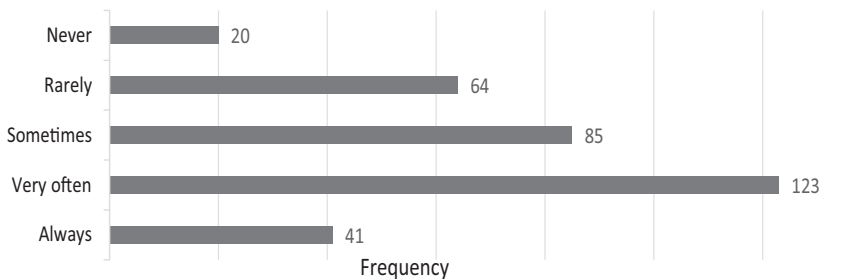
Statistically Significant Results:

Gender (no trans): X^2 (4, $N = 295$) = 11.769, $p = .019$
Nationality/place of residence: X^2 (12, $N = 333$) = 25.102, $p = .014$
Supplemental labor experience: X^2 (4, $N = 333$) = 11.086, $p = .026$

FIGURE 3.6   How Often Has Your Daily Routine Been Disrupted during the COVID-19 Pandemic? ($N = 333$)

responded that their daily routine had been always or very often disrupted during the pandemic, while a quarter of participants responded that their daily routine had been rarely or never disrupted. A close examination of the results revealed that three variables explain the variation: gender, nationality/place of residence, and supplemental labor experience.

3.2.6.1 Gender

A chi–square of independence test was performed to investigate the relationship between the disruption of daily life during the pandemic and participants' gender. Of note, no transgender participants were included in this analysis. The relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(4, N = 295) = 11.769$, $p = .019$. While nearly 60% of female participants responded that their daily routine had been "always" or "very often" disrupted during the pandemic, less than 45% of male participants responded the same. Male participants were more likely than female counterparts to respond that their daily routine was rarely or never disrupted during the pandemic. Overall, female participants were more likely than male counterparts to have their daily routine disrupted due to the pandemic.

3.2.6.2 Nationality/Place of Residence

The nationality/place of residence of the participants was also associated with their perception of the disruption to their lives caused by the pandemic. A chi–square of independence test was performed to assess the relationship between the disruption of daily life during the pandemic and participants' Japanese nationality and place of residence. The relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(12, N = 333) = 25.102$, $p = .014$. Of note, participants overseas, JO and FO, lived in a number of different countries. The actual situations concerning the pandemic greatly varies country to country, and only 3 FJ participants responded to this question. Yet, an interesting pattern was observed when three other groups were compared. While two-thirds of JO participants responded that their daily routine had very often or always been disrupted, less than one-third of FJ and a little more than one-tenth of JJ participants responded the same. At the same time, while almost 30% of JJ participants responded that their daily routine had rarely or never been disrupted, only a little more than one-tenth of FJ and one-sixth of JO participants responded the same. In contrast, two-thirds of FO participants responded that their daily routine had always been disrupted during the pandemic.

3.2.6.3 Supplemental Labor Experience

In addition, to examine the relationship between the disruption of daily life during the pandemic and participants' supplemental labor experience, a chi–square of independence test was performed. The relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(4, N = 333) = 11.086$, $p = .026$. A higher proportion of

participants who have experience of supplemental labor reported that their lives were disrupted than those who do not have supplemental labor experience.

3.2.7 If You Are Infected With COVID-19 and Quarantined, Are You Prepared to Live in Quarantine for Two Weeks? (CP7)

This is another question concerning life disruption, but, unlike the previous one, this question asked about participants' preparedness. Figure 3.7 shows that nearly half of the participants responded that they were not prepared to support themselves financially for two weeks if they were infected with the virus and quarantined. Close to one-third of participants responded that they were prepared, while nearly a quarter of participants responded that they did not know.

3.2.7.1 Age, Educational Level, and Marital Status

The first group of variables found to be associated with participants' preparedness are age, educational level, and marital status. In order to analyze the relationship between participants' preparedness and age, a chi–square of independence test was performed. The relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(6, N = 257) = 12.643$, $p = .049$. Overall, younger participants were less likely than older counterparts to be prepared to financially get by for two weeks if they were infected with the virus and quarantined. This trend was clearly observed among
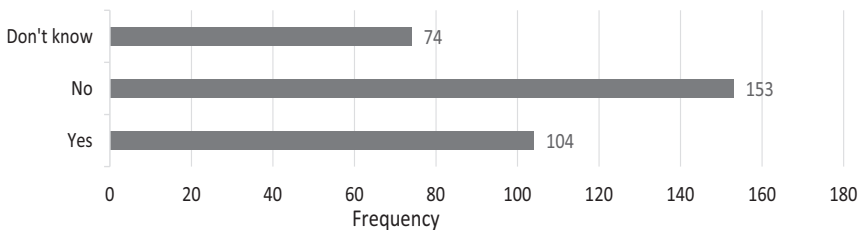
Statistically Significant Results:

Age: $X^2(6, N = 257) = 12.643$, $p = .049$
Relationship status: $X^2(8, N = 257) = 21.643$, $p = .006$
Nationality & place of residence: $X^2(3) = 28.977$, $p = .000$
Level of education: $X^2(10, N = 246) = 19.137$, $p = .039$
In distribution/retailing industry: $X^2(1, N = 257) = 3.935$, $p = .047$
Current occupational status: $X^2(9, N = 244) = 17.205$, $p = .046$
Living with a spouse or partner: $X^2(1, N = 257) = 12.329$, $p = .000$

FIGURE 3.7   If You Are Infected with COVID-19 and quarantined, Are You Prepared to Live in Quarantine for two Weeks? ($N = 331$)

participants between 18 and 54 years old, which accounted for well over 90% of the sample. Almost three-quarters of participants between 18 and 24 years old responded that they were not prepared, while about half of participants between 45 and 55 years old responded the same.

In order to assess the effect of education, a chi-square of independence test was performed to assess the relationship between participants' preparedness and level of education. The relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(9, N = 245) = 17.727$, $p = .038$. The results show that there was a major gap between participants who had a bachelor's degree and those who did not. Close to half of participants who had a bachelor's degree or higher responded that they were prepared, while about a quarter of participants whose highest level of education was an associate degree or lower responded the same.

3.2.7.2 Marital Status and Living With a Spouse or Partner

Legal relationship status helps improve participants' preparedness. In order to examine the relationship between participants' preparedness and marital status, a chi-square of independence test was performed. The relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(8, N = 257) = 21.643$, $p = .006$. The majority of participants who were in a same-sex marriage (66.7%), opposite-sex marriage (77.8%), or partnership (80%) responded that they were prepared, while the majority of participants who were single (68.2%), living with a partner (55.5%), or in a relationship but not living together (62.2%) were not prepared. Overall, participants who were in a legal relationship were more likely than those who were not to be prepared to get by for two weeks if they were infected with the virus and quarantined.

Likewise, a chi-square of independence test was performed to examine the relationship between participants' preparedness and living with a spouse or partner. The relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(1, N = 257) = 12.329$, $p = .001$. The results show that participants who were living with their spouse or partner were more likely than those who were not living with a spouse or partner to be prepared to support themselves financially for two weeks if they were infected with the virus and quarantined. Close to three-fifths of participants who were living with their spouse or partner responded that they were prepared, while one-third of participants who were not living with their spouse or partner responded the same.

3.2.7.3 Distribution/Retailing Industry and Occupational Status

There are some work-related variables that explain the variation. The results of a chi-square of independence test indicated that the relationship between participants' preparedness and being in the distribution/retailing industry was significant, $X^2(1, N = 257) = 3.935$, $p = .047$. Participants whose current employment was in the distribution/retailing industry were more than twice less likely than those who were not in the same industry. Less than one-fifth of participants who were in the

distribution/retailing industry responded that they were prepared to financially get by for two weeks if they were infected with the virus and quarantined. Another chi-square of independence test also showed that the relationship between participants' preparedness and current occupational status was significant, $X^2(9, N = 244) = 17.205, p = .046$. Participants who were particularly not prepared include those who were unemployed (87.5%), dispatched employees (81.8%), and students (68.9%).

3.2.7.4 Nationality/Place of Residence

Finally, differences among four nationality/place of residence subgroups were assessed. A chi-square of independence test revealed that the relationship between participants' preparedness and nationality and place of residence was significant, $X^2(3, N = 257) = 28.977, p = .001$. One of the notable findings was that JJ participants were less likely than others to be prepared. While less than one-third of JJ participants responded that they were prepared, close to two-thirds of FJ, 90% of JO, and two-thirds of FO participants responded the same. This poses a question: Is there not much of a sense of emergency among JJ participants?

3.2.8 How Much of a Threat Is COVID-19 to You/Your Family/Your Local Community/Racial and Ethnic Minorities/Immigrants/Older Adults (Aged 65+)/Members of LGBTQ+ Community? (CP8)

As Figure 3.8 illustrates, participants tend to consider COVID-19 as less of a threat to the LGBTQ+ community and themselves than to the others, including
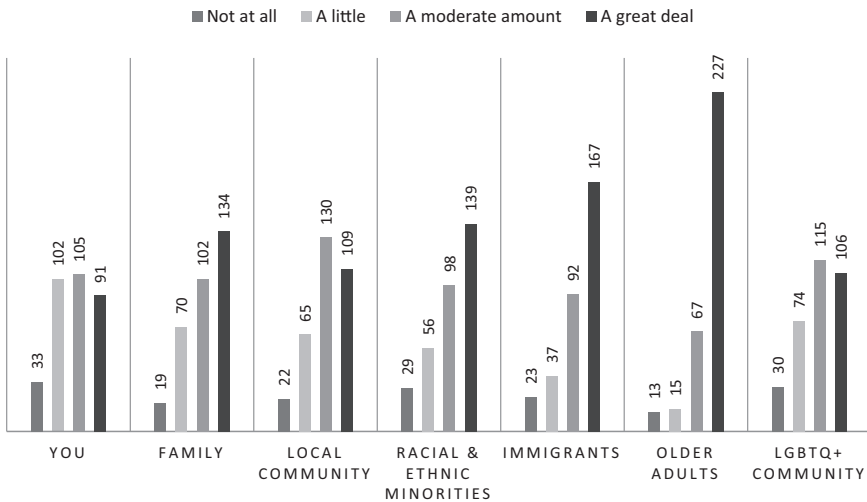
FIGURE 3.8 How Much of a Threat Is COVID-19 to you/Your Family/Your Local Community/Racial and Ethnic Minorities/Immigrants/Older Adults (Aged 65+)/Members of LGBTQ+ Community? ($N = 319–331$)

older adults, immigrants, racial/ethnic minorities, family and local community. For example, 106 participants responded that COVID-19 is a great deal of a threat to the community, whereas to older adults ($F = 227$), immigrants ($F = 167$), racial/ethnic minorities ($F = 139$), family ($F = 134$), and local community ($F = 106$).

3.2.9 As an LGBTQ+ Person, to What Extent Has Your Life Been Affected by Social Distancing Measures, Including Stay-at-Home Orders, Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic? (CP9 and 10)

3.2.9.1 In General

As Figure 3.9 illustrates, in general, about half of participants had not assessed the effect of social distancing measures on their lives in either way, responding "neither can be said" (37.7%) or "don't know" (12.7%). A little more than a quarter of participants responded that their lives had been somewhat adversely affected by social distancing measures, while the rest of participants responded that their lives had been "greatly adversely affected" (8%) or "moderately adversely
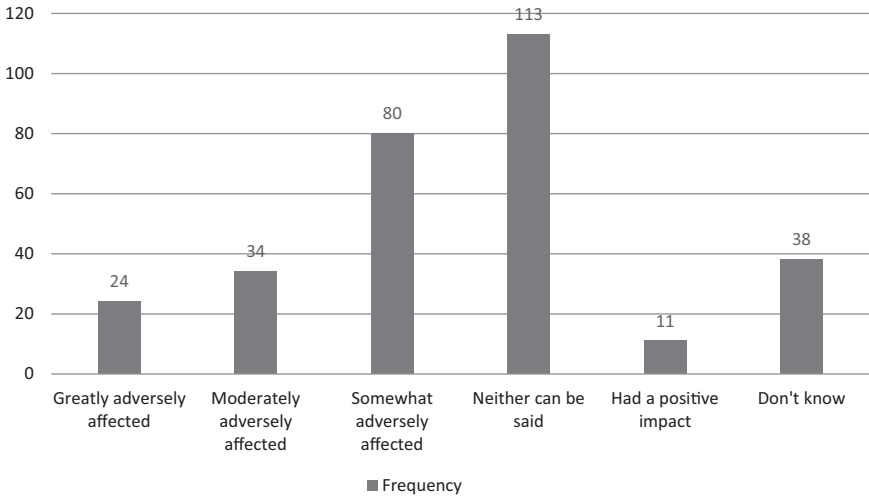
Statistically Significant Results:

Nationality & place of residence: X^2(15, $N = 300$) = 41.326, $p = .000$
In distribution/retailing industry: X^2(5, $N = 300$) = 11.832, $p. 037$
Occupational status: X^2(45, $N = 288$) = 64.811, $p = .028$

FIGURE 3.9   As an LGBTQ+ Person, to What Extent Has Your Life Been Affected by social Distancing Measures, Including Stay-at-Home Orders, Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic – in General? ($N = 300$)

affected" (11.3%). In addition, there was a minority of participants (3.7%) who responded that social distancing measures had a positive impact on their lives. Three variables were found to be associated with participants' perceptions of their lives being affected by social distancing measures in general.

3.2.9.1.1 Nationality/Place of Residence

First, there were some meaningful differences among four nationality/place of residence subgroups. The results of a chi-square of independence test indicated that the relationship between the effect of social distancing measures on participants' lives and nationality/place of residence was significant, X^2(15, N = 300) = 41.326, p = .001. Thirty-eight participants who responded "don't know" to this question were JJ participants. Combined with 90 JJ participants who responded "neither can be said," more than half of JJ participants could not assess the effect of social distancing measures on their lives. All but 1 of the 11 participants who responded "had a positive impact" were also JJ participants. Nearly 70% of FJ participants responded that their lives had been greatly, moderately, or somewhat adversely affected, which was greatly more than JJ counterparts who responded the same, which accounted for about 40%. Responses from JO and FO participants greatly varied, as they were in a number of different countries.

3.2.9.1.2 Working in the Distribution/Retailing Industry and Current Employment Status

Two work-related variables also explain the variation. A chi-square of independence test was performed to examine the relationship between the effect of social distancing measures on participants' lives and working in the distribution/retailing industry. The relationship between these variables was significant, X^2(5, N = 300) = 11.832, p = .037. The subsample of participants who worked in the distribution/retailing sectors was small, so any generalization could be misleading; however, less than one-fifth of participants who worked in the distribution/retailing industry responded "neither can be said" or "don't know," while close to 60% of participants who did not work in the distribution/retailing industry responded the same. Additionally, the results of another chi-square of independence test suggested that the relationship between the effect of social distancing measures on participants' lives and current employment status was significant, X^2(45, N = 288) = 64.811, p = .028.

   The following group of questions asked participants about how their lives were affected by social distancing measures specifically in eight different areas of life. As Figure 3.10a–b illustrates, the most negative impact on participants' lives were in opportunities to use LGBTQ+ entertainment facilities and to meet LGBTQ+ friends. For example, 103 out of 258 (about 40%) participants responded that they were "greatly adversely affected" in opportunities to use LGBTQ+ entertainment venues, while 101 out of 277 (36.4%) participants answered that they
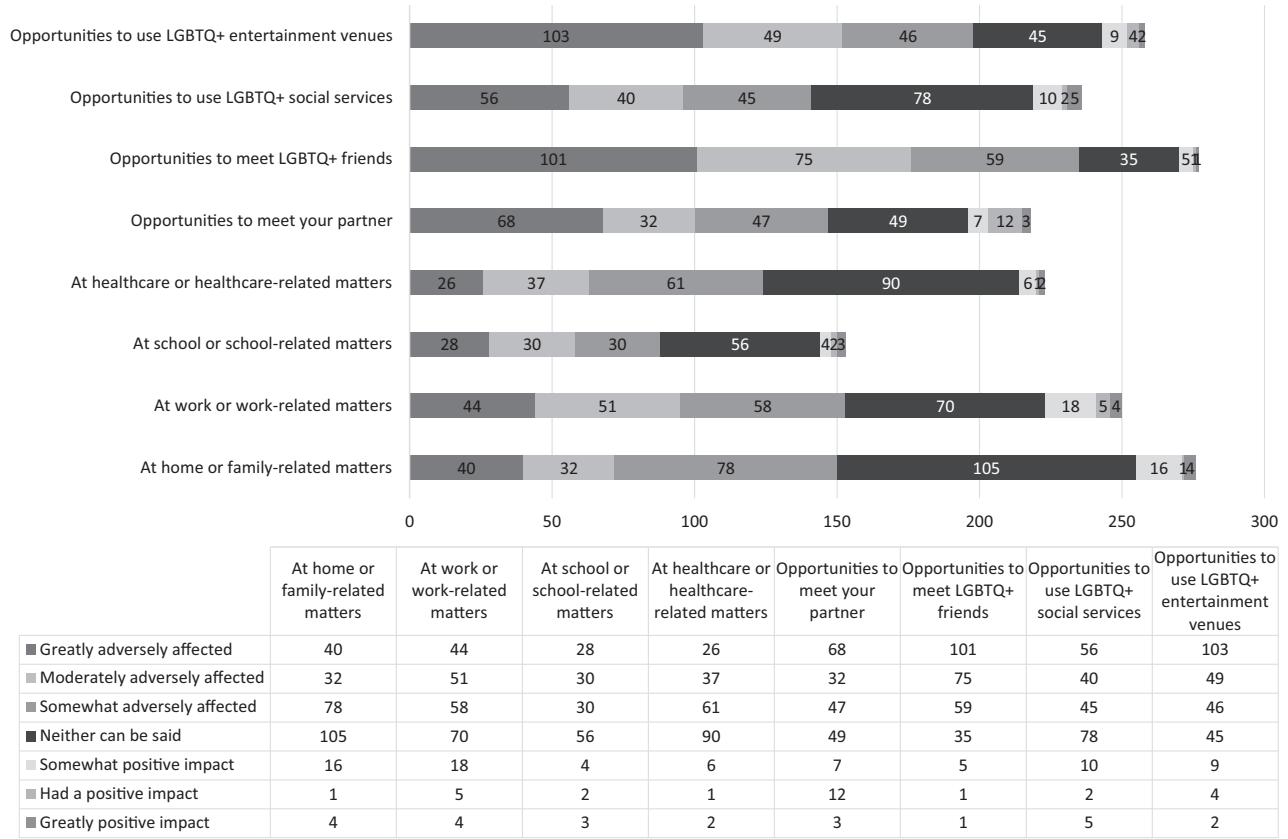
	At home or family-related matters	At work or work-related matters	At school or school-related matters	At healthcare or healthcare-related matters	Opportunities to meet your partner	Opportunities to meet LGBTQ+ friends	Opportunities to use LGBTQ+ social services	Opportunities to use LGBTQ+ entertainment venues
Greatly adversely affected	40	44	28	26	68	101	56	103
Moderately adversely affected	32	51	30	37	32	75	40	49
Somewhat adversely affected	78	58	30	61	47	59	45	46
Neither can be said	105	70	56	90	49	35	78	45
Somewhat positive impact	16	18	4	6	7	5	10	9
Had a positive impact	1	5	2	1	12	1	2	4
Greatly positive impact	4	4	3	2	3	1	5	2

FIGURE 3.10   As an LGBTQ+ Person, to What Extent Has Your Life Been Affected By Social Distancing Measures, Including Stay-at-Home Orders, Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic – Eight Areas of Life?

Ns: At home or family-related matters ($N = 276$); At work or work-related matters ($N = 250$); At school or school-related matters ($N = 153$); At healthcare facility or healthcare-related matters ($N = 223$); Opportunities to meet your partner ($N= 218$); Opportunities to meet LGBTQ+ friends ($N = 277$); Opportunities to use LGBTQ+ social services ($N = 236$); Opportunities to use LGBTQ+ entertainment venues ($N = 258$)

Statistically Significant Results:

At Home or Family-Related Matters"
Age: $r_s(274) = -.162$, $p = .004$; $F(5, 270) = 1.849$, $p = .104$
Gender (no trans): $X^2(6, N = 248) = 14.928$, $p = .021$
Japanese nationals living in Japan – race/ethnicity: $X^2(6, N = 207) = 12.625$, $p = .049$
Current occupation status: $X^2(54, N = 268) = 109.409$, $p = .000$
Living with a (grand)parent(s): $X^2(6, N = 276) = 12.760$, $p = .047$

At Healthcare Services or Healthcare-Related Matters:
Japanese nationals living in Japan – race/ethnicity: $X^2(6, N = 160) = 15.231$, $p = .019$
Occupational status: $X^2(54, N = 216) = 106.875$, $p = .000$

Opportunities to Meet Your Partner:
Relationship status: $X^2(42, N = 218) = 76.513$, $p = .001$
Living alone: $X^2(6, N = 218) = 18.011$, $p = .006$
Living with a spouse or partner: $X^2(6, N = 218) = 39.323$, $p = .000$

Opportunities to Use LGBTQ+ Social Services:
LGBTQ+ (8 groups): $X^2(42, N = 236) = 65.537$, $p = .012$
Nationality/place of residence: $X^2(18, N = 236) = 37.238$, $p = .005$
Level of education: $r_s(225) = -.168$, $p = .011$
Living with a (grand)parent(s): $X^2(6, N = 236) = 14.462$, $p = .025$

Opportunities to Meet LGBTQ+ Friends:
Nationality/place of residence: $X^2(18, N = 277) = 30.016$, $p = .037$
Japanese nationals living in Japan – race: $X^2(6, N = 208) = 13.905$, $p = .031$
Occupational status: $X^2(54, N = 271) = 152.955$, $p = .000$

Entertainment: Opportunities to Use LGBTQ+ Entertainment Venues:
Relationship status: $X^2(48, N = 258) = 108.313$, $p = .000$
Nationality/place of residence: $X^2(18, N = 258) = 43.758$, $p = .001$
In distribution/retailing industry: $X^2(6, N = 258) = 13.472$, $p = .036$
Occupational status: $X^2(54, N = 252) = 77.843$, $p = .019$
Living with a (grand)parent(s): $X^2(6, N = 258) = 12.572$, $p = .050$

FIGURE 3.10   (Continued)

were "greatly adversely affected" in opportunities to meet LGBTQ+ friends. In addition, 68 out of 218 (31.2%) participants responded that they were "greatly adversely affected" in opportunities to meet their partner.

3.2.9.2 At Home or Family-Related Matters

Specifically concerning social distancing measures at home or family-related matters, variation in participants' perceptions of their lives being affected by the social distance caused by the pandemic is explained by age, gender, racial/ethnic identity of the Japanese nationals living in Japan, and occupational status.

3.2.9.2.1 Age

A Spearman's rank-order correlation was run to determine the relationship between the effect of social distancing measures at home or family-related matters and participants' age. There was a negative correlation between these scores, which was significant, $r_s(274) = -.162$, $p = .004$. The results show that older participants were more likely to be adversely affected at home or family-related matters by social distancing measures caused by the pandemic. Nearly 62% of participants between 18 and 44 years old responded that their lives at home or family-related matters had "greatly," "moderately," or "somewhat adversely" been affected by the social distancing measures, while close to 65% of participants 45 years old and older responded the same. At the same time, while 8.6% of participants between 18 and 44 years old responded that social distancing measures had a positive impact ("somewhat positive impact," "had a positive impact," "greatly positive impact") on their lives at home or family-related matters, 3.6% of participants 45 years old and over responded the same.

3.2.9.2.2 Gender

The results of a chi-square of independence test showed that the relationship between the effect of social distancing measures at home or family-related matters and participants' gender was significant, $X^2(6, N = 248) = 14.928$, $p = .021$. Of note, transgender participants were not included in this analysis. The results suggest that male participants were more likely than female counterparts to be adversely affected by social distancing measures at home or in family-related matters. More than 30% of male participants responded that their lives had been "greatly" or "moderately adversely affected" by social distancing measures at home or family-related matters, while about 15% of female counterparts answered the same. In addition, while about 11% of female participants responded that social distancing measures had a "somewhat positive impact" on their lives at home or family-related matters, no female participants responded that it had a "positive impact" or "greatly positive impact." On the other hand, male participants' responses were more diverse, and a few reported "had a positive impact" or "greatly positive impact."

3.2.9.2.3 Racial/Ethnic Identity Among Japanese Nationals Living in Japan

A chi–square of independence test was performed to assess the relationship between the effect of social distancing measures at home or family–related matters and JJ participants' Japanese race/ethnicity identity. The relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(6, N = 207) = 12.625$, $p = .049$. The results indicated that JJ participants who identified as Japanese race/ethnicity were more likely than those who did not to be adversely affected by social distancing measures, at home or family–related matters. The majority of JJ participants who identified as Japanese race/ethnicity responded that their lives had been "greatly," "moderately," or "somewhat adversely affected" by social distancing measures at home or family–related matters, while about 6 percentage points less of JJ participants who did not identity as Japanese race/ethnicity answered the same. In addition, while less than 5% of JJ participants who identified as Japanese race/ethnicity responded that social distancing measures had a positive impact ("somewhat positive impact," "had a positive impact," or "greatly positive impact") on their lives at home or family–related matters, close to 20% of JJ participants who did not identify as Japanese race/ethnicity responded that it had somewhat positive or greatly positive impact.

3.2.9.2.4 Current Occupational Status

A work–related variable also explains the variation. Results of a chi–square of independence test suggested the relationship between the effect of social distancing measures at home or family–related matters and current occupational status was significant, $X^2(54, N = 268) = 109.409$, $p = .001$. The results seem to suggest that participants who were, in order of severity, unemployed, self–employed, and employed fulltime for wages were more likely than others to be adversely affected by social distancing measures caused by the pandemic, at home or family–related matters. More than 60% of participants who were unemployed (60%), self–employed (64.3%), and employed full–time for wages (61.2%) responded that their lives had been "greatly," "moderately," or "somewhat adversely affected" by social distancing measures at home or family–related matters, while about 44% of others responded the same. In addition, while about 7% of participants who were unemployed, self–employed, and employed full–time for wages responded that social distancing measures had a positive impact ("somewhat positive impact," "had a positive impact," or "greatly positive impact") on their lives at home or family–related matters, a little more than 9% of others responded the same. Of note, no unemployed participants responded that they had a positive impact.

3.2.9.2.5 Living With a (Grand)parent(s)

In addition, results of a chi–square independence test indicated that participants who lived with a (grand)parent(s) assessed their lives being affected less adversely

than those who did not, $X^2(6, N = 276) = 12.760, p = .047$. For example, 39 out of 85 participants (45.9%) who lived with a (grand)parent(s) responded that their lives were "greatly adversely affected" (10.6%), "moderately adversely affected" (7.1%), or "somewhat adversely affected" (28.2%), while 111 out of 191 participants (58.1%) who did not live with a (grand)parent(s) answered, "greatly adversely affected" (16.2%), "moderately adversely affected" (13.6%), or "somewhat adversely affected" (28.3%). Yet, the results do not seem to indicate that participants who lived with a (grand)parent(s) evaluated their lives more favorably than those who did not. In fact, a greater proportion of the latter (about 8%) than the former (less than 5%) responded that their lives had a positive impact. Other factors may have an indirect influence. For example, it may be the difference between urban and rural areas, as it is more likely that people in rural areas live with their parents, whereas in cities it is more common for people to live alone. It may be that COVID-19 had little or no impact, especially in rural areas, where there were very few infected people.

3.2.9.3 At Healthcare Services or Healthcare-Related Matters

3.2.9.3.1 Racial/Ethnic Identity Among Japanese Nationals Living in Japan

A chi-square of independence test was performed to examine the relationship between the effect of social distancing measures at healthcare facility or healthcare-related matters and JJ participants' identification as Japanese race/ethnicity. The relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(6, N = 160) = 15.231, p = .019$. Overall, the results show that, among Japanese nationals living in Japan, participants who identified as non-Japanese race/ethnicity were more likely than participants who identified as Japanese race/ethnicity to have their lives adversely affected by the social distancing measures caused by the pandemic. One of the major differences between these two subgroups of Japanese nationals lies in the fact that, while about a quarter of participants who identified as Japanese race/ethnicity chose "greatly adversely affected" or "moderately adversely affected," close to half of participants who identified as non–Japanese race/ethnicity responded the same.

3.2.9.3.2 Occupational Status

Additionally, the results of a chi-square of independence test suggested that the relationship between the effect of social distancing measures at a healthcare facility or healthcare-related matters and participants' occupational status was significant, $X^2(54, N = 216) = 106.875, p = .001$. One standout result is that the experience of those who responded that they were full-time employees was considerably better than the other ones, due possibly to their exclusive access to some medical services.

3.2.9.4 Opportunities to Meet Your Partner

3.2.9.4.1 Relationship Status

A chi–square of independence test was run to assess the relationship between the effect of social distancing measures on opportunities to meet their partner and participants' relationship status. The relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(42, N = 218) = 76.513$, $p = .001$. The majority of participants were adversely affected, yet the results suggest that participants who were in a relationship but not living together or single had a more adverse effect than others. Close to 70% of participants who were in a relationship but not living together responded that their lives had been "greatly" or "moderately adversely affected" and a little less than half of participants who were single reported the same. Furthermore, more than half of participants who were in a relationship but not living together responded that their lives had been greatly adversely affected. The next test particularly examined the effect of living with a spouse or partner.

3.2.9.4.2 Living With a Spouse or Partner

Results of a chi-square of independence test showed the relationship between the effect of social distancing measures on opportunities to meet their partner and living with a spouse or partner to be significant, $X^2(6, N = 218) = 39.323$, $p = .001$. The results show that, concerning opportunities to meet their partner, participants who were living with a spouse or partner were less likely than those who were not to be adversely affected by social distancing measures caused by the pandemic. Almost 80% of participants who were not living with a spouse or partner responded that their lives had "greatly," "moderately," or "somewhat adversely affected" by social distancing measures, while among participants who were living with a spouse or partner it was close to 40%. Furthermore, about a quarter of participants who were living with a spouse or partner responded that their lives had a positive impact, while among participants who were not living with a spouse or partner it was less than 5%. Of note, a number of participants are in an opposite-sex marriage.

3.2.9.4.3 Living Alone

In order to investigate the relationship between the effect of social distancing measures on opportunities to meet their partner and living alone, a chi-square of independence test was performed. The relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(6, N = 218) = 18.011$, $p = .006$. The results show that participants who were living alone were more likely than those who were not to be adversely affected by social distancing measures caused by the pandemic. Of participants who were living alone, 82.4% responded that their lives had been "greatly," "moderately," or "somewhat adversely affected" by social distancing measures, while among participants who were not living alone it was 57.9%. Furthermore,

4 out of 85 participants (4.7%) who were living alone responded that social distancing had a positive impact on their lives, while among participants who were not living alone it was 18 out of 133 participants (13.5%).

3.2.9.5 Opportunities to Meet LGBTQ+ Friends

3.2.9.5.1 Nationality/Place of Residence

Results of a chi-square of independence test suggested the relationship between the effect of social distancing measures on opportunities to meet LGBTQ+ friends and participants' nationality/place of residence to be significant, X^2(18, N = 277) = 30.016, p = .037. The results seem to show that, concerning opportunities to meet LGBTQ+ friends, FJ participants were more likely than others to be adversely affected by social distancing measures caused by the pandemic. More than 90% of FJ participants responded that their lives had been "greatly," "moderately," or "somewhat adversely affected" by social distancing measures, while among JJ counterparts it was more than 5 percentage points less, at 84.1%. In addition, the results seem to indicate that JO and FO participants were more likely than others to be adversely affected by social distancing measures caused by the pandemic. Of note, responses from JO and FO participants typically greatly varied as they were in a number of different countries, despite their small subsample sizes.

3.2.9.5.2 Racial/Ethnic Identity Among Japanese Nationals Living in Japan

A chi-square of independence test was run to assess the relationship between the effect of social distancing measures on participants' opportunities to meet LGBTQ+ friends and Japanese race/ethnic identity among JJ participants. The relationship between these variables was significant, X^2(6, N = 208) = 13.905, p = .031. The results show that, concerning opportunities to meet LGBTQ+ friends, JJ participants with Japanese race/ethnicity identity were more likely than those who identified with non-Japanese race/ethnicity to be adversely affected by social distancing measures caused by the pandemic. Eighty-six percent of JJ participants who identified as Japanese race/ethnicity responded that their lives had been "greatly," "moderately," or "somewhat adversely affected" by social distancing measures, while among JJ with non-Japanese race/ethnicity identity it was less than two-thirds. In addition, 2 out of 22 JJ participants with non-Japanese race/ethnicity identity responded that social distancing measures had a "somewhat positive impact."

3.2.9.5.3 Current Occupational Status

Participants' occupational status partly explain the variation. Results of a chi-square of independence test indicated that the relationship between the effect

of social distancing measures on participants' opportunities to meet LGBTQ+ friends and current occupational status was significant, X^2(54, N = 271) = 152.955, p = .001. The results suggest that, concerning opportunities to meet LGBTQ+ friends, participants who were employed full-time for wages and dispatched employees to be more adversely affected by social distancing measures than others. Although on a different contractual basis, they both worked fulltime for wages. More than 90% of them responded that their lives had been "greatly," "moderately," or "somewhat adversely affected" by social distancing measures, while a little more than three-quarters of others responded the same.

3.2.9.6 Opportunities to Use LGBTQ+ Social Services

3.2.9.6.1 Nationality/Place of Residence

In order to examine the relationship between the effect of social distancing measures on opportunities to use LGBTQ+ social services and participants' nationality/place of residence, a chi-square of independence test was performed. The relationship between these variables was significant, X^2(18, N = 236) = 37.238, p = .005. The results suggest that, concerning opportunities to use LGBTQ+ social services, FJ participants were more likely than others to be adversely affected by social distancing measures caused by the pandemic. More than three-quarters of FJ participants responded that their opportunities to use LGBTQ+ social services had been greatly, moderately, or somewhat adversely affected by social distancing measures, while among JJ counterparts it was more than 20 percentage points less, at 54.7%. Of note, responses from JO and FO participants greatly varied as they were in a number of different countries, despite their small subsample sizes.

3.2.9.7 Opportunities to Use LGBTQ+ Entertainment Venues

3.2.9.7.1 Relationship Status

A chi-square of independence test was performed to investigate the relationship between the effect of social distancing measures on participants' opportunities to use LGBTQ+ entertainment venues and relationship status. The relationship between these variables was significant, X^2(48, N = 258) = 108.313, p = .001. The results seem to suggest that, concerning their opportunities to use LGBTQ+ entertainment venues, participants who were single were less likely than participants in a (legal) relationship, including same-sex marriage, opposite-sex marriage, partnership, living with a partner, in a relationship but not living together, to be adversely affected by social distancing measures caused by the pandemic. Approximately two-thirds of participants who were in a relationship responded that their lives had "greatly" or "moderately adversely affected" by social distancing measures to use LGBTQ+ entertainment venues, while 57% of participants who were single answered the same. In addition, while about 3% of

participants who were in a relationship responded that social distancing measures "had a positive impact," "somewhat positive impact," "had a positive impact," or "greatly positive impact," to use LGBTQ+ entertainment venues, close to 6% of single participants responded the same.

3.2.9.7.2 Nationality/Place of Residence

In order to examine the relationship between the effect of social distancing measures on participants' opportunities to use LGBTQ+ entertainment venues and nationality status and place of residency, a chi-square of independence test was performed. The relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(18, N = 258) = 43.758$, $p = .001$. The results are likely to indicate that, concerning opportunities to use LGBTQ+ entertainment venues, FJ participants were more likely than JJ counterparts to be adversely affected by social distancing measures. The great majority of FJ participants (83.6%) responded that their lives had been "greatly" or "moderately adversely affected" by social distancing measures to use LGBTQ+ entertainment venues, while a little more than half of JJ participants answered the same. In addition, while about 6% of JJ participants responded that social distancing measures had a positive impact ("somewhat positive impact," "had a positive impact," or "greatly positive impact") on using LGBTQ+ entertainment venues, no FJ participants responded the same. Of note, responses from JO and FO participants greatly varied as they were in a number of different countries, despite their small subsample sizes.

3.2.9.7.3 Current Occupational Status

The results of a chi-square independence test suggested the relationship between the effect of social distancing measures on participants' opportunities to use LGBTQ+ entertainment venues and current occupational status was significant, $X^2(54, N = 252) = 77.843$, $p = .019$. The results suggest that participants who were, in order of severity, dispatched employees, unemployed (tie), and employed full-time for wages were more likely than others to be adversely affected by social distancing measures caused by the pandemic to use LGBTQ+ entertainment venues. More than 80% of participants who were dispatched employees (100%), unemployed (87.5%), and employed full-time for wages (85%) responded that their lives had been "greatly," "moderately," or "somewhat adversely affected" by social distancing measures to use LGBTQ+ entertainment venues, while about 64% of others responded the same. In addition, while about 2% of participants who were dispatched employees, unemployed, and employed full-time for wages responded that social distancing measures had a positive impact ("somewhat positive impact," "had a positive impact," or "greatly positive impact") on using LGBTQ+ entertainment venues, about 10% of others responded the same.

3.2.10 How Often Have You Experienced Family Conflict Related to Your Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity During the COVID-19 Pandemic? (CP11)

As Figure 3.11 shows, 10% of participants responded that they have "sometimes" experienced family conflict related to their sexual orientation or gender identity during the pandemic, while about 5% of participants responded, "very often" or "always." In addition, more than 85% of participants responded that they had "never" or "rarely" experienced family conflict related to their sexual orientation or gender identity during the pandemic.

3.2.10.1 Transgender Identity

A chi-square independence test was performed to examine the relationship between family conflict and transgender identity. The results were significant, $X^2(4, N = 247) = 13.107$, $p = .011$. While about 70% participants who identified as transgender responded that they "never" or "rarely" experienced family conflict, close to 90% of non-transgender counterparts responded the same. The difference was close to 20 percentage points. About 30% of transgender participants
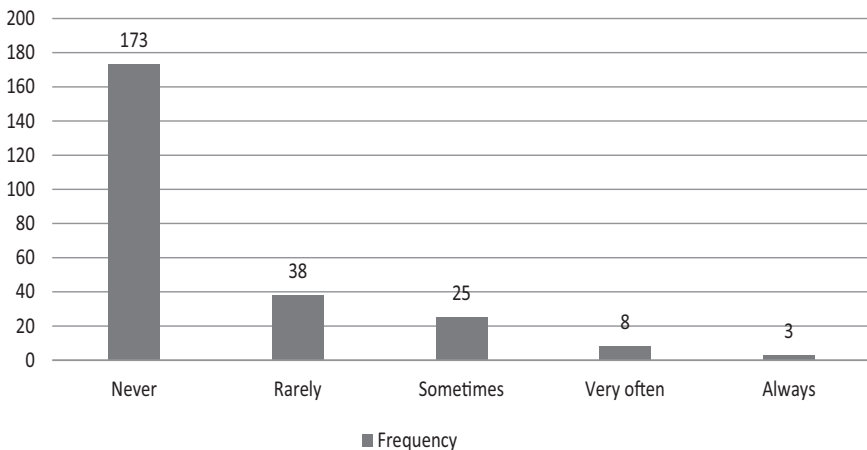
Statistically Significant Results:

Transgender identity: $X^2(4, N = 247) = 13.107$, $p = .011$
Sexual orientation and gender identity (8 groups): $X^2(28, N = 247) = 42.510$, $p = .039$
Nationality/place of residence: $X^2(12, N = 247) = 111.457$, $p = .001$

FIGURE 3.11 How Often Have You Experienced Family Conflict Related to Your Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity during the COVID-19 Pandemic? ($N = 247$)

answered that they "sometimes," "very often," or "always" experienced conflict, while less than half of that figure of non–transgender counterparts (12%) answered the same.

3.2.10.2 LGBTQ+ Subgroups

In order to investigate the relationship between family conflict and LGBTQ+ subgroups, a chi–square independence test was performed. The relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(28, N = 247) = 42.510$, $p = .039$. The results showed an interesting pattern: transgender participants experienced more family conflict than any other subgroups, followed by bi/pansexual and then homosexual counterparts. Within each sexuality and gender group, FtM/X, bi/pansexual women, and lesbian participants were more likely to experience family conflict than MtF/X, bi/pansexual men, and gay counterparts. For example, while about 70% of FtM/X participants responded that they had "never" or "rarely" experienced family conflict, more than 90% of gay counterparts answered the same. Less than 10% of gay participants responded that they had "often" or "always" experienced family conflict, whereas more than 30% of FtM/X counterparts chose the same.

3.2.10.3 Nationality/Place of Residence

The results of a chi–square independence test indicated that the relationship between these variables were significant, $X^2(12, N = 247) = 111.457$, $p = .001$. The figures for JJ, FJ, and JO were very similar and about 85% of each subgroup responded that they had "never" or "rarely" experienced family conflict during the pandemic and the rest answered that they had "sometimes," "very often," or "always" experienced the same. In contrast, two–thirds of FO participants responded that they had always experienced the same, while the rest of the same subgroup answered "never," although the FO subgroup has a very small sample size.

3.2.11 How Often Have You Reduced Connection to the LGBTQ+ Community During the COVID-19 Pandemic? (CP12)

3.2.11.1 Educational Level

As Figure 3.12 demonstrates, while a quarter of participants responded that they "never" or "rarely" reduced connection to the LGBTQ+ community during the pandemic, close to three-quarters of them answered that they "sometimes," "very often," or "always" did. Among the latter, about 40% answered "sometimes." In order to examine the relationship between reduced connection to the LGBTQ+ community and educational level, a Spearman's rank–order correlation was run. There was a strong position correlation between these scores,
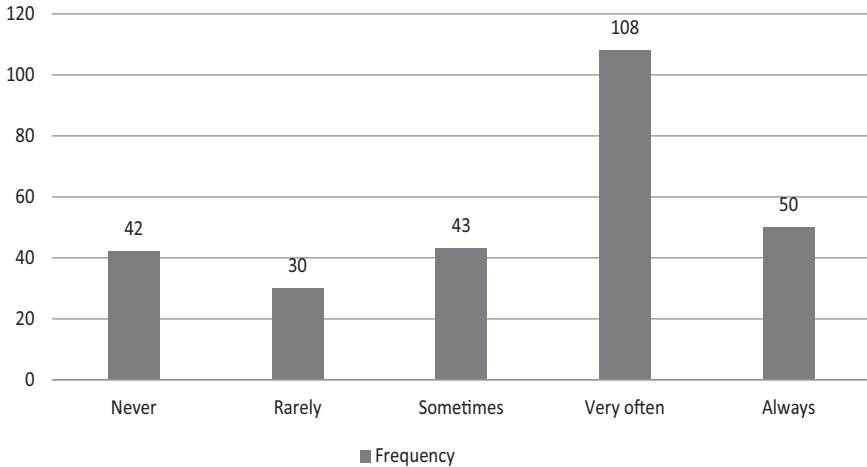
Statistically Significant Results:

Educational level: $r_s(263) = 1.000$, $p = .001$

FIGURE 3.12   How Often Have You Reduced Connection to the LGBTQ+ Community during the COVID-19 Pandemic? ($N = 273$)

which was statistically significant, $r_s(262) = .221$, $p = .001$. The more educated participants were, the more they reduced their connection to the LGBTQ+ community.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of how the pandemic affected the LGBTQ+ community in Japan by focusing on the quantitative analysis findings and presenting a number of significant findings from the survey regarding the following subjects: family conflict related to participants' sexual orientation and/or gender identity, reduced connection of the LGBTQ+ community, financial concerns, mental health concerns, disruption of daily life, perception of threat, impact of social distance measures, and disruption of the LGBTQ+ community. Although the number of those infected with COVID-19 was small, there is no question that the lives of Japanese LGBTQ+ people are deeply affected by the pandemic, in particular, because of social distance measures, including stay-at-home orders, imposed by Japanese authorities.

An intersectional analysis of the results from the survey further revealed that the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic among the Japanese LGBTQ+ community vary significantly, depending on some of the attributes of participants,

including nationality/place of residence, racial/ethnic identity among Japanese nationals living in Japan, gender, gender identity, employment, and marital status, among others. A number of sociodemographic characteristics were also found to be associated with participants' perception that their financial situation was affected by the pandemic, including relationship status, being in the service industry, supplemental labor experience, occupational status, and annual income.

4

EXPERIENCES AT HOME AND HEALTHCARE, MENTAL HEALTH AND ASSESSMENT OF THE JAPANESE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

4.1 Introduction

As a continuation from the previous chapter, this chapter illustrates participants' experiences at home and healthcare services, mental health, assessment of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, and human rights, as well as the most important problems and possible remedies. Likewise, participants' experiences are further explored through an intersectional analysis, including sociodemographic characteristics such as gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, and nationality.

4.2 Experiences at Home and Healthcare Services

This section demonstrates results of survey questions concerning participants' experiences at home, including family-related matters, public healthcare services, and mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, while participants' experience with healthcare services is limited due largely to the healthcare crisis as a result of the pandemic, their experience at home greatly varies depending on their living situation. Participants' mental health seems to have greatly deteriorated to an alarming extent that requires an immediate intervention.

4.2.1 Experiences at Home and Family-Related Matters

Figure 4.1a–h demonstrates results of the question "How many people among the following, if any, are you open with about being LGBTQ+?" As discussed earlier, one of the major problems facing the Japanese LGBTQ+ community is its invisibility. The great majority of them are in the closet or out to a few close friends who are often LGBTQ+ themselves. Out of 189 participants, 76 (40.2%), 38 (20.1%), and 20 (10.6%) responded that they are open with none, some, and

1. How many people among the following, if any, are you open with about being LGBTQ+?
(*N* = 129–234)
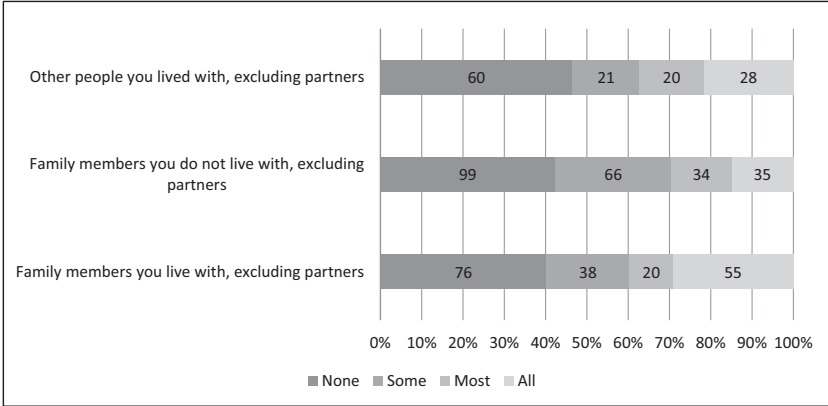
Statistically Significant Results:

Age: $r_s(187) + .222, p = .002$
LGBTQ+ subgroups (4 groups): $X^2(9, N = 189) = 23.581, p = .005$

FIGURE 4.1a Experiences at Home and Family-Related Matters

2. Because you are (or are perceived to be) an LGBTQ+ person, did you experience any of the following from someone you lived with for any reason during the COVID-19 pandemic? (Select all that apply.)
(*N* =128)
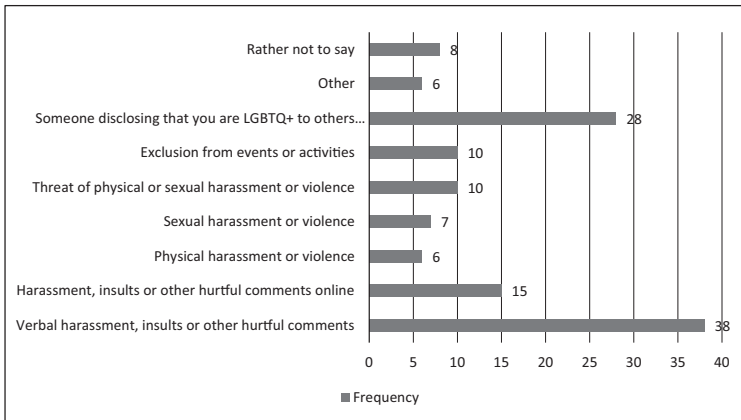
FIGURE 4.1b (Continued)

most of their family members they live with about being LGBTQ+, excluding their partners. In other words, a little over 70% of participants live in a household where they were not open to at least someone among their family members. This is a truly disconcerting factor, due to the strict social distancing measures imposed by Japanese authorities, by which many are forced to spend most of their time at home.

3. Think about the most serious incident during the COVID-19 pandemic. Which of the following happened to you? (Select all that apply.) ($N = 177$)
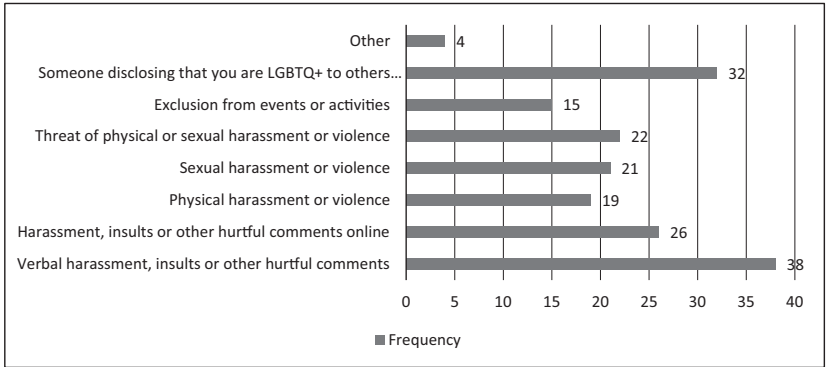
(This question was about their experiences with their family members they lived with; but the numbers were higher than these for the previous question. I think they misunderstood as a general question.)

FIGURE 4.1c (Continued)

4. Who was the perpetrator(s) of this most serious incident? (Select all that apply.) ($N = 104$)
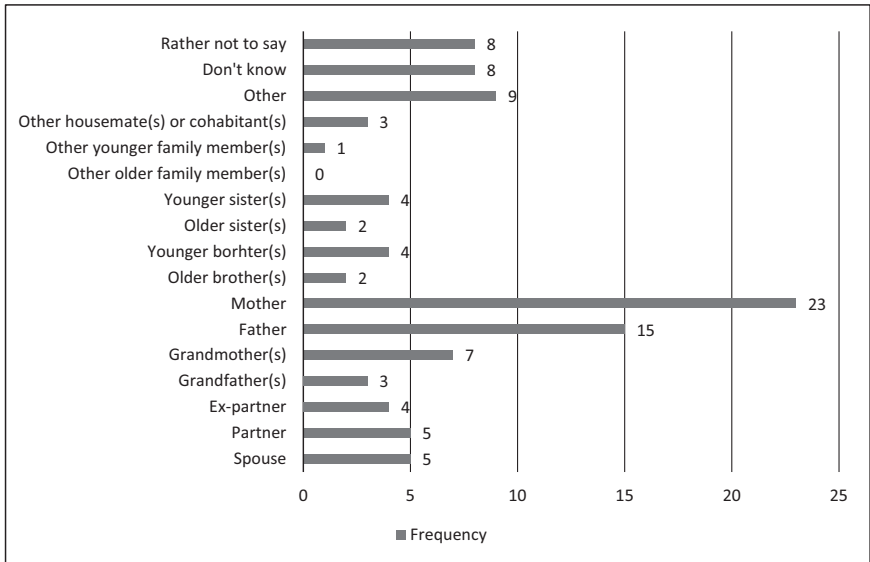
FIGURE 4.1d (Continued)

4.2.1.1 Age and SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) Identity

A further examination revealed that participants' being open about being as an LGBTQ+ person are significantly related to their age and their sexual orientation/gender identity. A Spearman's rank–order correlation was performed to test

5. Did you or anyone else report this most serious incident? (*N* = 54)
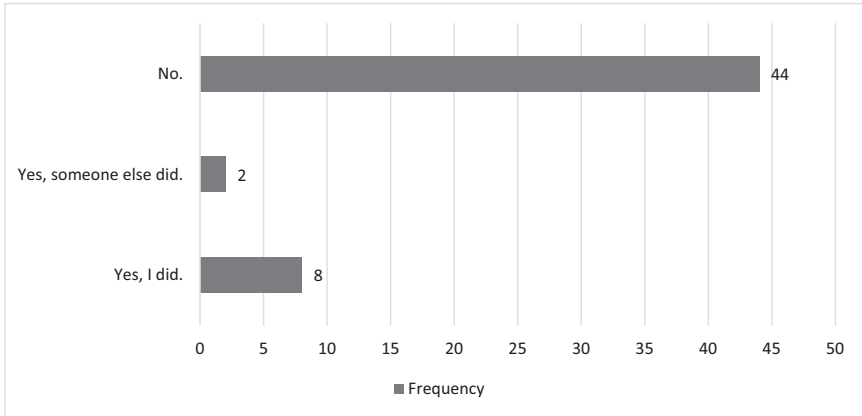
FIGURE 4.1e   (Continued)

6. Who was this most serious incident reported to? (*N* = 12)
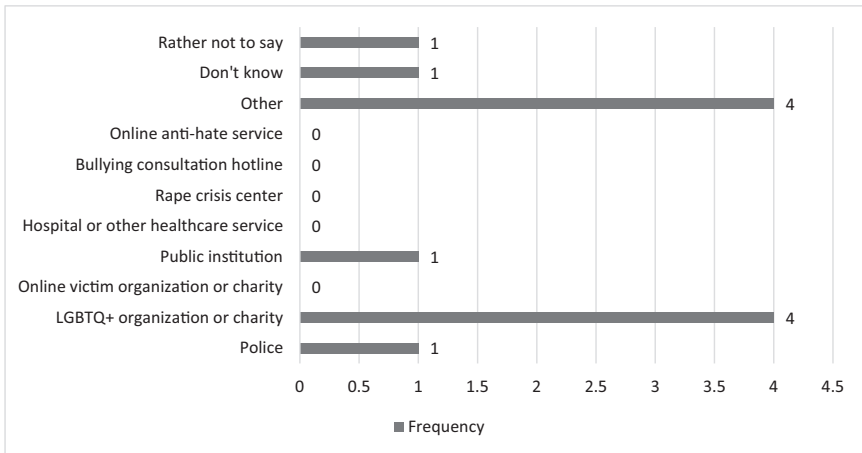
FIGURE 4.1f   (Continued)

the relationship between participants' being open about being an LGBTQ+ person and their age. There was a positive correlation between these scores, $rs(189) = .222$, $p = .002$. The older the participants, the more open they are about being an LGBTQ+ person to their family members living together. For example, 32 out of 61 participants, or more than half, who are 18–24 years old answered that they are open with no family members living together about being an LGBTQ+ person, while about one-third of those who are 35–54 years old answered the same. At the same time, among LGBTQ+ subgroups, participants who identified as bisexual, queer, or asexual are less likely than those identified as lesbian, gay, or transsexual, and the differences are significant, $X^2(9, N = 189) =$

7. Has the negative comment or behavior stopped after the report? (*N* = 10)
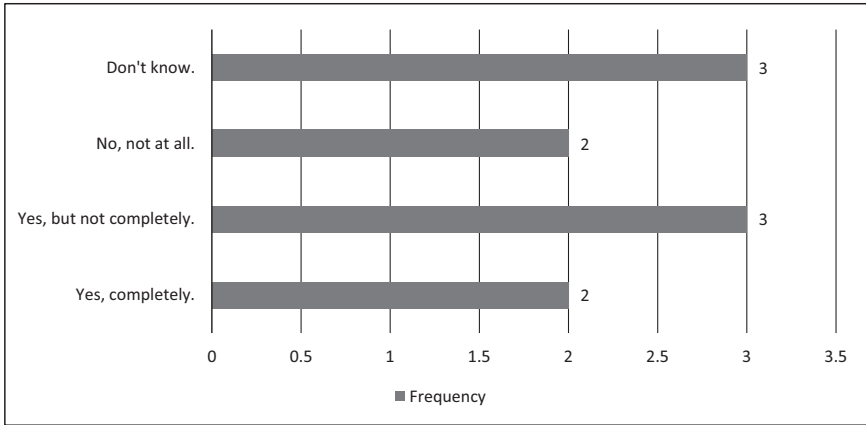
FIGURE 4.1g (Continued)

8. Why did you not report this most serious incident to the police? (Select all that apply.) (*N* = 108)
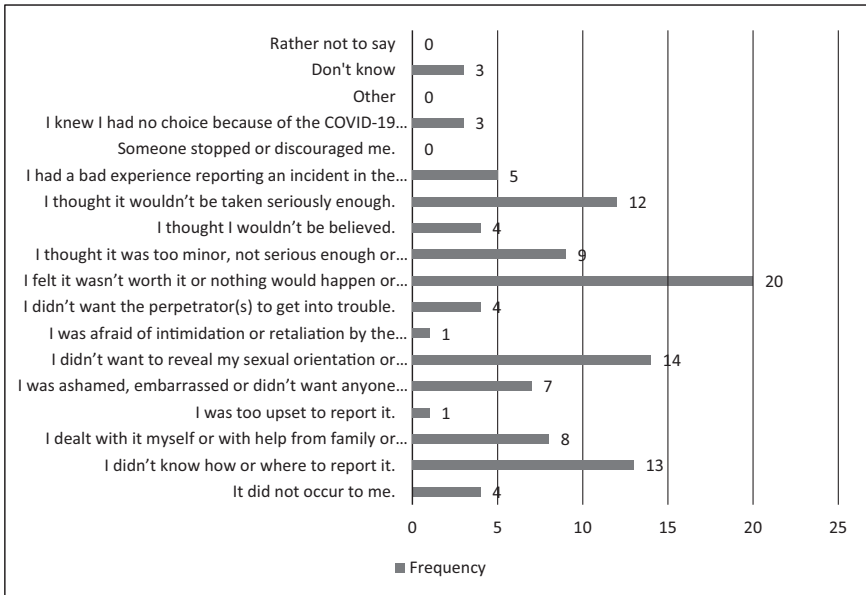
FIGURE 4.1h (Continued)

23.581, *p* = .005. In addition, although not statistically significant due possibly to some other factors, among nationality/place of residence groups, results among JO participants stand out. Five out of seven JO participants (71.4%) answered that they are open about being LGBTQ+ to their family members living together, while 36 out of 143 (25.2%) JJ participants answered the same.

4.2.1.2 Harassment, Insults, and Hurtful Comments

Figure 4.1b illustrates results of the question "Because you are, or are perceived to be, an LGBTQ+ person, did you experience any of the following from someone you lived with for any reason during the COVID-19 pandemic?" Participants were asked to select all that apply. Thirty-eight (about 30%) of the participants responded that they experienced "verbal harassment, insults or other hurtful comments," 28 responded "someone disclosing that you are LGBTQ+ person to others," and 15 responded "harassment, insults or other hurtful comments online."

4.2.1.3 Transgender Identity and Racial/Ethnic Minority Japanese Nationals Living in Japan

A further examination revealed that some subgroups of participants were more prone than others to experience "verbal harassment, insults or other hurtful comments" (verbal harassment). Of the 55 participants who identified as "transgender," 12 (21.8%) reported verbal harassment, which is significantly higher than those who did not, $X^2(1, N = 339) = 7.424$, $p = .006$. Among JJ participants, participants who do not identify as Japanese race/ethnicity scored higher than those who do, $X^2(1, N = 260) = 6.071$, $p = .014$. A quarter of the former (7 out of 28) responded that they experienced verbal harassment, while fewer than 10% (22 out of 232) of those who identify as Japanese race/ethnicity responded the same. Of 55 participants who identify as transgender, 9 (16.4%) experienced someone having disclosed that they are LGBTQ+ to others without their permission, while 19 out of 284 (6.7%) of those who do not identify as transgender experienced the same, and the difference is significant, $X^2(1, N = 339) = 5.690$, $p = .017$.

4.2.1.4 Perpetrators and Reporting

Figure 4.1d shows results of the question "Who was the perpetrator(s) of this incident?" Participants were instructed to select all that apply. Participants responded, in order of frequency: mother ($F = 23$), father ($F = 15$), grandmother ($F = 7$), partner ($F = 5$) and spouse ($F = 5$). Of note, 25 participants, about a quarter, selected "rather not to say," "don't know," or "other." In response to the question "Did you or anyone else report this incident?", the great majority of participants (44 of 54) answered that they did not, while 8 and 2 responded that they did or someone else did for them, respectively. Four participants reported to an LGBTQ+ organization or charity, another 4 to "other," and 1 to the police. Two participants answered that the negative comment or behavior has completely stopped after the report; 3 responded "Yes, but not completely." Some of the major reasons participants selected as a response to the question "Why did you not report this incident to the police" were "I felt it wasn't worth it or nothing would happen" ($F = 20$), "I didn't reveal my sexual orientation or gender identity" ($F = 14$), "I didn't know how or where to report it" ($F = 13$), and "I thought it wouldn't be taken seriously enough" ($F = 12$).

4.2.2 Experiences of Public Healthcare Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Figure 4.2 shows some trends in participants' experience of public healthcare service during the pandemic. As Figure 4.2a illustrates, 200, which is more than 60%, of 325 participants responded that they accessed public healthcare services, while 106, about one-third, did not. Additionally, 19 participants answered, "I tried to use healthcare services, but did not. Or, wanted to, but could not."

4.2.2.1 Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity Disclosure

To those who accessed healthcare services during the pandemic, the survey asked the question, "During the COVID-19 pandemic, how often did you discuss or disclose your sexual orientation or gender identity with healthcare staff," the majority ($F = 129$, 68.6%) answered they never discussed or disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity, while participants who responded, "most of the time" ($F = 7$) or "always" ($F = 14$) account a little more than 10%. There are some variations across different subgroups of participants. For example, close to 30% of participants who identify as transgender responded "most of the time" or "always," about 7% of those who do not identify as transgender did the same. The difference is statistically significant, X^2 (3, $N = 188$) = 25.004, $p = .001$. Among nationality/place of resident subgroups, there was a statistically significant difference, as well, $X^2(9, N = 188) = 31.793$, $p = .001$. While more than half of JO participants answered, "most of the time" or "always," less than 10% of JJ participants answered the same. At the same time, the figure is the lowest among FJ participants: none of them answered "always" and one participant "most of the time." More than three-quarters of them answered "never" to this question. In addition, no participants who are 18- to 24-year-old answered, "most of the time" or "always," whereas a quarter of those who are 45–54 years old did. Although not statistically significant, it seems that the older the participants, the more they discuss or disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity with healthcare staff, $X^2(15, N = 187) = 23.853$, $p = .068$. Although they seem more open and comfortable being an LGBTQ+ person, FJ participants are less likely to reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity at healthcare services. They are more cautious when they are with the general public beyond their friends and colleagues.

4.2.2.2 Being Open About Your Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity With Healthcare Staff

There are a few follow-up questions. First, participants were asked, "During the COVID-19 pandemic, did being open about your sexual orientation or gender identity with healthcare staff have an effect on your care?" The majority ($F = 37$) of participants answered, "No, it did not have an effect," while

1. Did you access, or try to access, any public healthcare services during the COVID-19 pandemic? (*N* = 325)
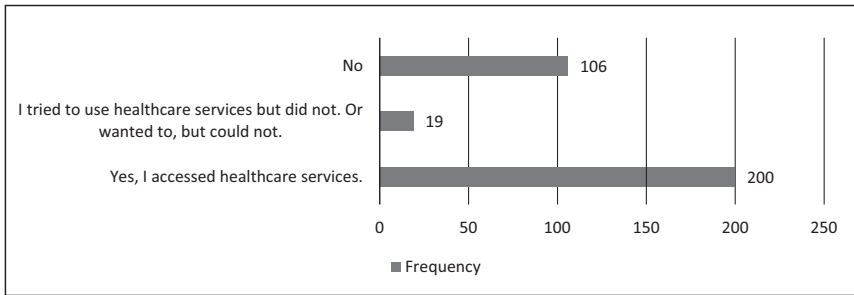

FIGURE 4.2a Experiences of Public Healthcare Services during the COVID–19 Pandemic

2. During the COVID-19 pandemic, how often did you discuss or disclose your sexual orientation or gender identity with healthcare staff? (*N* = 188)
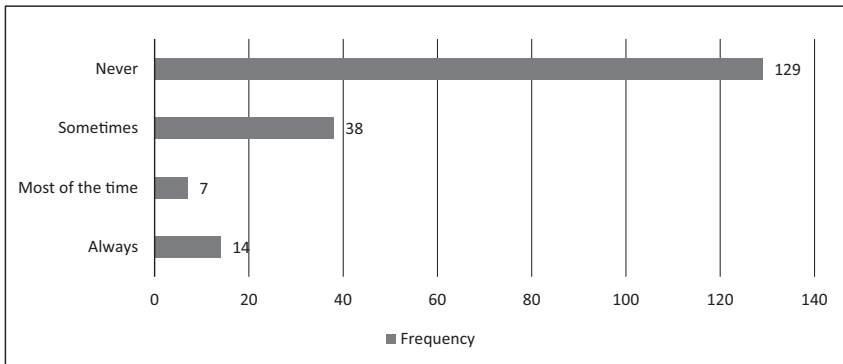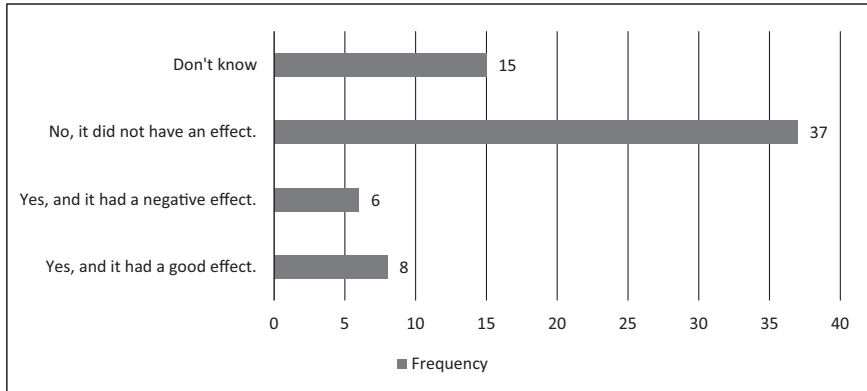

FIGURE 4.2b (Continued)

8 answered "Yes, and it had a good effect" and 6 answered "Yes, and it had a negative effect." To the question, "During the COVID–19 pandemic, why did you not discuss your sexual orientation or gender identity with healthcare staff? Please select all answers that apply," about half (*F* = 90) of participants chose "It was not relevant," followed by 26 participants who selected, "I did not want to reveal my sexual orientation or gender identity," and 25 of those who answered, "I was afraid of a negative reaction." Participants were also asked, "During the COVID–19 pandemic, did you experience any of the following when using or trying to access healthcare ser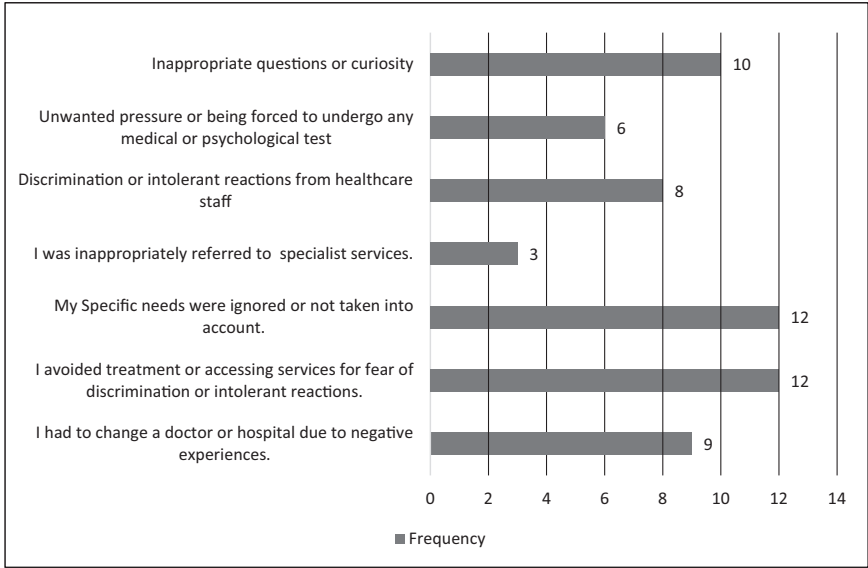vices because of your sexual orientation or gender identity?" Twelve participants answered "My specific needs were ignored or not taken into account" and another 12 answered "I avoided treatment of accessing services for fear of discrimination or intolerant reactions." Ten participants experienced "inappropriate question or curiosity,"

3. During the COVID-19 pandemic, did being open about your sexual orientation or gender identity with healthcare staff have an effect on your care? ($N = 66$)

FIGURE 4.2c (Continued)

4. During the COVID-19 pandemic, why did you not discuss your sexual orientation or gender identity with all healthcare staff? Please select all answers that apply. ($N = 171$)
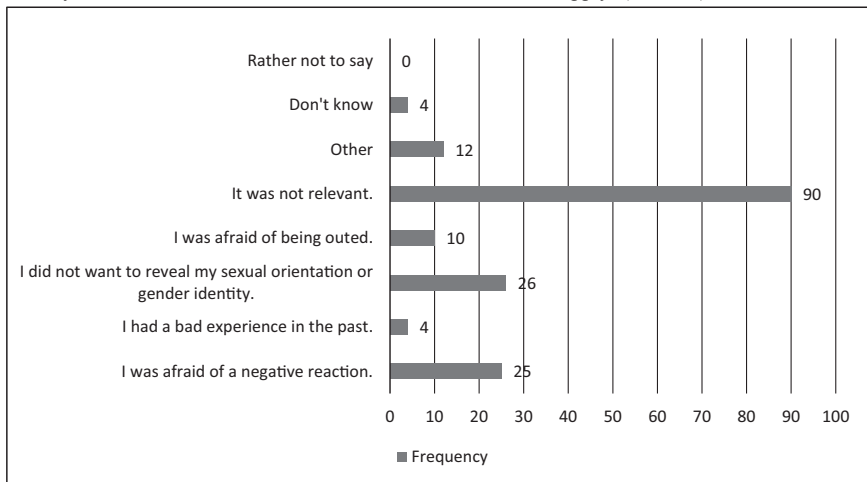
FIGURE 4.2d (Continued)

9 "had to change a doctor or hospital due to negative experiences," and 8 experienced "discrimination or intolerant reactions from healthcare staff," among others. Finally, some of the major reasons participants "tried but couldn't access any public healthcare services during the COVID-19 pandemic," included "I did not know where to go" ($F = 7$), "I was afraid of contracting COVID-19" ($F = 6$), "The service was not close enough to me" ($F = 5$) and "I wasn't able to go at a convenient time" ($F = 5$).

5. During the COVID-19 pandemic, did you experience any of the following when using or trying to access healthcare services because of your sexual orientation or gender identity? ($N = 60$)

Category	Frequency
Inappropriate questions or curiosity	10
Unwanted pressure or being forced to undergo any medical or psychological test	6
Discrimination or intolerant reactions from healthcare staff	8
I was inappropriately referred to specialist services.	3
My Specific needs were ignored or not taken into account.	12
I avoided treatment or accessing services for fear of discrimination or intolerant reactions.	12
I had to change a doctor or hospital due to negative experiences.	9

FIGURE 4.2e   (Continued)

6. Why did you try but couldn't access any public healthcare services during the COVID-19 pandemic? ($N = 39$)

Category	Frequency
Language barrier	3
I was afraid of racial or ethnic discrimination or…	1
Financial reasons	2
Have no health insurance	0
I was afraid of being outed through contact tracing.	1
I was afraid of contracting COVID-19.	6
The services were not available due to the COVID-19…	3
I was worried, anxious or embarrassed about going.	3
I wasn't able to go to a convenient time.	5
I had to wait too long to access the services.	2
The service was not close enough to me.	5
My doctor was not supportive.	1
My doctor did not know where to refer me.	0
I did not know where to go.	7

FIGURE 4.2f   (Continued)

4.3 Mental Health

4.3.1 Anxiety

Anxiety Diagnosis (*N* = 320)

Severe anxiety (15-21) 41
Moderate anxiety (10-14) 45
Mild anxiety (5-9) 106
Minimal anxiety (0-4) 128

■ Frequency
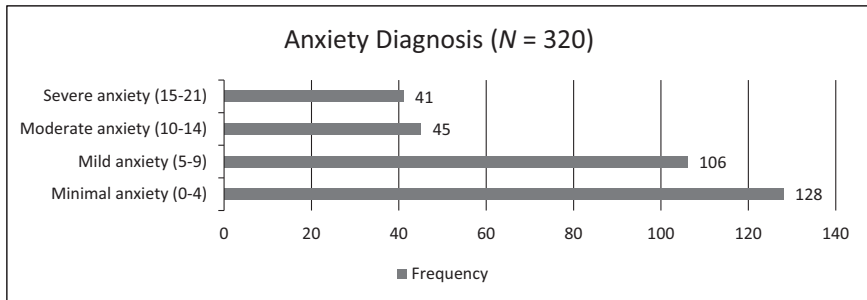
Table 4.1 illustrates results of the survey questions concerning participants' state of anxiety. GAD-7 (General Anxiety Disorder–7) was used as a tool to assess participants' level of anxiety. GAD-7 consists of the following seven questions, with the prompt "Over the last two weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?" (1) feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge; (2) not being able to stop or control worrying; (3) worrying too much about different things; (4) trouble relaxing; (5) being so restless that it is hard to sit still; (6) becoming easily annoyed or irritable; and (7) feeling afraid, as if something awful might happen. Participants were asked to respond by selecting "not all," "several days," "more than half the days," or "nearly every day." The responses are assigned scores of 0, 1, 2, and 3, respectively. GAD-7 anxiety severity is calculated by the total score of the seven items: 0–4 = minimal anxiety, 5–9 = mild anxiety, 10–14 = moderate anxiety, and 15–21= severe anxiety.

4.3.1.1 Results

Results demonstrate that the majority of participants (73.1%) were diagnosed with minimal or mild anxiety, while more than a quarter of participants with moderate (13.3%) or severe anxiety (12.1%). The rest of the table shows the results of a variety of statistical tests, including simple linear regression, multiple linear regression, *t*-tests and ANOVA, assessing participants' GAD anxiety scores in association with some sociodemographic factors, as well as their assessment of the COVID-19 experience, including the effect of social distancing measures caused by the pandemic.

A simple linear regression was carried out to investigate whether age, years of education, and annual income of participants each, as well as a multiple linear regression for all, could significantly predict their GAD-7 anxiety scores. The results of the single linear regression indicated that age appeared to a significant

predictor of participants' anxiety score, $F(1, 318) = 4.618$, $p = .032$; however, the results of a multiple linear regression together with the other two variables, years of education and annual income, indicated that none of the variables contributed significantly to predict participants' anxiety score, $F(3, 257) = 1.541$, $p = .204$, suggesting that there might be some other meaningful factors, beyond these three variables.

4.3.1.1.1 Gender and Sexuality

The mean anxiety score for cis male participants is 6.15, while 7.46 for cis female counterparts. The results indicate that, although the mean anxiety scores of both cis male and cis female participants fell in the level of mild anxiety, cis female participants were more severely suffering from anxiety than cis male counterparts, although the differences were not statistically significant, $t(283) = 1.883$, $p = .061$. The mean score (7.94) for transgender participants was slightly higher than that (6.53) of non-transgender counterparts. The difference was not statistically significant, $t(318) = 1.579$, $p = .115$. Across four different sexuality and gender groups, there were considerable differences in their anxiety scores. Homosexual men and women scored the lowest at 5.75, bi/pansexual men and women scored the highest at 8.23. The results of one-way ANOVA test of anxiety scores across sexuality & gender groups indicated that there was a significant effect of sexuality & gender on the anxiety score, $F(3, 316) = 4.210$, $p = .006$. In addition, regrouping of participants by eight different sexuality and gender, (list 8 groups), illustrates a wider range of means than that by four sexuality and gender sub groups, although the differences were not significant, $F(11, 308) = 1.596$, $p = .100$. While the mean score of gay participants was 5.72, that of pansexual men was 12.33, which falls in the moderate anxiety.

4.3.1.1.2 Race and Ethnicity

The mean anxiety score for JJ participants who identified as Japanese race/ethnicity was 8.84, while that of JJ participants who did not identify as Japanese race/ethnicity was 6.12. The differences seem wide, yet there were no significant differences, $t(248) = -.524$, $p = .601$, due probably to the large *SD* values.

Among FJ participants, White/European identity indicated differences in anxiety score, $t(51)$, -2.974, $p = .004$. FJ participants who did not identify as White/European scored 5.41, while the mean score for FJ participants who identified as White/European was 9.31, which was beyond the mild anxiety range.

4.3.1.1.3 Occupational Status

Occupational status was appeared to be another significant predictor for anxiety scores, $F(9, 296) = 2.884$, $p = .003$. In general, participants' occupational status seems a decisive factor. The mean scores for participants who were not able to

TABLE 4.1 Mental Health – Anxiety

		GAD-7 Anxiety Score (N = 320)	
Total		$M = 6.74$ $(SD = 5.648)$	
			Diagnosis
Minimal anxiety (0–4)		$F = 128$ (37.8%)	
Mild anxiety (5–9)		106 (31.3)	
Moderate anxiety (10–14)		45 (13.3)	
Severe anxiety (15–21)		41 (12.1)	
			Simple linear regression
Age (N = 320)*		$F (1, 318) = 4.618$, $p = .032$, $R^2 = .014$, R^2adjusted $= .011$, $B = -.055$ $(B_0 = 8.659)$	
Years of education (309)		$F (1, 307) = .485$, $p = .487$, $R^2 = .002$, R^2adjusted $= -.002$, $B = -.104$ $(B_0 = 8.300)$	
Annual income (267)		$F (1, 265) = 3.097$, $p = .080$, $R^2 = .012$, R^2adjusted $= .008$, $B = -.002$ $(B_0 = 7.264)$	
Age, years of education, and annual income (261)		Multiple linear regression: $F (3, 257) = 1.541$, $p = .204$	
			T-test
Cisgender		Men ($F = 191$)	$M = 6.15$ $(SD = 5.636)$	$t (283) = 1.883$, $p = .061$
(no trans)		Women (94)	7.46 (5.225)	
Transgender identify		Yes (47)	7.94 (6.197)	$t (318) = 1.579$, $p = .115$
		No (273)	6.53 (5.534)	
Japanese nationals in Japan		Japanese race/ethnicity ($F = 224$)	$M = 8.84$ $(SD = 7.171)$	$t (248) = -.524$, $p = .601$
		Non-Japanese race/ethnicity (26)	6.12 (6.320)	
Non-Japanese nationals in Japan**		White ($F = 26$)	$M = 9.31$ $(SD = 5.074)$	$t (51)$, -2.974, $p = .004$
		Non-White (27)	5.41 (4.466)	
Living situation	Alone	Yes ($F = 115$)	$M = 7.42$ $(SD = 5.654)$	$t (318)$, -1.617, $p = .107$
		No (205)	6.36 (5.623)	
	With a (grand) parent(s)	Yes (110)	6.84 (5.899)	$t (318)$, $-.226$, $p = .821$
		No (210)	6.69 (5.526)	
	With a spouse or partner*	Yes (88)	5.51 (5.031)	$t (318)$, 2.410, $p = .017$
		No (232)	7.20 (5.808)	

(Continued)

TABLE 4.1 (Continued)

	GAD-7 Anxiety Score (N = 320)		
			ANOVA
Sexuality and *gender* (4 groups)**	Homosexual men and women (F = 175)	M = 5.75 (SD = 5.257)	F (3, 316) = 4.210, p = .006
	Bi/pansexual men and women (62)	8.23 (5.710)	
	Transgender men and women (45)	7.91 (6.335)	
	Others (38)	7.47 (5.746)	
Sexuality and *gender* (12 groups)	Gay (F = 145)	M = 5.72 (SD = 5.444)	F (11, 308) = 1.596, p = .100
	Lesbian (30)	5.90 (4.318)	
	Bisexual men (23)	6.83 (5.630)	
	Bisexual women (19)	8.47 (5.551)	
	Pansexual men (3)	12.33 (8.083)	
	Pansexual women (17)	9.12 (5.566)	
	MtF/X (11)	7.73 (5.781)	
	FtM/X (34)	7.97 (6.585)	
	Asexual men (3)	8.67 (10.970)	
	Asexual women (12)	8.33 (4.638)	
	Other queer+ men (6)	5.17 (4.070)	
	Other queer+ women (17)	7.47 (6.206)	
Relationship status	Single (F = 163)	M = 7.17 (SD = 5.900)	F (8, 311) = .619, p = 761
	Married (same sex) (6)	5.00 (3.347)	
	Married (opposite sex) (19)	6.37 (4.437)	

	Partnership (8)	5.13 (5.357)	
	Living with a partner (55)	5.76 (5.305)	
	In a relationship but not living together (59)	7.03 (5.919)	
	Divorced/separated (6)	5.33 (6.282)	
	Widowed (3)	6.67 (2.887)	
Nationality and *place of residency*	Japanese nationals in Japan ($F = 250$)	$M = 6.68$ ($SD = 5.793$)	$F (3, 316) = .906, p = .438$
	Non-Japanese nationals in Japan (57)	7.09 (5.051)	
	Japanese nationals or immigrants overseas (11)	5.27 (3.771)	
	Non-Japanese nationals overseas (2)	12.00 (12.728)	
*Occupational status***	Employed full-time for wages ($F = 143$)	$M = 6.20$ ($SD = 5.833$)	$F (9, 296) = 2.884, p = .003$
	Dispatched employees (11)	7.27 (6.513)	
	Employed part-time (34)	5.38 (3.601)	
	Self-employed (29)	6.03 (4.444)	
	Unemployed (12)	9.00 (4.973)	
	Homemakers (5)	7.40 (4.827)	
	Retired (3)	2.00 (3.464)	
	Students (58)	7.47 (6.041)	
	Unable to work (7)	14.57 (5.062)	
	Others (4)	2.50 (2.517)	
Geographical areas	Urban area ($F = 191$)	$M = 6.30$ ($SD = 5.547$)	$F (2, 317) = 1.727, p = .180$
	Suburban area (91)	7.64 (5.370)	
	Rural area (38)	6.76 (6.627)	

(Continued)

TABLE 4.1 (Continued)

GAD-7 Anxiety Score (N = 320)	
	Multiple linear regression
*COVID-19 experience*** (N = 176)*	*F (9, 166) = 10.512, p = .001*
To what extent are you worried about your health condition during the COVID-19 pandemic?	B = .333, p = .456
To what extent are you worried about your financial situation during the COVID-19 pandemic?*	B = 1.032, p = .050
To what extent is your health condition affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?**	B = 1.555, p = .001
To what extent is your financial situation affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?	B = −.818, p = .103
How often has your daily routine been disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic?	B = .737, p = .052
How much of a threat is COVID-19 to you?	B = .305, p = .477
As an LGBTQ+ person, to what extent has your life been affected by social distancing measures, including stay-at-home orders, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic?*	B = −.913, p = .023
How often have you experienced family conflict related to your sexual orientation or gender identity during the COVID-19 pandemic?**	B = 1.495, p = .002
How often have you reduced connection to the LGBTQ+ community during the COVID-19 pandemic?	B = .237, p = .418
	Simple Linear Regression
At home or family-related matters (N = 267)*	F (1, 265) = 5.910, p = .016, R² = .022, R² adjusted = .018, B = −.674 (B₀ = 9.157)
At work or work-related matters (243)**	F (1, 242) = 9.640, p = .002, R² = .038, R² adjusted = .034, B = −.798 (B₀ = 9.211)
At school or school-related matters (149)	F (1, 147) = 2.289, p = .132, R² = .015, R² adjusted = .009, B = −.555 (B₀ = 9.113)
At healthcare facility or healthcare-related matters (218)***	F (1, 216) = 15.319, p = .001, R² = .066, R² adjusted = .062, B = −1.291 (B₀ = 11.295)
Opportunities to meet your partner (213)***	F (1, 211) = 12.977, p = .001, R² =.058, R² adjusted = .053, B = −.856 (B₀ = 9.440)
Opportunities to meet LGBTQ+ friends (270)	F (1, 268) = 3.701, p = .055, R² = .014, R² adjusted = .010, B = −.570 (B₀ = 8.196)
Opportunities to use LGBTQ+ social services (230)	F (1, 228) = 2.541, p = .112, R² = .011, R² adjusted = .007, B = −.415 (B₀ = 8.392)
Opportunities to use LGBTQ+ entertainment venues (251)	F (1, 249) = 2.536, p = .113, R² = .010, R² adjusted = .006, B = −.407 (B₀ = 7.710)

*Significant at 0.05, ** at 0.01, and *** at 0.001 (two-tailed)

work (14.57), which was beyond the range of moderate anxiety and the highest, followed by those who were unemployed (9.00). Although there were some subtle differences, the mean scores for participants who were currently in the labor force, including, in the order of severity, dispatched employees (7.27), employed full-time for wages (6.2), self-employed (6.03), and employed part-time (5.38), all fall in the range of mild anxiety. Students (7.47) and homemakers (7.4) scored within the same range, although slightly higher. In addition, the mean anxiety score for the retired was 2.00, which was the lowest among the different groups by occupational status.

4.3.1.1.4 Living Situation and Relationship Status

Participants who responded that they were living together with a spouse or partner for the living situation question scored significantly lower (5.51) than those who were not living together with a spouse or partner, $t(318)$, 2.410, $p = .017$. Participants by relationship status produced interesting results, although not significant, $F(8, 311) = .619$, $p = .761$. The mean score for single participants was the highest at 7.17, followed by those who were in a relationship but not living together (7.03). The means of participants who were in a legal relationship or living together scored lower: in ascending order, same-sex married (5.00), partnership (5.13), living with a partner (5.76), and opposite-sex married (6.37). In addition, the mean scores of participants who were living together with a (grand) parent(s) and those who were not were considerably similar. The mean anxiety score among participants who were living alone was higher (7.42), yet there were not significant differences between those who were living alone and those who were not.

4.3.1.1.5 Nationality/Place of Residence and Area of Residence

Although the differences were not statistically significant, the mean scores among JJ, FJ, J0, and FO participants greatly vary: from the lowest, JO (5.27), JJ (6.68), FJ (7.09), and FO (12). All but FO participants fall in the range of mild anxiety and FO participants moderate anxiety. Additionally, there were subtle differences: from the lowest, urban area (6.30), rural area (6.76), and suburban area (7.64), though the differences were not significant.

4.3.1.1.6 Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic

A multiple regression was carried out to investigate whether variables concerning participants' experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, (list here), could significantly predict participants' anxiety scores. Of note, two questions concerning COVID-19 infection and financial preparedness, were omitted from this analysis, due to a large number of missing data. The results of the regression analysis indicated the model explained 36.3% of the variance and that the model was

a significant predictor of participants' anxiety level, $F(9, 166) = 10.512$, $p = .001$. Among the nine independent variables included in this analysis, the results indicated that the following contributed significantly to the model, in order of significance: To what extent is your health condition affected by the COVID-19 pandemic? $B = 1.555$, $p = .001$; how often have you experienced family conflict related to your sexual orientation or gender identity during the COVID-19 pandemic? $B = 1.495$, $p = .002$; to what extent are you worried about your financial situation during the COVID-19 pandemic? $B = 1.032$, $p = .050$; as an LGBTQ+ person, to what extent has your life been affected by social distancing measures, including stay-at-home orders, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic? $B = -.913$, $p = .023$. Participants' health condition, financial situation, and experience of family conflict contribute to their anxiety, while participants' perception that, as an LGBTQ+ person, their life being affected by social distancing measures limit their anxiety, which is further investigated in the following.

4.3.1.1.7 Effect of Social Distancing Measures

A series of simple regression was carried out to investigate whether each of the variables concerning participants' assessment of the effect of social distancing measures in various spheres of their lives could significantly predict participants' anxiety scores. Of note, instead of a multiple regression, this assessment used a series of simple regression, due to a large number of missing data depending on the variable, that would reduced the total number of cases to less than one-third of the sample.

The results of the regression indicated that the following four variables significantly predicted the anxiety level among participants, in order of significance: at healthcare facility or healthcare-related matters (218), $F(1, 216) = 15.319$, $p = .001$; opportunities to meet your partner (213), $F(1, 211) = 12.977$, $p = .001$: at work or work-related matters (243), $F(1, 242) = 9.640$, $p = .002$; at home or family-related matters ($N = 267$), $F(1, 265) = 5.910$, $p = .016$. None of the variables appears to limit the anxiety level among participants. The findings suggest that participants' high anxiety level is mainly caused by their health condition, financial situation, and experience of family conflict, not by participants' perception that, as an LGBTQ+ person, their life was being affected by social distancing measures.

4.3.2 Depression

Table 4.2 demonstrates results of the survey questions concerning participants' state of depression. PHQ (Patient Health Questionnaire-9 Depression Score was used as a tool to assess participants' depression level. PHQ-9 asks the following nine questions, with the prompt "How often have you been bothered by the following over the past two weeks?" (1) little interest or pleasure in doing things; (2) feeling down, depressed, or hopeless; (3) trouble falling or staying asleep, or

sleeping too much; (4) feeling tired or having little energy; (5) poor appetite or overeating; (6) feeling bad about yourself, or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down; (7) trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television; (8) moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed, or so fidgety or restless that you have been moving a lot more than usual; and (9) thoughts that you would be better off dead, or thoughts of hurting yourself in some way. Participants were asked to respond by selecting "not all," "several days," "more than half the days," or "nearly every day." The responses are assigned scores of 0, 1, 2, and 3, respectively. PHQ-9 depression severity is calculated by the total score of the nine items: 0–4 = minimal depression, 5–9 = mild depression, 10–14 = moderate depression, 15–19 = moderate severe depression, and 20–27 = severe depression.

4.3.2.1 Results

Results show that the majority (about 60%) were diagnosed with minimal or mild depression, about 14% with moderate depression, and one-fifth with moderate severe or severe depression. The results of a number of statistical tests assessing the associations between depression score and sociodemographic factors, as well as their assessment of COVID-19 experience, including the effect of social distancing measure, demonstrate some intriguing trends.

A multiple linear regression was run to examine where age, years of education, and annual income could significantly predict participants' depression scores. The results of the regression indicated that the model explained 6.3% of the variance and that the model was a significant predictor of depression level, $F(3, 255) = 5.749$, $p = .001$. While annual income of participants contributed significantly to the model ($B = -.003$, p = .032), age ($B = -.065$, $p = .093$) or years of education ($B = -.204$, $p = .312$) did not.

4.3.2.1.1 Gender and Sexuality

The mean score for cis female participants was 9.40, while that of cis male participants was 7.75. The results indicated that on average cis female participants suffered more severely from depression than cis male participants, although the differences were not significant, $t(282) = 1.932$, $p = .054$. There were significant differences between nontransgender (8.04) and transgender (11.08) participants, with mild and moderate depression levels, respectively, $t(317) = 2.840$, $p = .005$. There were also significant differences among LGBTQ+ subgroups. The results of one-way ANOVA test of depression scores across the four groups, namely homosexual (6.92), bi/pansexual (10.67), transgender (10.80), and other (9.51) participants, indicated that the differences were significant, $F(3, 315) = 7.441$, $p = .001$. Of note, the mean score for homosexual participants fall in the range of mild depression, with the rest in moderate depression on average. Furthermore, a close comparative examination of participants' depression levels by 12 different

TABLE 4.2 Mental Health – Depression

PHQ-9 Depression Score (N = 319)		
Total	M = 8.5 (SD = 6.917)	
		Diagnosis
Minimal depression (1–4)	F = 105 (31.0%)	
Mild depression (5–9)	99 (29.2)	
Moderate depression (10–14)	47 (13.9)	
Moderate severe depression (15–19)	41 (12.1)	
Severe depression (20–27)	27 (8.0)	
	Simple linear regression	
Age (N = 319)★★	$F (1, 317) = 8.137$, $p = .005$, $R^2 = .025$, R^2 adjusted $= .022$, $B = -.091$ ($B_0 = 11.691$)	
Years of education (308)★	$F (1, 306) = 6.515$, $p = .011$, $R^2 = .021$, R^2 adjusted $= .018$, $B = -.464$ ($B_0 = 15.583$)	
Annual income (265)★★	$F (1, 263) = 13.515$, $p = .001$, $R^2 = .049$, R^2 adjusted $= .045$, $B = -.004$ ($B_0 = 9.815$)	
Age, years of education, annual income (259)★★★	Multiple Linear Regression: $F (3, 255) = 5.749$, $p = .001$, $R^2 = .063$, R^2 adjusted $= .052$ ($B0 = 14.804$; $B_{age} = -.065$, $p = .093$; $B_{edu} = -.204$, $p = .312$; $B_{income} = -.003$, $p = .032$)	

			T-test
Cisgender (no trans)	Men (F = 191)	M = 7.75 (SD = 6.912)	$t (282) = 1.932$, $p = .054$
	Women (93)	9.40 (6.337)	
Transgender identify★★	Yes (48)	11.08 (8.147)	$t (317) = 2.840$, $p = .005$
	No (271)	8.04 (6.588)	
Japanese nationals in Japan	Japanese race/ethnicity (F = 224)	M = 8.84 (SD = 7.175)	$t (246) = -.685$, $p = .497$
	Non-Japanese race/ethnicity (24)	7.79 (6.561)	

Non-Japanese nationals in Japan		White (*F* = 27)	*M* = 8.81 (*SD* = 5.897)	*t* (52), −1.697, *p* = .096
		Non-White (27)	6.26 (5.141)	
Living situation	Alone★	Yes (*F* = 116)	*M* = 9.68 (*SD* = 6.867)	*t* (317), −2.325, *p* = .021
		No (203)	7.82 (6.871)	
	With a (grand) parent(s)	Yes (109)	8.70 (7.318)	*t* (317), −.369, *p* = .712
		No (210)	8.40 (6.716)	
	With a spouse or partner★★	Yes (88)	6.33 (5.901)	*t* (317), 3.518, *p* = .001
		No (231)	9.32 (7.106)	

			ANOVA
Sexuality and *gender* (4 groups)★★★	Homosexual men and women (*F* = 175)	*M* = 6.92 (*SD* = 6.134)	*F* (3, 315) = 7.441, *p* = .001
	Bi/pansexual men and women (61)	10.67 (7.321)	
	Transgender men and women (46)	10.80 (8.194)	
	Others (37)	9.51 (6.292)	
Sexuality and *gender* (12 groups)★★★	Gay (*F* = 146)	*M* = 7.06 (*SD* = 6.415)	*F* (11, 307) = 4.190, p = .001
	Lesbian (29)	6.21 (4.483)	
	Bisexual men (23)	6.83 (5.630)	
	Bisexual women (20)	9.00 (4.779)	
	Pansexual men (3)	20.33 (5.132)	
	Pansexual women (17)	14.12 (7.976)	
	MtF/X (12)	13.00 (8.539)	
	FtM/X (34)	10.03 (8.055)	
	Asexual men (3)	6.67 (7.234)	
	Asexual women (11)	11.18 (5.036)	
	Other queer+ men (6)	4.83 (5.492)	
	Other queer+ women (17)	10.59 (6.662)	

(*Continued*)

TABLE 4.2 (Continued)

PHQ–9 Depression Score (N = 319)

Relationship status	Single (F = 163)	M = 9.44 (SD = 7.136)	F (8, 310) = 1.471, p = .167
	Married (same sex) (6)	5.17 (1.941)	
	Married (opposite sex) (19)	6.95 (4.731)	
	Partnership (8)	6.62 (6.186)	
	Living with a partner (55)	6.58 (6.402)	
	In a relationship but not living together (58)	8.67 (7.224)	
	Divorced/separated (6)	7.33 (10.053)	
	Widowed (3)	13.00 (3.606)	
Nationality and place of residency**	Japanese nationals in Japan (F = 248)	M = 8.74 (SD = 7.112)	F (3, 315) = 5.831, p = .001
	Non-Japanese nationals in Japan (57)	7.30 (5.612)	
	Japanese nationals or immigrants overseas (11)	5.45 (2.622)	
	Non-Japanese nationals overseas (3)	22.67 (6.658)	
Occupational status**	Employed full-time for wages (F = 142)	M = 7.31 (SD = 6.863)	F (9, 296) = 4.940, p = .001
	Dispatched employees (11)	8.55 (7.725)	
	Employed part-time (35)	7.17 (3.365)	
	Self-employed (29)	3.365 (5.308)	
	Unemployed (12)	12.75 (5.707)	
	Homemakers (5)	11.20 (7.050)	
	Retired (3)	5.00 (7.000)	
	Students (57)	9.25 (6.553)	
	Unable to work (8)	20.13 (7.376)	
	Others (4)	4.00 (6.694)	

Geographical areas	Urban area (F = 191)	M = 8.04 (SD = 6.853)	F (2, 315) = 1.111, p = .331
	Suburban area (91)	9.32 (6.422)	
	Rural area (38)	8.89 (8.359)	

	Multiple linear regression	
COVID-19 experience★★★ (N = 178)	F (9, 168) = 10.598, p = .001, R^2 = .362, R^2 adjusted = .328 (B_0 = .315)	
To what extent are you worried about your health condition during the COVID-19 pandemic?		B = −.637, p =. 236
To what extent are you worried about your financial situation during the COVID-19 pandemic?★★		B = 1.765, p = .006
To what extent is your health condition affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?★★★		B = 1.878, p = .001
To what extent is your financial situation affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?		B = −.626, p = .304
How often has your daily routine been disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic?★		B = 1.001, p = .031
How much of a threat is COVID-19 to you?		B = .015, p = .978
As an LGBTQ+ person, to what extent has your life been affected by social distancing measures, including stay-at-home orders, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic?★		B = −1.046, p = .029
How often have you experienced family conflict related to your sexual orientation or gender identity during the COVID-19 pandemic?★★		B = 1.705, p = .002
How often have you reduced connection to the LGBTQ+ community during the COVID-19 pandemic?		B = .134, p = .707

	Simple linear regression
At home or family-related matters (N = 267)	F (1, 265) = 2.468, p = .117, R^2 = .009, R^2 adjusted = .005, B = −.544 (B_0 = 10.551)
At work or work-related matters (244)★	F (1, 242) = 6.514, p = .011, R^2 = .026, R^2 adjusted = .022, B = −.796 (B_0 = 10.912)
At school or school-related matters (150)	F (1, 148) = 1.478, p = .226, R^2 = .010, R^2 adjusted = .003, B = −.527 (B_0 = 10.727)
At healthcare facility or healthcare-related matters (219)★★	F (1, 217) = 7.980, p = .005, R^2 = .035, R^2 adjusted = .031, B = −1.146 (B_0 = 12.301)
Opportunities to meet your partner (213)★★	F (1, 211) = 10.135, p = .002, R^2 = .046, R^2 adjusted = .041, B = −.964 (B_0 = 11.421)
Opportunities to meet LGBTQ+ friends (271)	F (1, 269) = .548, p = .460, R^2 = .002, R^2 adjusted = −.002, B = −.271 (B_0 = 9.208)
Opportunities to use LGBTQ+ social services (233)	F (1, 231) = 1.069, p = .302, R^2 = .005, R^2 adjusted = .001, B = −.327 (B_0 = 9.747)
Opportunities to use LGBTQ+ entertainment venues (252)	F (1, 250) = 1.305, p = .254, R^2 = .005, R^2 adjusted = .001, B = −.354 (B_0 = 9.089)

★Significant at 0.05, ★★ at 0.01, and ★★★ at 0.001 (two-tailed)

groups by sexuality and gender, namely gay (7.06), lesbian (6.21), bisexual men (6.83), bisexual women (9.00), pansexual men (20.33), pansexual women (14.12), MtF/X (13.00), FtM/X (10.03), asexual men (6.67), asexual women (11.18), other queer men (4.83), and other queer women (10.59), revealed that wider differences among participants from 4.83 among other queer men to 20.33 among pansexual men. The results of one-way ANOVA test indicated that the differences were significant, $F(11, 307) = 4.190$, $p = .001$, suggesting a great diversity in depression level among the participants depending on sexual orientation and gender identity beyond the conventional four subgroups.

4.3.2.1.2 Race and Ethnicity

The mean depression score for JJ participants who identified as Japanese race/ethnicity was 8.84, while those who did not identify as Japanese race/ethnicity was 7.79. The results of an independent sample t-test indicated that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups, $t(246) = -.685$, $p = .497$. At the same time, the mean depression score for FJ participants who identified as White/European was 8.81, and the score for those who did not identified as White/European was 6.26. The results indicated that the differences were not significant, $t(52)$, -1.697, $p = .096$. As far as these results are concerned, race or ethnicity does not explain participants' depression level.

4.3.2.1.3 Occupational Status

Occupational status appeared to be another predictor of depression scores, $F(9, 296) = 4.940$, $p = .001$. Participants who scored higher include, from highest, unable to work (20.13), which falls in the range of severe depression, unemployed (12.75), homemakers (11.20), and students (9.25). The mean score for self-employed standouts at 3.365, which was the lowest and within the range of minimal depression. The mean scores for employed full-time for wages (7.31), dispatched employees (8.55), and employed part-time (7.17) fall between these two extremes.

4.3.2.1.4 Relationship Status

Concerning participants' relationship status, there were some interesting findings, although the differences were not statistically significant, $F(8, 310) = 1.471$, $p = .167$. The mean depression scores for single participants (9.44) and those in a relationship but not living together (8.67) were greatly higher than others. Similar to the results of the anxiety test, participants who were in a legal relationship or living together scored lower: from the lowest, same-sex married (5.17), living with a partner (6.58), in a partnership (6.62), and opposite-sex married (6.95). On another account, a similar examination between participants who were living together with a spouse or partner (6.33) and those were not (9.32) confirmed the results, $t(317)$, 3.518, $p = .001$. Additionally, the mean depression

score among participants who were living alone was significantly higher (9.44) than those who were not (7.82), $t(317)$, -2.325, $p = .021$.

4.3.2.1.5 Nationality/Place of Residence and Area of Residence

The mean depression scores among JJ, FJ, JO, and FO greatly vary: from the lowest, JO (5.45), FJ (7.30), JJ (8.74), and FO (22.67), which was in the range of severe depression. The differences were significant, $F(3, 315) = 5.831$, $p = .001$, although the numbers of FJ and particularly FO were limited. There were subtle differences among different geographical areas. The mean depression score among participants who lived in urban areas was the lowest at 8.04, while that of those lived in suburban areas was 9.32. The differences were not significant, $F(2, 315) = 1.111$, $p = .331$.

4.3.2.1.6 Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic

A multiple regression was carried out to investigate whether variables concerning participants' experience of the COVID-19 pandemic could significantly predict participants' depression scores. Of note, two questions concerning COVID-19 infection and financial preparedness were omitted from this analysis due to a large amount of missing data. The results of the regression indicated that the model explained 36.2% of the variance and that the model was a significant predictor of participants' depression level, $F(9, 168) = 10.598$, $p = .001$. The following variables contributed significantly to the model among the nine independent variables, in order of significance: (1) To what extent is your health condition affected by the COVID-19 pandemic? $B = 1.878$, $p = .001$; (2) To what extent are you worried about your financial situation during the COVID-19 pandemic? $B = 1.765$, $p = .006$; (3) How often have you experienced family conflict related to your sexual orientation or gender identity during the COVID-19 pandemic? $B = 1.705$, $p = .002$; (4) As an LGBTQ+ person, to what extent has your life been affected by social distancing measures, including stay-at-home orders, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic? $B = -1.046$, $p = .029$; and (5) How often has your daily routine been disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic? $B = 1.001$, $p = .031$.

4.3.2.1.7 Effect of Social Distancing Measures

A series of simple regression was carried out to investigate whether each of the variables concerning participants' assessment of the effect of social distancing measures could significantly predict participants' depression scores. Of note, instead of a multiple regression, this assessment used a series of simple regression due to a large number of missing data depending on the variable that would have reduced the total number of cases to less than one-third of the sample.

The results of the regression Indicated that the following three variables significantly predicted the depression level among participants, in order of significance:

(1) opportunities to meet your partner (213) $F(1, 211) = 10.135$, $p = .002$; (2) at healthcare facility or healthcare–related matters (219) $F(1, 217) = 7.980$, $p = .005$; and (3) at work or work–related matters (244), $F(1, 242) = 6.514$, $p = .011$. The results indicated that participants' limited opportunities to meet their partner due to the social distancing measures predict their depression level more than any other variables concerning the effect of social measures.

4.4 On Human Rights

The survey asked a series of questions concerning human rights. The great majority of the questions were adopted from the survey by the Ipsos *Human Rights in 2018: A Global Advisor Survey* (2018). The original Ipsos survey was conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic. It does not provide data concerning the LGBTQ+ identities of the participants. The present study asked the same questions to make a comparative analysis possible (e.g., Japanese perception of human rights before and during the pandemic as well as the country's general population versus LGBTQ+ individuals). Of note, the questions were asked in the same order and with the same wording, in both English and Japanese, as by Ipsos, except a few minor modifications (e.g., an omission of some irrelevant questions).

4.4.1 How Much, if Anything, Would You Say You Know About Human Rights?

Figure 4.3a–h illustrates results of the question "How much, if anything, would you say you know about human rights?" About half of participants ($F = 121$) answered "not very much," while 14 selected "nothing at all." On the other hand, about 40% of participants responded "a fair amount." Those who responded "a great deal" remained a small minority.

4.4.1.1 Educational Level and Nationality/Place of Residence

A close examination of the results shows some interesting trends. Participants' education and nationality/place of residence are closely associated with their knowing about human rights. A Spearman's rank-order correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between participants' knowing about human rights and educational level. There was a positive correlation between these scores and the correlation was statistically significant, $r_s(242) + .253$, $p = .001$. Among participants' nationality/place of residency subgroups, there were also some interesting findings. While 36.3% of JJ participants responded that they know about human rights either "a great deal" or "a fair amount," a little more than 75% of FJ participants and 90% of JO participants answered the same. The differences in terms of knowing about human rights among the nationality/place of residency subgroups are statistically significant, ANOVA $F(3, 246) = 13.168$, $p = .001$.

4.4.2 Is It Important to Have a Law That Protects Human Rights in Japan?

The next two questions were agree/disagree questions: "To what extent, or at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statement?" First, participants were asked, "Is it important to have a law that protects human rights in Japan?" The great majority, 181 out of 256, of participants "strongly agreed" with the statement and, combined with those who "tend to agree," about 94% of participants "agreed." In addition, 13 participants (5%) "neither agree nor disagree" with the statement.

4.4.2.1 Educational Level and Nationality/Place of Residence

Similar to the results for the previous question, participants' educational level and nationality/place of residence are associated with their agreeing to the statement. A Spearman's rank-order correlation was performed to see if the relationship between participants' educational level and agreeing to the statement and the result was statistically significant, $r_s(247) + .209$, $p = .001$. A closer examination revealed that, unlike those with less educational level, almost all participants with their educational level beyond college, including some graduate school, "strongly agreed" (87.2%) or "tend to agree" (10.6%). According to an ANOVA test, the relationship between participants' agreeing to this statement

1. How much, if anything, would you say you know about Human Rights generally? ($N = 250$)
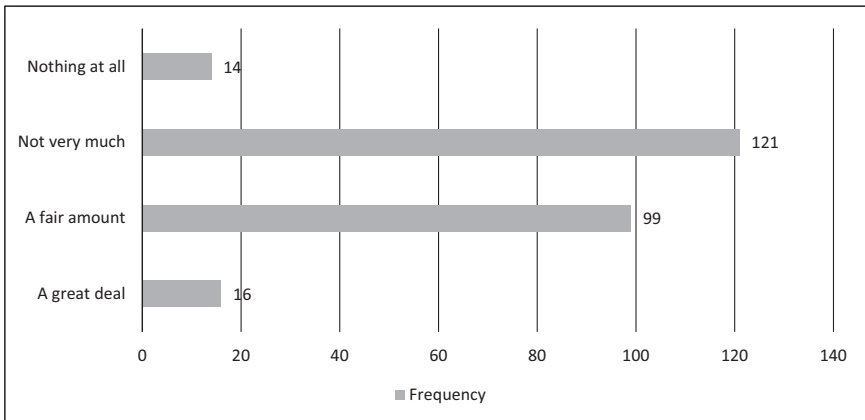
Statistically Significant Results:

Age: $F(6, 243) = 2.172$, $p = .046$; $X^2(18, N = 250) = 26.200$, $p = .095$
Educational level: $F(8, 233) = 10.524$, $p = .005$; $X^2(24, N = 242) = 39.941$, $p = .022$
Nationality/place of residence: $F(3, 246) = 13.168$, $p = .000$; $X2(9, N = 250) = 38.803$, $p = .000$

FIGURE 4.3a Human Rights

2. To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "It is important to have a law that protects Human Rights in Japan." ($N = 256$)
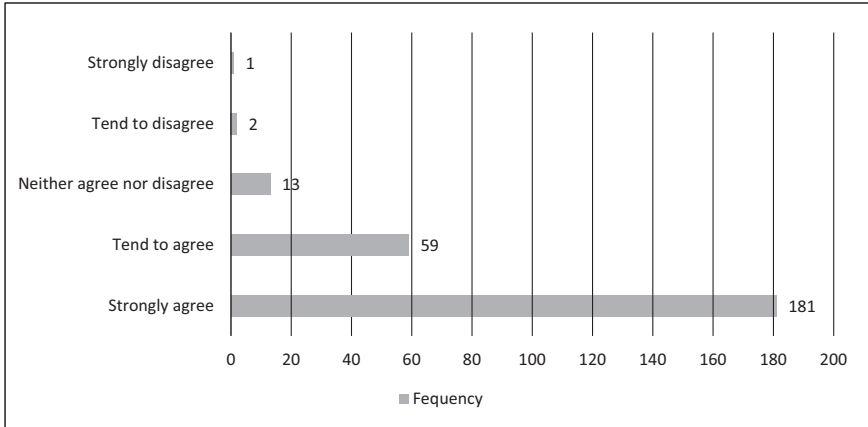
Statistically Significant Results:

Educational level: $F(8, 238) = 2.225$, $p = .026$; $X^2(32, N = 247) = 45.354$, $p = .059$
Nationality/place of residence: $F(3, 252) = 3.780$, $p = .011$; $X^2(12, N = 256) = 13.343$, $p = .345$

FIGURE 4.3b (Continued)

3. People in favor of Human Rights say that all human beings are born with equal rights, no matter who they are or where they are born. These rights can never be taken away, even though they might be restricted at times (for example, if someone breaks the law or for national security). When it comes to Human Rights, which of the following statements comes closest to what you believe? ($N = 261$)
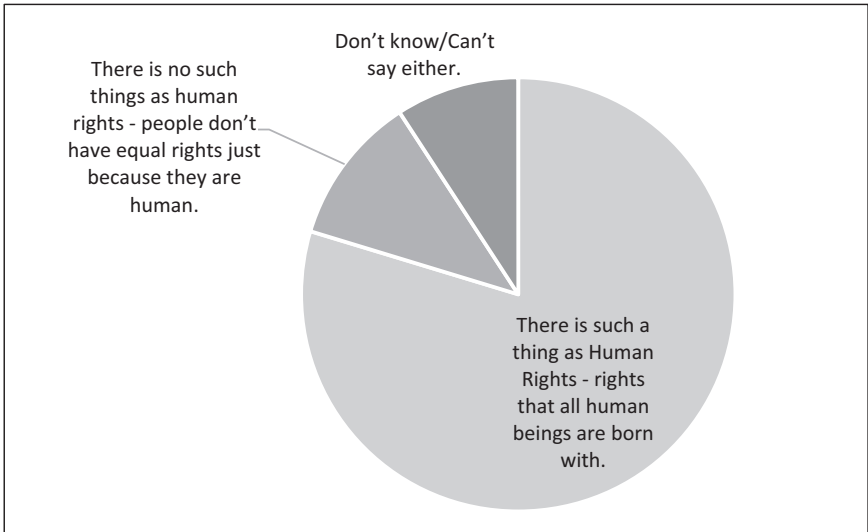
FIGURE 4.3c (Continued)

4. What difference, if at all, do you think laws protecting Human Rights make to your life as an LGBTQ+ person? ($N = 240$)
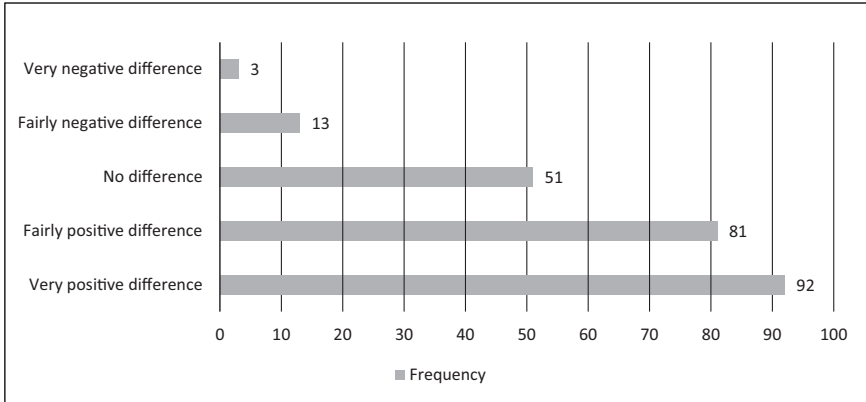
FIGURE 4.3d (Continued)

5. Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally? ($N = 260$)
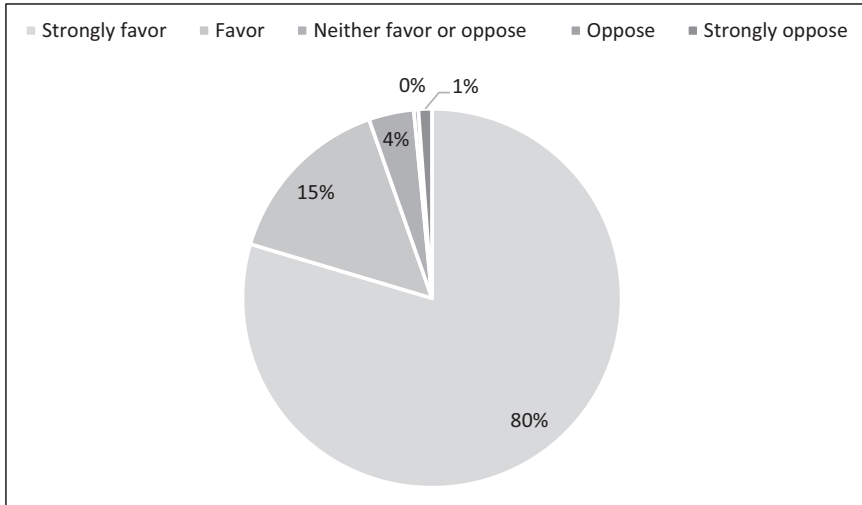
Statistically Significant Results:

Age: $X^2(24, N = 260) = 38.196, p = .033$
Nationality/place of residence: $F(3, 256) = 4.085, p = .026$
LGBT subgroups (8 groups): $F(7, 252) = 8.954, p = .004; X^2(28, N = 260) = 41.145, p = .052$
Gender (no trans): $X^2(4, N = 229) = 11.214, p = .024$

FIGURE 4.3e (Continued)

6. What do you think are the most important problems facing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people today? (Select all that apply.) ($N = 1934$)
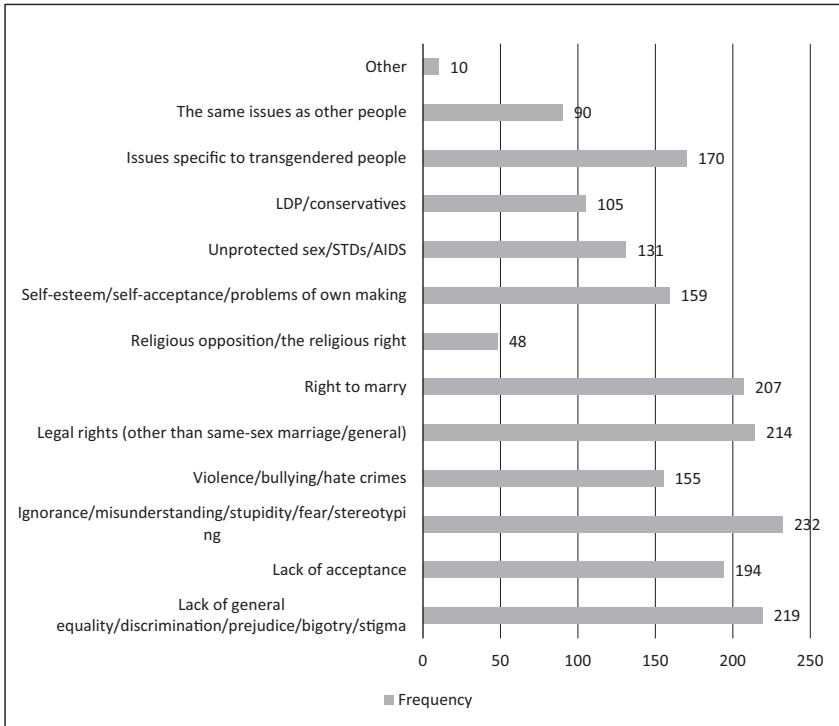
FIGURE 4.3f   (Continued)

and nationality/place of residence is also significant, ANOVA $F(3, 252) = 3.780$, $p = .011$. One of the major differences between JJ participants and the rest is that 7% of the former selected either "neither agree nor disagree" ($F = 12$ out of 199), "tend to disagree" ($F = 2$), or "strongly disagree" ($F = 1$). Among non-JJ participants, only one participant selected "neither agree nor disagree" and none disagreed with the statement. Of note, all JO participants answered that they "strongly agree" to the statement that "it is important to have a law that protects human rights in Japan."

4.4.3 Are All Human Beings Are Born With Equal Rights, No Matter Who They Are or Where They Are Born?

Next, participants were presented with this scenario: "People in favor of human rights say that all human beings are born with equal rights, no matter who they are or where they are born. These rights can never be taken away, even though they might be restricted at times (for example, if someone breaks the law or for national security). When it comes to human rights, which of the following

7. What would allow you to be more comfortable living as a LGBTQ+ person in Japan? (*N* = 251–254)

Legend: ■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly disagree

Coverage of transgender health issues by health insurance: 2, 3, 24, 92, 131

Support for organizations that provide services to LGBT youth: 2, 4, 23, 95, 129

More efforts aimed at prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS: 0, 4, 32, 100, 117

Recognition of same-sex partnerships across Japan: 3, 12, 58, 180

The possibility to foster/adopt children: 3, 4, 24, 67, 153

The possibility to marry and/or register a partnership: 2, 10, 49, 190

Better acceptance of differences in sexual orientations and gender identities by religious leaders: 7, 13, 67, 74, 92

Training of public servants (e.g. police, teachers) on the rights of LGBT people: 5, 3, 17, 67, 162

National authorities who promote the rights of LGBT people: 3, 1, 25, 78, 146

Public figures in politics, business, sports, etc. openly speaking in support of LGBTQ+ people: 2, 6, 40, 83, 122

Measures implemented at school to respect LGBTQ+ people: 3, 3, 21, 67, 160

Anti-discrimination policies referring to sexual orientation and gender identity at the workplace: 4, 4, 28, 101, 117

FIGURE 4.3g   (Continued)

statements comes closest to what you believe?" The choices were "there is such a thing as human rights – rights that all human beings are born with"; "there is no such thing as human rights – people don't have equal rights just because they are human"; and "don't know/can't say either." Overall, 208 out of 261, almost 80%, participants selected that "there is such a thing as human rights." No vari-ables were found to be closely associated with how participants answered this

8. How much, if at all, does each of the following help to make society more accepting of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTQ+) people in Japan? ($N = 250$–254)
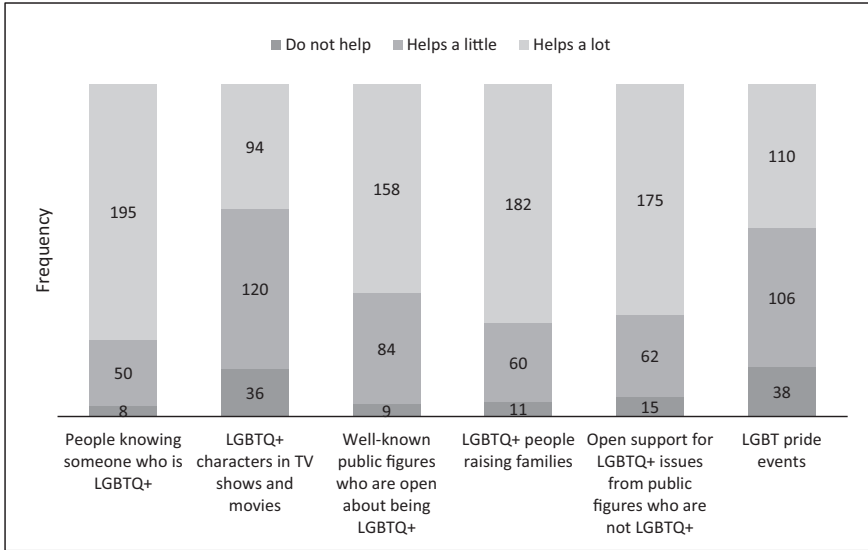
FIGURE 4.3h (Continued)

question; although, a further examination revealed that 28 out of 29 who selected "there is no such things as human rights" and 22 out of 24 who answered "don't know/can't say either" were JJ participants. It seems that there are some major gap in understanding "human rights" between JJ participants and the rest. "Human rights" in Japanese society and culture will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

4.4.4 What Difference, if at All, Do You Think Laws Protecting Human Rights Make to Your Life as an LGBTQ+ Person?

Participants were asked, "What difference, if at all, do you think laws protecting human rights make to your life as an LGBTQ+ person?" Participants selected their answer from the following: "very positive difference," "fairly positive difference," "no difference," "fairly negative difference," and "very negative difference." Overall, 173 out of 240, about 72%, participants answered either "very positive" ($F = 92$) or "fairly positive difference" ($F = 81$), while 51, which is more than one-fifth, think that laws protecting human rights make "no difference" to their life as an LGBTQ+ person. In addition, 14 participants selected either "fairly negative difference" ($F = 13$) or "very negative difference" ($F = 3$). Similar to the earlier questions, although to a lesser extent, participants' educational level and nationality/place of residence seem to be associated with how they answered this particular question. A Spearman's rank-order correlation results in a statistically significant positive correlation, $r_s(232) = -.142$, $p = .031$.

The higher the educational level of participants, the more positive effect they think that laws protecting human rights make to their life as an LGBTQ+ person. A chi-square of independence test was performed to examine the relationship between participants' thinking of laws protecting human rights and their nationality/place of residence. The relationship between these variables was not significant, X^2 (12, N = 240) = 17.263, p = .140; however, a close examination of results revealed that the great majority of participants who answered either "no difference," "fairly negative difference," or "very negative difference" are JJ participants: they constitute 46 out of 51, 9 out of 13, and two out of three. In particular, the differences between JJ and JO participants are noteworthy. While more than 30% of the former selected either "no difference," "fairly negative difference," or "very negative," none among the latter did.

4.4.5 Do You Strongly Favor, Favor, Oppose, or Strongly Oppose Allowing Gays and Lesbians to Marry Legally?

The next question is about legalization of same-sex marriage. Participants were asked, "Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally?" The great majority (95%) of participants answered either "strongly favor" (80%) or "favor" (15%) same-sex marriage. While 4% of participants selected "neither favor nor oppose," 1% answered that they "oppose" to same-sex marriage. A close examination of the results revealed some interesting trends: participants' age, nationality/place of residence, and gender were significantly associated with their view on legalization of same-sex marriage. The older the participants were, the more they favored allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally. JJ participants as well as male participants, excluding transgender participants, were less likely than others to favor same-sex marriage.

4.4.5.1 Age, Gender, and Nationality/Place of Residence

A chi-square of independence test was run to examine the relationship between participants' attitudes toward same-sex marriage and age. The relationship between these variables is significant, X^2 (24, N = 260) = 38.196, p = .033. For example, although the great majority "strongly favor" or "favor," the difference lies between participants who selected "strongly favor" and "favor." For example, about 83% and 85% of the youngest participants, 18–24 years old and 25–34 years old, "strongly favor" same-sex marriage, about 73% and 78% of those who are 35–44 years old and 45–54 years old answered the same. As for gender differences, a one-way ANOVA was performed to compare the effect of participants' gender on their attitudes toward same-sex marriage. The statistical test revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in attitudes toward same-sex marriage between at least two groups, $F(7, 252)$ = 8.954, p = .004. For example, all participants who identity as lesbian "strongly favor," while less than three-quarters of those who identify as gay answered the same. Besides,

a close examination further revealed that participants who identify as bisexual, pansexual, and other sexualities are less likely to "strongly favor" legalization of same-sex marriage. As for nationality/place of residence subgroups, a one-way ANOVA test was performed. The test revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in attitudes toward same-sex marriage, $F(3, 256) = 4.085$, $p = .026$. The difference lies mostly due to the fact that those who answered, "neither favor nor oppose," "oppose," or "strongly oppose" are Japanese nationals living in Japan.

4.4.6 What Are The Most Important Problems Facing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transsexual People Today?

Chart 6.1 illustrates results of the question "What do you think are the most important problems facing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people today? Select all that apply." The five most important problems they selected are, in order of frequency, "ignorance/misunderstanding/stupidity/fear/stereotyping" ($F = 232$), "lack of general equality/discrimination/prejudice/bigotry/stigma" ($F = 219$), "legal rights (other than same-sex marriage)" ($F = 214$), "right to marry" ($F = 207$), and "lack of acceptance" ($F = 194$).

4.4.7 What Would Allow You to Be More Comfortable Living as an LGBTQ+ Person in Japan?

Chart 6.2 demonstrates results of the question "What would allow you to be more comfortable living as an LGBTQ+ person in Japan?" Participants were asked to choose their answer from the following: "strongly disagree," "disagree," "neither agree nor disagree," "agree," and "strongly agree." The five items participants "strongly agree" the most for are, in order of frequency, "the possibility to marry and/or register a partnership" ($F = 190$), "recognition of same-sex partnership across Japan" (180), "training of public servants (e.g. police, teachers) on the rights of LGBTQ+ people" (162), "measures implemented at school to respect LGBTQ+ people" (160), and "the possibility to foster/adopt children" (153).

4.4.8 What Would Help to Make Society More Accepting of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBTQ+) People in Japan?

The last question in this section asked the following question: "How much, if at all, does each of the following help to make society more accepting of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTQ+) people in Japan?" Participants were asked to select "do not help," "helps a little," or "helps a lot" for the following items: "People knowing someone who is LGBTQ+," "LGBTQ+ characters in TV shows and movies," "well-known public figures who are open about being LGBTQ+," "LGBTQ+ people raising families," "open support for LGBTQ+ issues from public figures who are not LGBTQ+," and "LGBTQ+ pride events."

The three items participants answered as "helps a lot" the most are "people knowing someone who is LGBTQ+" ($F = 195$), "LGBTQ+ people raising families" ($F = 182$), and "open support for LGBTQ+ issues from public figures who are not LGBTQ+" ($F = 175$), while the two items "LGBTQ+ characters in TV shows and movies" and "LGBTQ+ pride events" received the least ratings. In fact, 36 and 38 participants answered that they "do not help" to make society more accepting of LGBTQ+ people in Japan.

4.5 General Impressions of the Japanese LGBTQ+ Community

4.5.1 How Comfortable Do You Feel Being an LGBTQ+ Person in Japan?

This section demonstrates results of survey questions related to participants' general impressions of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community. Figure 4.4a–i illustrates the main results. Figure 4.4a shows results of the question, "How comfortable do you feel being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan?" Participants were asked to select their answer from the following: "very comfortable," "comfortable," "neutral," "not comfortable," and "Not at all comfortable." About 60% of participants answered they do not feel comfortable being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan, including 62 participants who responded, "not at all comfortable." Those who answered that they feel comfortable being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan are a minority, including about 13% of participants who responded "comfortable." Some variables are found to be associated with participants' assessment of living as an LGBTQ+ person in Japan and those who are more likely than others to feel comfortable being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan are gays, foreign nationals living in Japan, and those who are highly educated, although by no means those who feel comfortable being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan represent a majority of these subgroups.

4.5.1.1 MtF/X Transgender People

A chi-square of independence test was performed to examine the relationship between participants' impressions of being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan and their transgender identity and results indicated the relationship to be statistically significant, $X^2(4, N = 270) = 11.715$, $p = .020$. More than three-quarters of transgender participants answered that they do not feel comfortable, including "not at all comfortable," being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan, while a little more than half of participants who do not identity as transgender. A further examination revealed that there is a great gap between MtF/X and FtM/X participants and the former assessed their impressions of being an LGBTQ+ person greatly less favorable than the latter. For example, more than 90% of MtF/X participants chose "uncomfortable," including 7 out of 11 MtF/X participants who answered, "not at all comfortable," while about three-quarters of FtM/X participants selected "comfortable."

4.5.1.2 Asexual Women Versus Gays, Foreign Nationals Living in Japan, and Highly Educated

Besides transgender participants, asexual female participants' impressions of being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan scored the second least favorable only after these by MtF/X transgender participants. There are some sexual orientation and gender identity subgroups that assessed their impressions more favorably than others, including gay and bisexual male participants. Twenty-seven (22.5%) of gay participants, for example, responded that they feel comfortable being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan. Among nationality/place of residence subgroups, participants who are non–Japanese nationals living in Japan on average also gave a more favorable assessment of being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan than other subgroups. For example, about a quarter of them answered either "comfortable" or "very comfortable," while about 14% of JJ participants answered the same. The difference between these two subgroups is indeed statistically significant, $X^2(4, N = 270) = 17.146$, $p = .002$. Incidentally, none among Japanese nationals or immigrants overseas responded that being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan is comfortable, either "comfortable" or "very comfortable." Finally, there is a statistically significant relationship between the educational level of participants and their assessment of being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan,

1. How comfortable do you feel being an LGBT person in Japan? ($N = 270$)
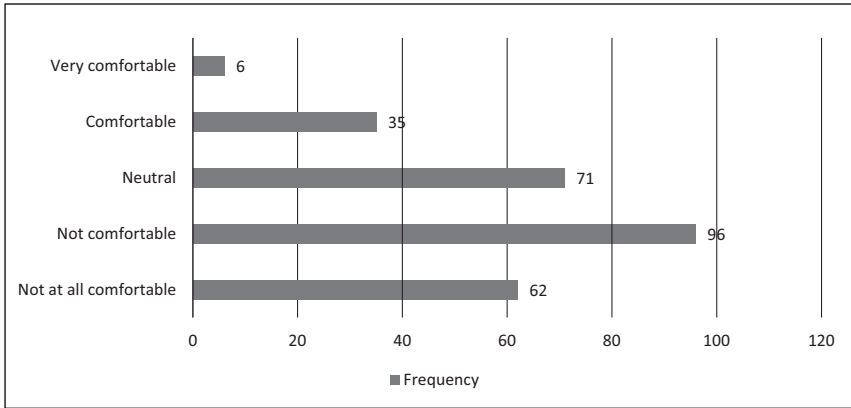
Significant Statistical Results:

Gender (no trans): $X^2(4, N = 238) = 7.489$, $p = .112$; $F(1, 236) = 5.816$, $p = .017$
Transgender: $X^2(4, N = 270) = 11.715$, $p = .020$; $F(1, 268) = 10.142$, $p = 002$
LGBTQ+ subgroups (4 groups): $X^2(12, N = 270) = 23.070$, $p = .027$; $F(3, 266) = 4.488$, $p = .004$
LGBTQ+ subgroups (8 groups): $X^2(28, N = 270) = 41.731$, $p = .046$; $F(7, 262) = 3.195$, $p = .003$
LGBTQ+ subgroups (12 groups): $X^2(44, N = 270) = 59.294$, $p = .062$; $F(11, 258) = 2.431$, $p = .007$
Nationality/place of residence: $X^2(12, N = 270) = 21.533$, $p = .043$; $F(3, 266) = 5.323$, $p = .001$
Nationality/place of residence – FJ: $X^2(4, N = 270) = 17.146$, $p = .002$; $F(1, 268) = 14.341$, $p = .001$
Educational level: $r_s(257) = 0.153$, $p = .014$

FIGURE 4.4a General Impressions of the Japanese LGBTQ+ Community

2. For each of the following types of discrimination, could you please specify whether, in your opinion, it is very rare, fairly rare, fairly widespread or very widespread in Japan? ($N = 272–279$)

	Very rare	Fairly rare	Neither rare nor widespread	Fairly widespread	Very widespread
Education	25	34	86	83	47
Social class	26	50	67	93	38
Immigrant	21	27	61	93	71
Disability	16	27	57	120	55
Religion or belief	41	65	87	64	19
Age	16	30	53	112	64
Gender identification	15	15	52	104	86
Sexual orientation	5	13	42	123	93
Gender	14	12	30	109	111
Race or ethnic origin	22	38	43	126	50

Frequency

FIGURE 4.4b (Continued)

$r_s(259) + .153$, $p = .014$. The more education participants have completed, the more favorable their assessment of being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan.

4.5.2 What Are Most Widespread Types of Discrimination in Japan?

4.5.2.1 Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identification

Figure 4.4b illustrates results of the question "For each of the following types of discrimination, could you please specify whether, in your opinion, it is very rare,

3. In your opinion, in Japan, how widespread is discrimination because a person is… ($N = 260$–269)

Very widespread
Fairly widespread
Neither rare nor widespread
Fairly rare
Very rare
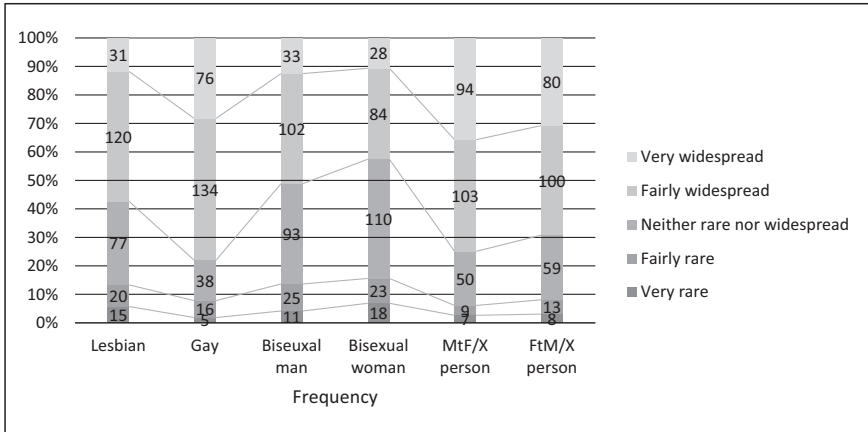
FIGURE 4.4c (Continued)

4. Thinking about the level of social acceptance of different groups of LGBT people in Japan today, how much social acceptance, if any, do you think there is of each of the following? ($N = 267$–272)

Not at all
Only a little
Some
A lot
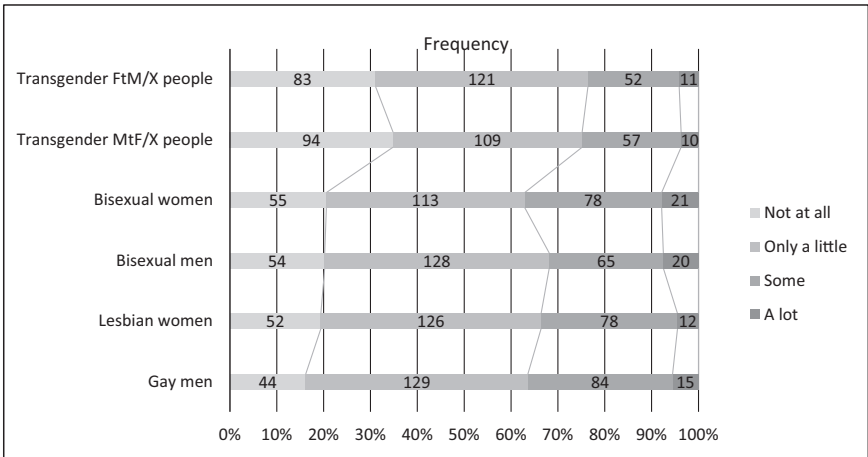
FIGURE 4.4d (Continued)

fairly rare, fairly widespread, or very widespread in Japan?" According to the results, the three most widespread types of discrimination in Japan are based on people's gender, sexual orientation, and gender identification. For example, 220 out of 276 participants answered either "fairly widespread" ($F = 109$) or "very widespread" ($F = 111$). As for discrimination based on sexual orientation, 216 out of 276 participants responded either "fairly widespread" ($F = 123$) or "very

5. I feel that the problems faced by the local LGBTQ+ community are also my problems. ($N = 279$)
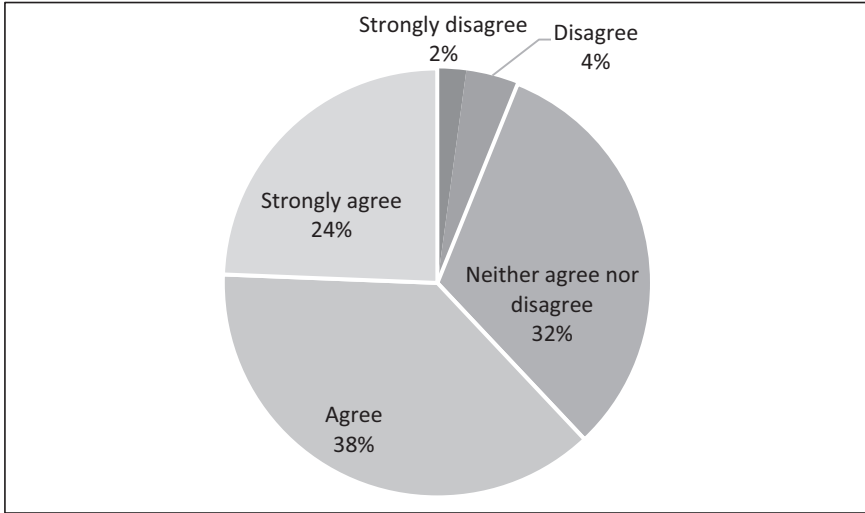
FIGURE 4.4e   (Continued)

6. Most of the bad things in my life happen because of homophobia and/or transphobia. ($N = 281$)
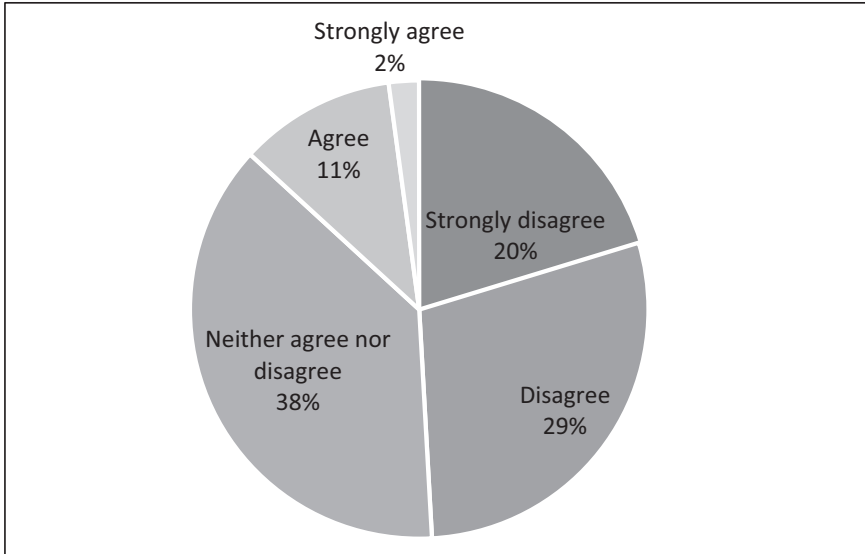
Statistically Significant Results:

Transgender identity: $X^2(4, N = 181) = 13.109, p = .011; F(1, 279) = 10.158, p = .002$
Racial/ethnic minority JJ: $X^2(4, N = 220) = 9.734, p = .045$

FIGURE 4.4f   (Continued)

7. I'm glad I belong to the LGBTQ+ community. ($N = 281$)
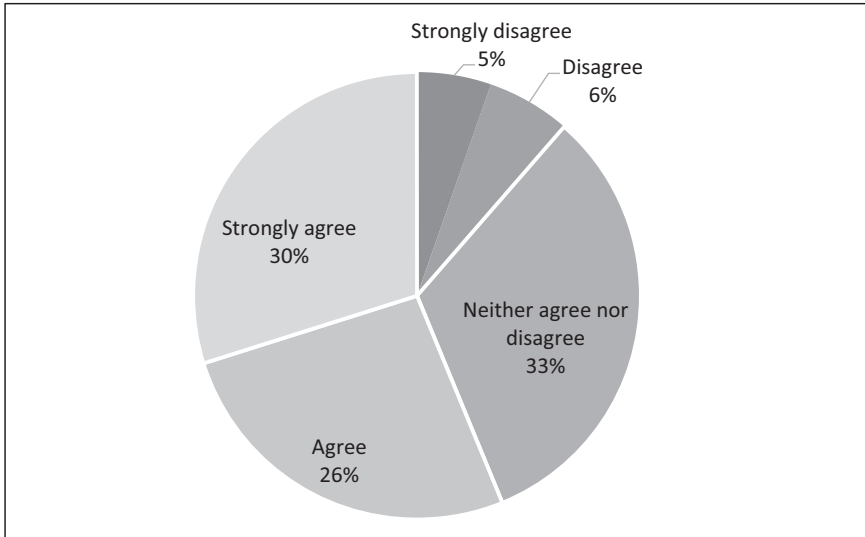
Statistically Significant Results:

Age: $X^2(24, N = 281) = 46.567$, $p = .004$
Transgender identity: $X^2(4, N = 281) = 19.895$, $p = .001$; $F(1, 279) = 16.481$, $p = .001$
LGBTQ+ subgroups (8 groups): $F(7, 273) = 4.465$, $p = .001$; $X^2(28, N = 281) = 58.141$, $p = .001$

FIGURE 4.4g   (Continued)

8. Overall, how much social acceptance, if any, of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people do you think there is in Japan today? ($N = 269$)
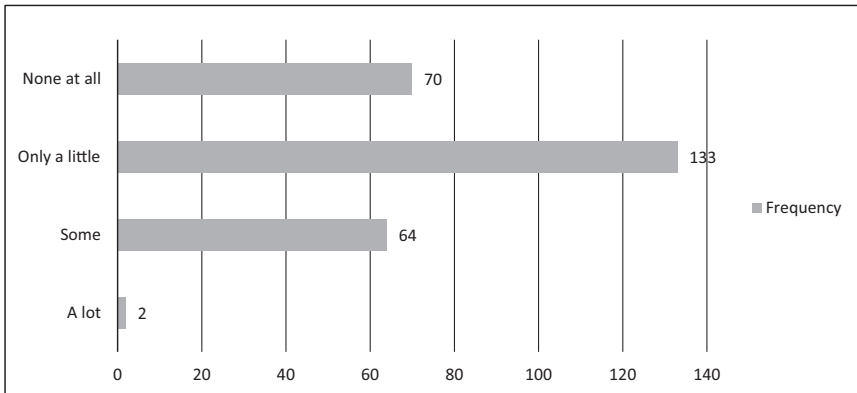
Statistically Significant Results:

Nationality/place of residence: $F(3, 265) = 9.606$, $p = .001$; $X^2(9, N = 269) = 22.992$, $p = .006$
Nationality/place of residence – FJ: $X^2(3, N = 269) = 21.170$, $p = .000$; $F(1, 267) = 9.501$, $p = .001$

FIGURE 4.4h   (Continued)

9. Compared with 10 years ago, would you say the level of social acceptance of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in Japan today is …
10. Looking ahead 10 years from now, do you think the level of social acceptance of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in this country will be…
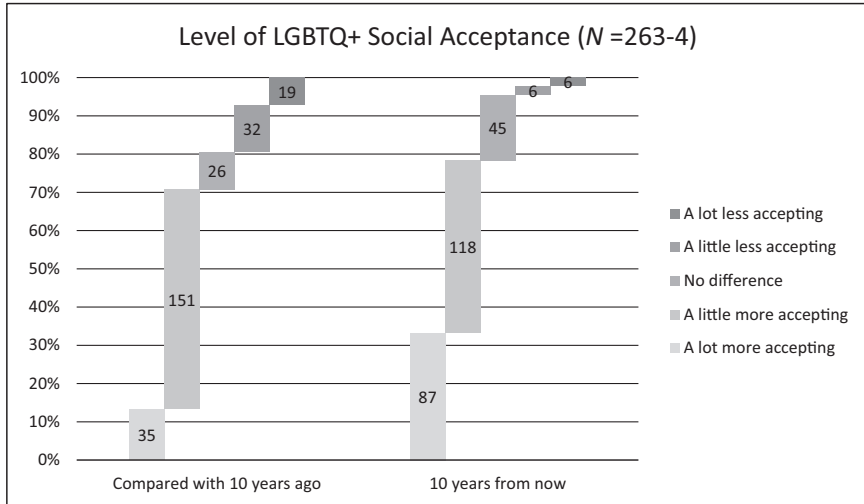
Statistically Significant Results for Question 9:

Age: $F(6, 256) = 2.305$, $p = .035$; $X^2(24, N = 263) = 40.653$, $p = .018$
Gender (no trans): $X^2(4, N = 232) = 11.562$, $p = .021$; $F(1, 230) = 8.078$, $p = .005$
LGBTQ+ subgroups (4 groups): $F(3, 259) = 2.692$, $p = .047$

FIGURE 4.4i (Continued)

widespread" ($F = 93$), whereas 190 out of 272 participants answered either "fairly widespread" ($F = 104$) or "very widespread" ($F = 86$).

4.5.3 How Widespread Is Discrimination Because a Person Is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Man, Bisexual Woman, MtF/X Person, or FtM/X Person?

4.5.3.1 Gays, MtF/X and FtM/X Transgender People

Figure 4.4c demonstrates results of the question "In your opinion, in Japan, how widespread is discrimination because a person is lesbian, gay, bisexual man, bisexual woman, MtF/X person, or FtM/X person?" Participants believe that gays, MtF/X, and FtM/X transgender people are the three subgroups that are subject to the most discrimination in Japan. For example, nearly 80% of participants think that discrimination against gays is widespread, either "very widespread" (about 30%) or "fairly widespread" (about 50%). At the same time, more participants believe that discrimination against both MtF/X and FtM/X are "very widespread" than they do concerning discrimination against gays. Comparatively speaking, participants

think that discrimination against bisexual women is the least widespread among the six subgroups, although more than 40% of participants think that discrimination against bisexual women is widespread.

4.5.4 How Much Social Acceptance Is There of a Person Is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Man, Bisexual Woman, MtF/X Person, or FtM/X Person?

4.5.4.1 Gays and Bisexual Women

This question is similar to the earlier question, but asked participants about social acceptance of different SOGI subgroups in Japan today. The question asked, "Thinking about the level of social acceptance of different groups of LGBT people in Japan today, how much of social acceptance, if any, do you think there is of each of the following?" The subgroups of LGBT people given for this question are same as the aforementioned, and participants were instructed to select their answers from the following options: a lot, some, only a little, and not at all. Of 272 participants, 99 think that gay men are socially accepted, either "some" ($F = 84$) or "a lot" ($F = 15$), while 99 out of 267 participants think that bisexual women are socially accepted either "some" ($F = 78$) or "a lot" ($F = 21$). These two subgroups are thought to be most accepted in Japan by participants, probably, perhaps for different reasons, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8. On the other hand, participants believe that transgender people are less social accepted than others. For example, 204 out of 267, more than three-quarters, participants selected "not at all" ($F = 83$) or "only a little" ($F = 121$) for transgender FtM/X people. Similarly, 203 out of 270 participants chose "not at all" ($F = 94$) or "only a little" ($F = 109$) for transgender MtF/X people.

4.5.5 Do You Feel That the Problems Faced by the Local LGBTQ+ Community Are Also Your Problems?

The next three questions asked participants' identification with the Japanese LGBTQ+ community. Participants chose the most appropriate answer from the following: "strongly agree," "agree," "neither agree nor disagree," "disagree," or "strongly disagree." "I feel that the problems faced by the local LGBTQ+ community are also my problems." Nearly two-thirds of participants agreed, including 38% agree and 24% strongly agree, while about one-third of participants selected "neither agree nor disagree" with the statement. Those who disagreed with the statement are a small minority.

4.5.5.1 The Youth

Among various sociodemographic characteristics, only participants' age is found to be associated with how they responded to this question. One of the major differences

seem mostly due to those who "strongly agreed." For example, about one-third of the youngest group, 18–24 years old, about 24% of those who are 25–34 years old, and a little less than 20% of those who are 35–54 years old feel that the problems faced by the local LGBTQ+ community are also their problems. A chi-square of independence test indicated that the relationship between these variables is statistically significant, $X^2(24, N = 279) = 66.701$, $p = .001$. Of note, the relationship is not correlational and, at the same time, a large number of participants who chose "neither agree nor disagree" somewhat makes any trends difficult to observe.

4.5.6 Do Most of the Bad Things in Your Life Happen Because of Homophobia and/or Transphobia?

4.5.6.1 MtF/X Transgender People Versus Racial/Ethnic Identification Among Japanese Nationals Living in Japan

"Most of the bad things in my life happen because of homophobia and/or transphobia." About 13% of participants agreed with this statement, either "strongly agree" (2%) or "agree" (11%), while nearly half of them disagreed, either "strongly disagree" (20%) or "disagree" (29%). Of note, nearly 40% of participants responded, "neither agree nor disagree" (38%). A further examination of the results with some sociodemographic characteristics of participants illustrates some revealing trends. First of all, participants who identify as transgender tends to agree more with the statement than the rest. Nearly 30% of transgender participants agreed with the statement, while about 10% of non-transgender participants did. A chi-square of independence test was used to determine if the relationship between these two variables is meaningful. The results indicate that it is, $X^2(4, N = 181) = 13.109$, $p = .011$. Further, it is found that 10 out of 32, more than 30%, of FtM/X transgender participants agreed with the statement. A one-way ANOVA test indicates that the difference between the mean scores of SOGI subgroups (eight groups) is significant, $F(7, 273) = 2.510$, $p = .016$. Incidentally, Japanese racial/ethnic identity among JJ participants is significantly associated with their response to this particular question, $X^2(4, N = 220) = 9.734$, $p = .045$. Sixty-five percent of non-Japanese race/ethnicity identifying JJ participants disagreed, either "strongly disagree" or "disagree," to the statement, while 45% of Japanese race/ethnicity identifying JJ participants did. This finding is meaningful in understanding the Japanese LGBTQ+ community through an intersectional lens and will be discussed further in Chapter 8.

4.5.7 Are You Glad You Belong to the LGBTQ+ Community?

4.5.7.1 Age

"I'm glad I belong to the LGBTQ+ community." About 56% of participants agreed with this statement, either "strongly" (30%) or "agree" (26%). While

one-third of participants selected "neither agree nor disagree," those who disagreed are a minority. Some of sociodemographic characteristics that are found to be associated with being glad to belong to the LGBTQ+ community include age and SOGI identity. A chi-square of independence test was performed to examine the relationship between participants' response to this particular question and their age. The relationship is significant, $X^2(24, N = 281) = 46.567$, $p = .004$. Due to a large number of participants who selected "neither agree nor disagree," it is hard to observe any trends; nevertheless, a close examination revealed that the difference seem to be a result of participants who "strongly agreed" with the statement, which greatly vary across different age groups. For example, nearly 40% of the youngest group of participants, 18–24 years old, and about 28% of those who are 25–54 year old answered "strongly agree."

4.5.7.2 FtM/X Transgender Identity

Another chi-square of independence test was run to determine if there is a meaningful relationship between participants being glad to belong to the LGBTQ+ community and transgender identity. The relationship between these two variables is statistically significant, $X^2(4, N = 281) = 19.895$, $p = .001$. One-third of participants who identify as transgender replied either "strongly agree" or "agree," while more than 60% of those who do not identify as transgender answered the same. Among transgender participants, nearly 20% of FtM/X participants "strongly disagreed" with the statement, which is outstanding, as it Is 15 points higher than 5% for overall. A one-way ANOVA test indicates that the difference in the mean scores between eight SOGI groups is significant, $F(7, 273) = 4.465$, $p = .001$.

4.5.8 How Much of Social Acceptance, if Any, of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender People Do You Think There Is in Japan Today?

Figure 4.4d illustrates the results of the question, "Overall, how much of social acceptance, if any, of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people do you think there is in Japan today?" Nearly half of participants responded that there is "only a little" social acceptance of LGBT people and 70 participants, more than a quarter, answered "none at all." At the same time, nearly a quarter of participants ($F = 64$) responded that there is "some" social acceptance, and two participants chose "a lot" of social acceptance of LGBT people in Japan today. Some sociodemographic variables appear to be associated with participants' impressions of social acceptance of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, including education and nationality/place of residence.

4.5.8.1 Educational Level and Nationality/Place of Residence

A Spearman's rank-order correlation was used to measure the correlation between participants' impressions of social acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community and

the furthest educational level they have completed. There was a negative correlation between the two variables, $r_s(256) = -.160$, $p = .010$. The more educated participants are, the less they think LGBT people are accepted in society. A one-way ANOVA was used to determine the effect of participants' nationality/place of residence on their impressions of social acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community. Results of the test revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in participants' impressions of social acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community between at least two groups, $F(3, 265) + 9.606$, $p = .001$. A further examination of the results shows that, while there seems to be not much difference between JJ and JO participants, FJ participants' impressions of social acceptance of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community are significantly more favorable than the rest. For example, about half of FJ participants thought that there was some social acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community in Japan today, while about one-fifth of JJ counterparts answered the same.

4.5.9 How Would You Say the Level of Social Acceptance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender People in Japan Today, Compared With 10 Years Ago and Looking Ahead 10 Years From Now?

Figure 4.4i shows the results of two interrelated questions: "Compared with 10 years ago, would you say the level of social acceptance of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people in Japan today is: a lot less accepting, a little less accepting, no difference, a little more accepting, or a lot more accepting?" "Looking ahead 10 years from now, do you think the level of social acceptance of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people in Japan will be: a lot less accepting, a little less accepting, no difference, a little more accepting, or a lot more accepting?"

Nearly 70% of participants believe that, compared with 10 years ago, the level of social acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community in Japan has improved, while about 30% of participants think otherwise, including 20% of participants who believe that Japanese society today is less accepting of the LGBTQ+ community than 10 years ago. On the other hand, looking ahead 10 years from now, nearly 80% of participants think that the level of social acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community in Japan will improve, including over 30% of participants who answered "a lot more accepting." While those who selected "a lot less accepting" or "a little less accepting" are a small minority, a little less than 20% of participants believe that there will be "no difference" 10 years from now.

4.5.9.1 Age, Gender, and Sexual/Gender Identity

A close examination of results revealed some interesting trends. Participants' assessment of social acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community in Japan today as compared with 10 years ago is associated with some of their sociodemographic characteristics, including age, gender, and SOGI identity. A Spearman's

rank-order correlation was used to measure the correlation between participants' impressions of social acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community as compared with 10 years ago and their age. There was a negative correlation between the two variables, $r_s(261) = -.189$, $p = .002$. For example, half of participants who are 55–64 years old chose "less accepting," either "a lot less" or "a little less," about 22%–24% of those who are 35–54 years old, and 13%–15% among those who are 18–34 years old. A chi-square of independence test was performed to determine whether the proportion of participants' assessment of social acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community in Japan today as compared with 10 years ago was equal between male and female participants, excluding those who identify as transgender. There was a significant relationship between the two variables, $X^2(4, N = 232) = 11.562$, $p = .021$. For example, close to a quarter of male participants responded that, compared with 10 years ago, Japanese society today is less accepting of the LGBTQ+ community, while about 65 of them answered that there is more acceptance than 10 years ago. On the other hand, less than 10% and more than 85% of female participants answered, "less acceptance" and "more acceptance" to this question. A one-way ANOVA was also performed to determine the effect of participants' sexual/gender identity (four groups) on their assessment of Japanese social acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community today as compared to 10 years ago. The results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference, $F(3, 259) = 2.692$, $p = .047$. A close examination of the results revealed that participants who identify as other than LGBT, for example, queer and asexual, responded to the question differently than the remaining participants. For example, about 93% of them responded "more acceptance," as compared with 10 years ago, while about 70% of participants overall did. Incidentally, as for the other question (i.e., social acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community 10 years from now), no sociodemographic characteristics of participants are found to be associated with their responses.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated the survey's findings regarding participants' experiences at public healthcare facilities and at home, two areas of their lives that were severely impacted by the pandemic. For a variety of reasons, many participants said they did not use healthcare services unless it was absolutely necessary. Some of these reasons had to do with COVID-19, while others had to do with their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. However, a sizable proportion of participants continued to use medical services while the pandemic was ongoing. Their experiences shed light on some of the most significant issues that LGBTQ+ people in Japan have with the healthcare system, which they perceived as being especially difficult during the pandemic. Their mental health is of particular concern. These findings will be discussed more in Chapter 8, along with other findings that I will show in the chapters that follow.

5

THE JAPANESE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

Diasporic Perspectives

5.1 Introduction

There are 59 participants who are not Japanese nationals in this study. They are from a great variety of countries across the globe, as described in detail in Chapter 1. From the perspective of the diaspora, they point out areas that are difficult for Japanese to see and discuss their experiences in Japan. Their observations are insightful and help us comparatively understand the Japanese LGBTQ+ community as embedded in Japanese society and culture around it. As demonstrated in what follows, although they all identify as LGBTQ+, their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as in everyday life in Japan are not necessarily a reflection of their sexual orientations or gender identities alone. Obviously, their diasporic presence in Japan shapes their experience, including their nationality and visa status. Their Japanese language skills appear to be one of the important factors that determines the quality and the extent of their experience. External characteristics such as race and gender seem also significant to their everyday experience in Japan. These characteristics intersect with their sexual orientation and gender identity and are thus manifested in their narrative accounts of their experiences. The Japanese LGBTQ+ community is not an isolated entity but is increasingly becoming an integral part of the dynamic world around it. These 59 non-Japanese participants are also an integral part of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, no matter how small a minority they may be at present.

The following are 12 ethnographic case studies of non-Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals who lived in Japan at some point during the pandemic. I believe many of them still do. Their nationalities and racial/ethnic identities greatly vary, as illustrated in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 in Chapter 1. They are predominantly gay, with a few lesbians, bisexual, and asexual women. None of them identified as transgender. The majority are in their twenties with a few older ones. All hold

a bachelor's degree or higher. One has a PhD and a few have master's degrees. Their current occupations vary greatly, as do their income levels. The majority corresponded in English, but many of those originally from Taiwan and China communicated in Japanese. Incidentally, some responses are too long to be presented in this book in their entirety. Next are 12 case studies in the order in which they participated in the survey.

5.1.1 A Data Engineer From Taiwan (Chia-hao, FO, Gay, 25–34)

Chia-hao is originally from Taiwan and one of the few participants who was in Japan when the pandemic hit the country and he returned to Taiwan. He is one of the few participants who was classified as FO in this study. Chia-hao is gay and 25–34 years old. He has a bachelor's degree and is single. While in Japan, he worked for a Japanese bank. He spent about 13 months in Japan. After returning to Taiwan, he started graduate school. To the question "Can you please explain the purpose of your entry into Japan, your visa, the length of stay, you experience in Japan, and the process that led to your departure," Chia-hao answered that he worked as a data engineer from January 2020 to February 2021 in a Japanese bank. He had a work visa for five years, and his job is typical. COVID-19, however, prevented him from traveling in Japan or making any new friends while he was here, and his life was monotonous. He left Japan because the pay was insufficient; his company stated that they wouldn't raise his pay because of the COVID-19 deficit. He therefore made the decision to leave Japan and pursue a master's degree in his home country.

Upon inquiry, Chia-hao explained if he was open about his sexual orientation at the Japanese bank where he worked:

> No. Since I worked as a data scientist, it is not necessarily [*sic*] for me to mention my private things in the office. Before the pandemic, I can feel that Japanese people are reluctant to speak to foreigners speaking bad Japanese already. After the pandemic, our company forbids gathering during lunchtime. I did not have many chances to chat with my colleagues, let alone [about] my sexuality.

I asked, "Have you ever felt discriminated against because of your sexual orientation, nationality, or anything else?"

> I do feel that my Japanese colleagues are not willing to chitchat with me, but I am not sure it is because of my nationality or my language ability. In general, they did not bully me or anything. I choose to think on the good side and believe they did not discriminate against me malignantly.

Chia-hao does not recall being bullied, but his experience at the bank seemed quite limited or may appear as if nothing ever happened. He was also not sure if

his colleagues were discriminating because of his nationality or not just willing to chitchat with him because of his limited Japanese language skills.

I asked "Did you have any particular problems when leaving Japan and entering Taiwan?"

> the plane ticket is much more expensive. Moreover, the flight only took off once a week (from my city to Taiwan). I needed to ask my landlord to stay a few days longer. I cannot leave Japan right after the day I finished all procedures.

Although his stay in Japan sounds more transient, most likely due mainly to the pandemic, Chia-hao did not come out to his colleagues, because according to him, it is a "private thing." He may not have been able to explore the LGBTQ+ community there and, possibly, meet Japanese gay people either, as he recalls his life while in Japan was boring. Upon returning, his income dropped almost to one-third of what he was making while in Japan.

5.1.2 A PhD Candidate From Thailand (Niran, FJ, Gay, 25–34)

Niran is 25–34 years old and gay. Currently, he is a PhD candidate in dental science at a major university in the Tohoku region. His specialization is oral pathology, and he also holds a title of a lecturer assistant at a university in Bangkok, Thailand. He is studying in Japan in order to be qualified to be a lecturer in his home country. He has a student visa and came to Japan through a Japanese government program in October 2020. He is a Thai citizen and in a relationship with his boyfriend in Thailand, who he has known for eight years. Niran describes his boyfriend: "I am his first partner. He is in the closet, but I am not pressuring him, because right now I have other achievements to focus on."

Niran is far from his family, although it is not certain whether he meant the physical distance or whether he feels that way due to the travel restrictions imposed under the pandemic. At work, he says, "Japanese work social[ization] is very work-related, and social distancing makes us even further." Concerning access to healthcare services, they are "harder to approach, need to make an appointment first." With regard to "LGBTQ+-related matters: I feel like, there are very few occasions to meet other LGBTQ+ members in Japan, even fewer in Sendai." He elaborates:

> The worse of it is my Japanese skill – my Japanese skill is not at the communicable level (about N4). I think it is harder to meet new friends during the pandemic. We usually do the same routine every day, meet the same people every day, so – the same goes for LGBTQ+ friends. The problem is because of my personality. As I mentioned before, I am a very outgoing extrovert, and the Japanese culture contradicts that. I have not met with a psychologist for medical help yet, but I have discussed my mental issues

with the university counseling center. She has been a great help to me. Additionally, I also bring myself to my friend (who is a doctor studying psychology), who diagnosed me with "adjustment disorder." I have some suicidal thoughts, seldomly, but more frequent during some stress periods, because I do not like being alone with myself. Nevertheless, I will make an appointment with the psychologist (English-speaking Japanese doctor, of course), and I will start from that.

The level N4 Niran refers to is the second level of Japanese language competency, defined by a result of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test conducted by the Japan Foundation and Japan Educational Exchanges and Services as "the ability to understand basic Japanese." His life seems unbearable a great deal of time even without the effect of the pandemic, as he describes himself as "outgoing extrovert," has his boyfriend back in his home country, studying for a PhD, and he was recently diagnosed with adjustment disorder.

Upon inquiry, Niran explained his accidental coming out to his parents.

I came out to my parents accidentally. When I was in grade 5, I cried because my crush broke my heart. My mother was surprised because she did not know when I met another girl. And I said it was my classmate's name Joe, ha-ha. Afterward, my mom probably told that story to my dad. They did not reject nor accept the fact that I am gay, I would say they "ignore" that fact. But my cousins, my aunt, uncle, who I am not that close with, probably know what I am, but I do not know that either.

Niran reflects on his mother's initial misunderstanding concerning her son's gender identity:

My mother said to me when I came out that she wants a son. I feel like, she misunderstood me that I wanted to be a girl. Over time, she understood, but she ignores the fact about my gender identity. I pressured myself to the point that, I need to be a dentist, to be a teacher, to have a Ph.D. All of that is very respectful positions in my community. I want my mom to be proud of me because of my achievements, and sometimes that makes me depressed.

I think Niran's mother is proud of him considering his achievements, but that worries him.

Despite all these difficulties, I hoped that he was enjoying his life in Japan. Niran describes that he came out to his former Japanese roommate, who is straight, but it seems, for some reason, his Japanese roommate already left.

My roommate is Japanese; his name is Haya. Before I moved out of the dorm, I told him that I am gay. I also told him that, if I am single, I would

> have to flirt with him. He is very cool; he is straight through. That was about 2 months ago, we occasionally talked to each other on Instagram story. Now I live with another Thai friend that came with me in the apartment. He is straight, easy-going, and we have known each other for 7 years.

Niran did not explain why his Japanese roommate left, but he now has a Thai roommate, who he has known for a while.

Concerning Japanese society, Niran also commented on a few issues.

> I feel like, I cannot be myself. There are not many places that I can be myself. All clubs, socials, circles, are in Japanese. I am trying to study the language though, but I am not sure that I can clear that barrier. And, I am allergic to alcohol, so that also reduces that chance of meeting [some]one.

About discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in Japan, he offers an interesting analysis:

> Discrimination towards sexual orientation/gender identification: I think it is the same for both phrases. Japanese tend to not discriminate against LGBTQ+ members, but ignorance of "minor diversity" is everywhere. I think more than half of the Japanese do not fully understand LGBTQ+. They tend to be surprised when something is out of the norm. But I have never experienced any discrimination though. And I feel like new generations, not only in Japan but throughout the world, do not seem to judge other people's identity.

Niran continues, and explains the Buddhist influence in his home country:

> Marriage, partnership, etc. The cultures, especially in some countries, there seems to be punishment for being "different," which I find is nonsense. . . . In Thai[land], for some strict Buddhism believers, it is wrong to be in between male and female. And 95%ish of Thais are Buddhist, so that has some influences. And I believe that this principle also applies to Japan. . . . "Minor diversity" tends to be awkward for the "major diversity," but not all cases. And I believe that newer generations would believe in scientific research [rather] than spiritual beliefs.

The "major diversity" Niran refers to is probably about the binary gender, while the "minor diversity" about differences as beyond men and women or "between male and female." According to Niran's explanation, Japan's relentless heteronormativity may be explained from a Buddhist perspective.

In closing, Niran states: "I am proud of myself. I know myself more than others. And if my life can be a lesson or an experience for others, I would love to be. If my stories are a little bit helpful for someone, I am more than glad."

5.1.3 A JET Programme Assistant From the US (Emma, FJ, Queer Female, 25–34)

Emma is from the US and living in Japan through an instructor visa since 2015. She is currently a JET Programme participant and works in a local education office in a suburban area in the Hokuriku region. She assists with the orientation of assistant language teachers, the training of Japanese English teachers, and in-school classes at senior and junior high schools. She identifies as White and, sexually, she identifies as bisexual and queer.

Emma's life has been disrupted due to the pandemic, as she describes: "I used to travel often and go to swimming classes 3–4 times a week. I also used to see friends quite often for karaoke, meals, movie nights, etc. I don't do any of those things anymore." Emma is particularly worried about her health condition due to asthma. She works every week with hundreds of different students and coworkers at four different locations while having asthma. Since March 2019, Emma describes that she has never stopped worrying about contracting COVID, infecting students, or being hospitalized abroad, which is Japan.

As an LGBTQ+ person, Emma "feels much safer in Japan"; however, she feels that Japanese society treats her as if she does not exist:

> As a queer woman, I feel much safer in Japan. I'm not worried about telling someone and getting an extremely negative or violent reaction. What's uncomfortable is feeling unseen, uncelebrated, and unimportant.

Due to social distancing measures, Emma has to reduce connection to the LGBTQ+ community. Although there are LGBTQ+ spaces in her area, they are mostly for gays. Due to travel restrictions, she has been unable to travel to bigger cities to meet people and participant in events.

Emma believes the government has unfairly targeted foreign residents of Japan with its response measures, such as its immigration policies. At the prefectural and municipal levels, there is a dearth of multilingual resources. Concerning discrimination in Japan, Emma commented that discrimination based on race or ethnic origin, gender and immigrants are very widespread. Upon inquiry, she elaborates:

> This is a question so big, I can't even start to list my experiences, or the experiences of my friends. I feel that Japan is a very difficult place to be a woman, from another country, and another race (especially if you're darker skinned). While I enjoy living in Japan and love my Japanese friends, I will never, ever fit in, no matter how good my Japanese is or how hard I work. It can be very alienating, and I have never gotten the impression that the Japanese government wants any of that to change.

Emma also thinks that discrimination against transgender people, both MtF/X and FtM/X, are very widespread. "I am constantly floored by the lack of

understanding of trans issues in Japan." Comparing homo/transphobia in her home country, Emma seems a little shocked to find how heteronormative Japanese society is:

> Homophobia and transphobia in the United States is an entirely separate issue (and a very big one). I think the thing I notice most about Japan is a complete lack of interest, sympathy, curiosity – ANY kind of reaction from the general public. This is a very cis, heteronormative society, and the longer I'm here, the harder it gets to ignore.

Finally, Emma commented about religion and sexual diversity in Japan. "People here are much less religious than in the United States, and much less likely to use religion as an excuse for homophobia."

5.1.4 Live Like the Majority (Chun-chieh, FJ, Gay, 35–44)

Chun-chieh is from Taiwan and lives alone in Tokyo. He is 35–44 years old and gay. He has a master's degree in modern and contemporary Japanese literature from a university in Taiwan. Chun-chieh works at an in-house IT help desk for a consulting firm, and he came to Japan with a highly specialized worker visa in September 2017. He corresponded in Japanese. Although he noted that his daily life has not been much affected, Chun-chieh's private life seems have been altered to a considerable extent. Concerning his relationship, Chun-chieh wrote, "I broke up with my boyfriend because it was difficult for me to meet him in Taiwan due to the border control measures."

Upon inquiry, Chun-chieh says he has already come out to many, including his mother and relatives on his mother's side and close friends, but he is hesitant to come out to his Japanese colleagues, as he noticed some conservative people at work, including one of his supervisors who made a "a slightly condescend comment about foreign sexual minorities." Chun-chieh cannot tell if he feels comfortable living in Japan as an LGBTQ+ person. He explains:

> In Taiwan, same-sex marriage has been approved by law, but in Japan, it is still a long way off, which is a big psychological factor. Of course, it is good that Japan has Shinjuku Ni-chōme, one of the best gay spots in Asia, and is relatively tolerant of the adult industry.

Although Japan has various gay entertainment venues, including Shinjuku Ni-chōme, he noted, the fact that same-sex marriage is not recognized in Japan seems to him the reason for the lack of comfort.

In the Japanese gay community, Chun-chieh observed, there are many cases of people who are married to women for the sake of publicity. "In the gay community in Japan, there are many cases of people who are married to women for publicity but date men behind their backs." I believe he noticed a strong influence

of Japan's heteronormativity on the lives of gays and, possibly, bisexual men in Japan. He also commented on the "LGBT Understanding Promotion Bill."

> Compared to Taiwan, Japan's legal system is quite backward. In Taiwan, gender and sexual orientation discrimination is prohibited in education and labor. It is unfortunate that Japan has not even passed a bill to promote understanding of gender and sexual orientation. If enacted, it would be only a first step, but of course it would have a positive impact in many areas.

From his own experience, Chun-chieh believes that the development of laws would be the most important thing to happen to the Japanese LGBTQ+ community:

> I believe that the most important thing is to promote the development of laws through cooperation between politicians and private organizations, rather than providing individual support. On a personal note, my mother accepted my coming out in the past, but she was concerned that I might be disadvantaged in the eyes of the public. I told her that if same-sex marriage was legally allowed, I would be able to silence those who discriminate against homosexuality.

It Is clear from his statement that he feels proud to be a citizen of a country that has legalized same-sex marriage.

Chun-chieh offered his thoughts on discrimination in Japan. Concerning types of discrimination in Japan, he noted Japanese attitudes toward foreigners, as well as sexism at work. He wrote that there are still many landlords who do not rent apartments to foreigners. He has also heard that Japanese people look at foreigners uncomfortably when they hear a foreign language on the train. In his own workplace, there are still people who think that female employees are at a disadvantage because they have to give birth and take care of children, even if this is not explicitly stated at the time of hiring.

Chun-chieh explains his experience as a foreigner in the Japanese LGBTQ+ community.

> In my experience, LGBTQ people do not treat foreigners in the same positive manner as ordinary Japanese people. There have been times in which our interactions have been cut off as soon as they realized that I am a foreigner. However, since I am basically from Taiwan, many people have a good image of me.

Chun-chieh may be alluding to the fact that members of the LGBTQ+ community express their negative feelings toward foreigners more overtly than Japanese people outside the community.

Finally, Chun–chieh reflects on his life as an LGBTQ+ person:

> I can't say I blame homophobia or transphobia for most of the bad things that have happened to me in my life. I was bullied a bit because of my temperament as a boy, and not coming out to my family and friends was somewhat bittersweet, but it has not had a major impact on my life. But the fact is that I felt uncomfortable.

He cannot say he is glad he is an LGBT person:

> I don't think I have gained anything from being an LGBTQ person, but I don't think I have lost much either. LGBTQ is just one trait that you are born with, and if you accept it, you can live like the majority, regardless of whether you are happy or unhappy.

Chun–chieh accepts the fact that he was born with it and lead a life like everyone else in society, not as a gay person. I think it also indicates that, while in Japan, he prefers to live just like the majority, not as a gay Taiwanese in Japan.

5.1.5 A British Citizen of Mixed Race (Harry, FJ, Gay, 25–34)

Harry is 25–34 years old and gay, and he is a British citizen. In terms of race/ethnicity, he identifies as a mixed British/Vietnamese. He has a bachelor's degree and currently holds a visa as an engineer/specialist in humanities/international services. He came to Japan in 2015 and lives in a suburb of the Greater Tokyo Metropolitan area with his Japanese partner. Harry noted that since his area not providing same-sex partnership, they have been renting under his name only. Harry was employed full-time before the pandemic, but he is currently self-employed in translation/online support. Upon inquiry, he clarified, "I left my previous job due to a pay cut, in addition to the work duties being incompatible with my career goals."

Concerning specifically as the effect of social distancing measures, Harry describes, as a positive impact, "I am able to spend more time with my partner as I now work exclusively from home." At the same time, as "the time with my partner has increased, arguments however have become more frequent, perhaps due to the added stress of the pandemic." At work, "I have switched to a fully work-from-home position, so I have not been affected much in this aspect." With regard to healthcare services, "I am more hesitant to go to the doctor for minor symptoms etc. and will try to treat things at home using OTC medication." In explaining his mental health issues, in particular concerning anxiety, Harry described his daily routine under the pandemic, as follows.

> Although switching to a full work-from-home position means I no longer have to commute every day, it can feel quite isolating due to most

communication happening through email and workplace SNS etc. (video calls are fairly rare) I am not out to my workplace colleagues, so it can sometimes be awkward when they ask me about my "girlfriend" and so on.

Even though he has been spending more time together with his partner at home than before the pandemic, Harry feels "quite isolating."

Harry says he does not feel comfortable being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan. He offers his explanation.

> I do not face direct discrimination, however heteronormality is extremely prevalent, meaning most people I meet assume I like girls and will commonly ask me questions like "do you have a girlfriend?" "what's your type?" Also, especially among male-only/male dominated workplaces and groups, "dirty" jokes can make me feel rather uncomfortable. My previous workplace was something you could call "*tai'ikukaikei*" [sports-minded] so I would get comments like "*chimpo tsuiteruno?* "[got a dick?] if I struggle to lift something heavy for example, so overall quite uncomfortable.

Speaking of different types of discrimination in Japanese society, Harry answered that overall they are all fairly widespread. Concerning his race, "I have been targeted as a half-Asian/British person with people telling me to go back to my country." Regarding sexism at work, Harry commented that the stereotypical roles of women in the workplace are deeply offensive: bringing tea to clients, being submissive, cleaning the office, and so on. He would do everything he could to assist in the performance of "feminine" duties. About sexuality, he explains, "Heteronormality is extremely strong in my experience, so aside from very close friends, I am forced to stay in the closet." As for gender identification, "I do not know any transgender people directly, but from comments from workplace colleagues/acquaintances it seems fairly widespread." Referencing on a Sri Lankan English teacher's fatal experience, he commented, "The incident about the woman passing away at the immigration center showed to me how immigrants are sometimes treated like second-rate citizens."

Harry also talks about his experience in the UK:

> I have [been discriminated against]. I am reluctant to show PDA [personal display of affection] – the most I am comfortable with is holding hands, however the stares can make me feel self-conscious. In the UK, I was sometimes called offensive words by strangers (prick, gayboy etc), but racist comments about my ethnicity were more common.

It seems that Harry experienced more overt forms of discrimination while in the UK than in Japan. In fact, Harry came out to himself and others only after he moved to Japan:

> During uni, I would get crushes on guys, but would brush those feelings off. This I found was due to my religious upbringing that instilled internal homophobia. After meeting other LGBTQ+ people, I was relieved to find people that were finally like me.

Harry reflected on religion and sexual diversity in Japan, compared to his home country. He has never heard of or seen any religious leaders in Japan discriminating against people who identify as LGBTQ+. As Christianity is more widely practiced in his home country, it is more common to view same-sex relationships as a "sin" and/or a "choice," he analyzed comparably.

Harry also explains "many disadvantages" of living in Japan:

> The biggest problem I face is with visa issues, and that if I don't have a job that qualifies, I am forced to leave my partner in Japan. Although same-sex partnerships are a step in the right direction, until same-sex marriage is implemented, living in Japan with a Japanese partner comes with many disadvantages.

His disadvantages of living in Japan seem mostly as a result of the lack of law to protect his relationship with his Japanese partner.

5.1.6 "We Are Othered Together" (Emily, FJ, Asexual Female, 25–34)

Emily is a US citizen living in the Chubu region of Japan. She is 25–34 years old and identifies as White. She holds a bachelor's degree and works in education. She has an instructor visa and came to Japan in 2018. She was an elementary English teacher for three years and is now a high school English teacher.

Emily describes what she is worried about specifically with her health condition during the pandemic. She lives in a major city and commutes via train and subway lines daily. On the trains, there is not enough room to distance properly. Instead of taking concrete steps to reduce COVID, schools have been putting up façades rather than closing like they did in the US. When a classmate was identified as having COVID, neither the teacher nor the club members were subjected to testing, she recalled. Her health condition was greatly affected by the pandemic, because the amount of stress she deals with on a daily basis has "skyrocketed."

Emily thinks that as an LGBTQ+ person her life has been affected by social distancing measures in various spheres of life. There are no upcoming events, and the online events are massively oversubscribed because everyone wants to attend them. When the groups exceed 30 or 40 people, there is no way to distance. She also explains about her difficult experiences with LGBTQ+-related matters. Emily often reduced connection to the LGBTQ+ community during the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of LGBTQ+ people connect with one another through mutual friends. There would be no way to meet new people without events in general.

Concerning mental health services in Japan, Emily previously mentioned, "The lack of mental health services for foreigners in Japan led me to looking internationally, meaning services that are easier to get to in some countries are quite difficult in Japan." As a follow-up, she wrote:

> While I attempted to keep up with an online text-based form of counseling (Better Help) it was difficult to connect with counselors based on time zone differences. I would either have to wake up very early or stay up very late (7am–ish/11pm or later) to discuss what was happening.

Her anxiety score was significantly high. I asked her, "What are you particularly worried about? Do you think these concerns are related to your being a LGBTQ+ person?"

> In general, my concerns are not expressly related to being LGBTQ+, but are compounded because of it. Finding someone in Japan who is not just LGBT friendly, but also ACE [asexual] friendly is quite difficult. It is a smaller label that is often overlooked, misunderstood, or ousted from the group because of people's assumption that it is either celibacy, naivete, or a lack of desire due to some medical condition.

Her concerns are compounded because of her sexuality, in addition to not receiving appropriate mental healthcare.

Emily describes her frustration trying to access public healthcare services during the pandemic:

> It is difficult to know what clinics I can go to that speak English. Because I do not have someone work-related to go with me, it is imperative that I have the ability to fall back on this if my Japanese fails. Additionally, word-of-mouth is only good so far, as it tends to be specific doctors/nurses/workers whose English is sufficient, not the clinic as a whole. Speaking a foreign language for any period of time is tough. Doing so when under pressure, especially time pressure, is embarrassing. Additionally, healthcare situations often use vocabulary that is not taught in Japanese classes, since it is not the main focus of most foreign language studies (which tend to be school/work oriented, perhaps with some friendly social interactions). Not only that, but doing things completely alone when stressed makes me irritable, impatient, and very prone to being overwhelmed, which is not helpful for anyone involved. I am not used to being able to afford healthcare. Not only that, but I am not sure how much clinic visits cost. Going through the website, I am constantly confused as to how much a trip will cost. Will I have to pay a fee for a first time patient, even for a short thing? Which places require that fee? How much is the consultation? How much will medicine be, if needed? A referral? This information is not readily

available on most clinic websites, which makes it doubly difficult to try and choose one from the thousands upon thousands that are within a reasonable distance from my apartment.

Emily's struggle to use the healthcare system in Japan is quite telling. In fact, Japan has a national healthcare system, and due to her stay in Japan she must have access to it. It seems, however, she was not able to find out how to use it and no one was able to assist her.

On the other hand, Emily feels comfortable being an LGBT person in Japan. She explains:

I am foreign. Any stigma around LGBTQ+ people in Japan I've seen is about Japanese LGBT people, as many Japanese people know that it is much more acceptable in other countries, and so give a pass to LGBT people from other places. . . . Passing has its problems, and the assumption that because I am female I automatically want a husband and children is so frustrating and disheartening. Some days I wish I could wear an asexual flag over my shoulders like a cape so I can stop having to shut down that very common line of questioning by literally every Japanese person I've ever encountered.

Specifically concerning discrimination based on gender identity, Emily explains her observation:

I have three students who do not wear skirts, and instead opted for trousers. . . . Kids and adults alike bully people who do not fulfill their expectation of a proper person. Gender identity is one of the more taboo things a person can ascribe to, as it goes against the very nature of everyone's treatment of them. People are treated one way if they are female, and one way if they are male. It is a part of so many social practices here that it still blows my mind. It is often that I am told "the girls just do this" or "the boys are just like that." No, that is the trend, or the majority. But not all. It is this reductive thinking that leads me to conclude that students whose gender breaks that norm would be discriminated against socially, structurally, and culturally.

Gendering is probably an integral part of Japanese school curriculum, as she observed.

Emily thinks discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in Japan is widespread and describes how some Japanese people understand that being LGBTQ+ is linked with being foreign.

Perhaps because of our visibility as foreigners, and our comfortability with it, some Japanese people have implied that being LGBTQ+ is linked with

being foreign more so than with being a part of someone's personhood. It is reductive, assumes quite a great deal about what it means to be Japanese, and harms Japanese LGBTQ+ people who are not foreign. There is sometimes the implication that they were "turned" LGBTQ+ based on things they have seen/experienced/learned about through foreigners, which is honestly such a terribly xenophobic and often racist way of dismissing LGBTQ+ people outside of one's own racial circle. It assumes that these "deviations" are part of the foreign group, and if said Japanese person had never experienced these foreigners, they would not have "chosen" to "deviate" in that way. I have heard Japanese people imply these things in their daily conversations when LGBTQ+ conversations are brought up. It is subtle, but there is a great deal implied with this lack of education and "us vs. them" mindset.

As Emily notes, it is an extremely xenophobic and racist view to be dismissive of LGBTQ+ people.

Emily is glad she belongs to the LGBTQ+ community. She says it is "refreshing":

It is so refreshing to be part of a group who supports you for you. We are othered in daily life because we do not conform to what society deems "normal." But we have created a group where we can go and feel normal, because we are all othered. We are othered together. It is that unity that makes me glad to be part of the community. There are problems, in fighting, and ridiculous discourse. But at the end of the day, I am glad to know there are people who would fight for my rights – no questions asked.

"We are othered together," she said.

5.1.7 A "Gifted" Teacher From France (Amelie, FJ, Bisexual Female, 25–34)

Amelie is a French citizen living in Japan. She is 25–34 years old. Sexually, she identifies as bisexual and is in an opposite-sex marriage. Her spouse is a French man she met in high school. She studied for a master's degree in English and education to become a teacher back in France. She did so. Amelie and her husband came to Japan together hoping they could find work in education there. She holds a specialist in humanities visa and came to Japan in May 2019. She works at an English conversation company in the Chubu region and she teaches children from 3 to 18 years old. It is an afterschool schedule, known as *Eikaiwa kyōshitsu* (English conversation classes), and she usually work from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. She has come out to her husband, who is supportive, as well as her parents and close friends back in France.

Amelie thinks that COVID-19 is particularly a great threat to immigrants in Japan.

> I think immigrants who do not have permanent residency rights are at a risk of getting fired if they are infected with covid-19. It happened to one of my coworkers. Luckily he could find a job again but if he hadn't he might have had to go back to his home country because losing your job means not being able to renew your visa. In this crisis it would be difficult to find work at home too and there are many fees involved with the entire process. That would be tough to say the least.

There is also the problem of discrimination.

> Personally I wasn't much affected but I was uncomfortable with the way some people would stare at me thinking I was a tourist who was still travel-ing despite the situation and might infect them when I didn't even go out of the prefectures I live and work in (I'm at the border between two and go to several schools).

Losing a job often means not being able to stay in the country. She also noted that some Japanese people would stare at her thinking she was visiting the area despite the situation.

Amelie scored high on the anxiety test, so I asked. "What are you particu-larly worried about? Do you think that these concerns are related to your being LGBTQ+?" In response, Amelie explains the effect of the pandemic on her mental health:

> Staying at home and not being able to move freely had a negative effect on my already bad anxiety. I couldn't see my friends because we were sup-posed to stay home and I haven't been able to go back home for the holiday, meaning I couldn't see my family and French friends either. I think that for the most part my problems have more to do with my being an immigrant.

Amelie finds her being an immigrant has a negative effect on her mental health, probably more so than being an LGBTQ+ person. She also talks about her expe-rience as a White person in Japan. She says, being White makes her life easy. She gets to make mistakes and Japanese people would just say, "Oh, she's a foreigner, she doesn't know," without having too much prejudice against her.

She also thinks it is not comfortable being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan. She explains:

> I don't feel like being LGBT is much understood in Japan. My friends here do not sound very open to their children not conforming to the traditional gender expectations. I've never been able to see someone who was open about

being queer in real life here, only online. . . . I also feel uncomfortable with
the idea that marriage isn't legal for same sex couples here and that I could
technically be fired for being queer and there wouldn't be much I could do
about it. Then again it might be a little better in France because you can sue
if something like this happen but you're still out of a job at the end of things.

Amelie has not met any "queer" Japanese people there. Through a conversation
with her supervisors at work, Amelie noticed, it was okay to be "queer," but it
was better not to tell anyone.

Types of discrimination Amelie believes to be widespread in Japan are based
on gender and gender identity. She observed a few examples of gender idealiza-
tion imposed upon Japanese children as well as upon her.

My friend's kid is a tomboy. Like, REALLY. My friend hates that and
keeps trying to change her kid. It is painful to watch. At work, I sometimes
give balloons to the kids when we have events (demo lessons and games).
It happened once that my boss intervened and changed the balloon. One
three-year-old boy had asked for a pink one and apparently that was not
okay (though the parents didn't seem to mind the pink balloon). My hus-
band works at the same company and he says he had some parents say no to
their sons when they asked for a pink balloon. At my previous job, my boss
would criticize my way of sitting on the floor, not because it was bad as
such but because I was "sitting like a man" (*otousan suwari*). I can't do *seiza*
[straight sitting] for five hours straight and I can't hold the flashcards if I'm
sitting in *yama suwari* [lady sitting] so what the hell was I supposed to do? I
just ignored her and quit (that wasn't the only reason she'd criticize me, or
everyone). She'd do the same to kids, even in kindergarten.

Comparing between France and Japan concerning discrimination, Amelie offers
an insight:

The main difference between France and Japan regarding discrimination is
that in Japan, I feel like I don't exist. I don't feel represented at all. I don't SEE
other queer people. In France people would say it, there were more openly
queer groups and/or events. BUT I am never afraid of getting assaulted
because I am bi here in Japan whereas I would be in France. I was 19 when
same-sex marriage became legal in France and I still remember the dem-
onstrations against it, how much people hated the idea. There were many
assaults at that time, people would get lynched for holding their partner's
hand. Even though I know it COULD happen, I don't picture that in Japan.

Amelie feels completely unrepresented in Japan, like Emily does. At the same
time, she cannot imagine homosexual people being lynched for holding their
partner's hand in public in Japan.

Finally, Amelie is glad that she was born with a gift:

> I am glad to belong in a community that despite some faults (some indi-
> viduals are not a[s] tolerant as others, as with any group of people) is overall
> so diverse, open and loving. I can't rationalize this feeling but I am also
> very happy that I was born with the capacity to love anyone regardless of
> their gender. I think of it as a gift.

The gift Amelie refers to is "the capacity to love anyone regardless of their
gender."

5.1.8 An International Student With the "Strange Feeling of Falling in Love With a Man" (Fenhua, FJ, Gay, 18–24)

Fenhua is 18–24 years old from Henan Province in China. He is gay and single.
He holds a master's degree and came to Japan in July 2019. He is currently
studying linguistics at a graduate school in Kansai and lives alone in Kyoto. He
corresponded in Japanese. His parents back in China do not know that he is gay,
but one of his cousins does. "I don't know many people [in Japan], so on the
contrary, I can live honestly. I don't mind being flamboyant," Fenhua describes
his living in Japan. Fenhua describes that he was not able to return to his home in
China since he came to Japan in 2019 due to the pandemic. He misses his home.
Unfortunately, he broke up with his boyfriend of many years because he lives in
a remote location.

Concerning his opportunities to meet LGBTQ+ friends as well as friends
in general, he describes, "It is difficult to make Chinese and Japanese friends
outside of school, so it was somewhat more difficult for me to meet LGBTQ+
friends as a "gay" person." "Of course, I was not able to meet up with my old
friends." He noted, "Bars and other places have closed down." About his con-
nection with the LGBTQ+ community, Fenhua says, "I didn't really connect
with the LGBTQ+ community in Japan." His life in Japan seems very isolating.
Out of stress for schoolwork, Fenhua suddenly became angry and started crying.

> I was very tired with a lot of final reports at the time, but I lived alone so
> I often didn't say a word all day long. . . . I was so stressed out that I sud-
> denly got angry and cried. I thought that if I were not gay, I could have a
> girlfriend and the situation would not be so bad.

He believes that the situation would not be as bad if he were straight and could
have a girlfriend.

Fenhua shared his experience as a Chinese person in Japan. He recalls his
unexpected coming out to his psychiatrist. He has been to a psychiatric clinic
for depression at the beginning of the year. When he spoke with the psychiatrist,
Fenhua unknowingly told him about his sexual orientation. The psychiatrist's

attitude changed a little when he said, "Yes, I'm gay." He felt bad. I am not sure of the psychiatrist's response, but Fenhua saw a shift in his demeanor. If he came out because he trusted his psychiatrist, the psychiatrist would not be qualified as such, regardless of reason.

Fenhua seems fluent in Japanese, but he experience discrimination time to time because of his nationality.

> When I tried to pay at a convenience store, the clerk suddenly became cold when I said "with Alipay." It happened twice. . . . When I moved to a new house for graduate school, a real estate agent asked me what my nationality was even though there was a tag that said "foreigners are OK." When I told him I was Chinese, he refused to rent to me.

Because he is living away from his family, hometown and country, Fenhua "can live honestly." Yet, he often experiences discrimination when people discover that he is Chinese.

Despite his disheartening experience in Japan, Fenhua thinks that there is less discrimination in Japan than in China:

> I think there is less discrimination in Japan than in China. In recent years, many people have come out as "gay" on the Internet. However, it is not uncommon to hear people say bad things like "You have AIDS," "You are disgusting," "Stay away from me," "Heaven forbid!" etc. In Japan, there are some, but they are clearly less common.

His assessment may not be totally accurate, as I will demonstrate in Chapter 7.

He also explains about the strange feeling he has about being a gay Chinese person:

> I have only "money" and "future family/partner" to worry about. If I were not gay, I would feel safe, get married and be on the money-making track. I have the strange feeling of falling in love with a man, especially since it is often unacceptable in China. I feel comfortable doing something rebellious and contrary to what is allowed in China.

Fenhua may be rebellious or he wants to think that way because of his "strange feeling of falling in love with a man."

5.1.9 An Issei Nikkeijin From the US (Riku, FJ, Gay, 55–64)

After graduating from college in Japan, Riku went to a university in Utah for a year to study abroad, and after a year, he decided to extend his studies to earn a degree in political science. After that, he went on to a graduate school in California and earned a master's degree in international affairs. After graduation, he

took the test to become an official of the United Nations, but as soon as the second round of selection was over, the application process was cancelled due to the suspension of US contributions. He then worked as a paralegal in the corporate and immigration law sectors in California. During this time, he received a green card from the firm. He got his citizenship because he thought he would be in a vulnerable position in the event of a crackdown on political agendas because he is gay.

Riku is now 55–64 years old and is in a relationship but he is not living with his boyfriend. Upon inquiry, he explained that his boyfriend is a married man about 20 years younger than him and has a wife and children. Riku currently lives with his mother in Tokyo and works part-time as an interpreter and translator of contracts in the travel industry. He explained that his stay in Japan was temporary. He came back because he wanted to quit his job, especially since he was fed up with the weekly changes in immigration standards, and also because he wanted to spend more time with his mother, who is declining each year that he returns to Japan. He does not have a particularly bad relationship with his siblings, due to his sexuality, but he thinks he will spend more time in the US when his mother passes away. He corresponded in Japanese.

Overall, Riku does not think his daily life was very disrupted. Yet, Riku says, "I paid special attention to my mother's healthcare, so I paid special attention to the places I went, especially to *hattenba* (cruising spots), and how I traveled." Perhaps it is because he lived in the US for so long, Riku seems to lack the social life in Japan. Concerning his opportunities to meet his partner, Riku described, "My partner works in a nursing home for the elderly, so basically contact with people from out of prefecture was strictly forbidden. In the past two years, I was only able to see him for three days." Also, the café he used to go to once or twice a month has closed. He thought about joining an organization that had a social space, but all their events were cancelled. He avoided LGBTQ+ entertainment venues, including *hattenba*, due to the fear of intense contact. He felt socially isolated. When asked if he tried participating in online events or contacting friends on social networking sites, he responded, "I browsed and posted on social networking sites and talked with friends using Oculus."

Regarding his mental health, Riku explained the effect of being gay. He says, he can't explain to his family that he cannot see his boyfriend, for example, and once he starts thinking negatively, the situation then starts to spiral out of control. He worries that his being an LGBTQ+ person in this the situation is causing him to feel inferior to his spouse. If he was in the US, Riku perhaps would not think that his being an LGBTQ+ person is causing him to feel inferior to his partner's spouse.

Riku thinks it is not comfortable to live as an LGBTQ+ person in Japan:

> There is a gay community in Long Beach, California, where holding hands, kissing, and hugging in the street is perfectly acceptable, and I never think about what others think of me because of my behavior. Besides,

discrimination against the elderly is even worse in Japan than in the US, and it is the same in the gay community. Fortunately or unfortunately, I can try to hide the fact that I am gay to some extent, but it is not so easy when it comes to age. I am fed up with being treated as an old person. . . . the effects of not allowing same-sex marriage in the first place are problematic in many ways. For example, like my own boyfriend, I have no other option but to marry a woman and give up on my ability to grow as a gay person in a healthy way. . . . One of the reasons why LGBTQ activities have not been ignited in Japan is because people are not frequently murdered or assaulted for this reason, as is the case in the US, but I also think it is because Japanese education has instilled the notion that people should be content to live in the environment they are given. . . . This kind of self-censorship is a defense for me as an individual, but it also results in further discrimination through further non-visibility. . . . Coming back to Japan after almost 40 years, there has been some progress, but I still feel that I have a long way to go.

Concerning the "protection" of human rights, Riku explains his opinion.

When people say protect human rights, I feel like they are asking us to give special treatment to LGBTQ persons. It doesn't mean that, it mean that we should treat them equally. I understand the purpose, but I would like it to be called the Human Rights Equality Act (*jinken byōdō-hō*).

It could be another instance of "lost in translation." In fact, the Japanese word for "rights" (*kenri*) has a nuanced difference from the original that seems trivial, but very crucial when considering how Japanese people understand the meaning and intension, including who and why, of the "protection" of human "rights" in the Japanese context (Tamagawa, 2009).

Riku hoped that the LGBT Understanding Promotion bill would have provided momentum for the Japanese government, but he was disappointed. If education in Japan does not change, Riku warns, we may not be able to expect much from Japan in the future.

5.1.10 A Fighter (Skyler, FJ, Queer Female, 25–34)

Skyler is from the US and identifies as White. She responded "queer" to both sexuality and gender questions and lives alone in Tokyo. They hold a bachelor's degree and currently works in the service industry. They also did a year of university in Akita from 2016 to 2017. When asked, Skyler describes their Japanese language skills. They have not taken the JLPT, but they think their speaking is maybe between N3 and N2 or closer to N2, and their reading is between N2 and N1. N1 is the most advanced level, while N3 is usually interpreted as some years of Japanese education at college level. Skyler moved to Japan in November 2018

on an engineering/specialist in humanities/international services visa. Their official title is global HR consultant.

Skyler describes changes to their daily life due to the pandemic. Coincidentally, a month before COVID-19 was discovered, Skyler had just begun a medical leave of absence for an unrelated condition. However, in the summer of 2020, as they were beginning to be able to work again, Skyler was able to use the pandemic as part of their justification for asking to be able to work from home full-time. For Skyler, the switch to remote work was beneficial for some unrelated condition.

Skyler answered that COVID-19 is a great threat to racial/ethnic minorities, immigrants, and members of LGBTQ+ community. When asked, they explained:

> I've noticed firsthand a lack of reliable resources in English, easy Japanese, and other languages for navigating government restrictions (e.g., immigration, state of emergency guidelines), how to get tested, or get treatment for COVID-19, etc. In many areas there's a total lack of English/other information for vaccine distribution as it was left to local governments to handle, which have even less ability to provide for their international residents. Many in the immigrant community received vaccine vouchers and related information purely in Japanese, without even an indication of where we could look to find out more in our own native languages. The Ministry of Defense's mass vaccination centers also lack information in languages other than Japanese.

They discovered a lack of reliable resources in other languages including English or even in easy Japanese for understand government guidelines.

Skyler describes how their life as an LGBTQ+ person has been affected by social distancing measures. It was

> more difficult to come up with date options when many social gathering places were closed or restricted until recently – may be closing/restricted again. . . . One option for this was the social app Tinder, and due to the overall influx of people working from home, users misusing the service for business and other purposes have increased.

Skyler has not used LGBTQ+ social services. Their opportunities to use LGBTQ+ entertainment venues were greatly affected. "The majority of these spaces are bars, and the government has placed intense restrictions on serving alcohol, so many of these spaces were completely closed until recently." Skyler also explained their reduced connection to the LGBTQ+ community:

> One connection to the community has been entertainment venues on a very occasional basis, and with those closed, likewise has that line of

> connection. I have also been using dating/social apps (both LGBTQ+-oriented and not) to meet new people but I've held back from meeting too many people in an effort to maintain (figurative) social distance. In a more subjective, feelings-based manner, I think constantly being at home and not going outside as often in general has likely made me feel more isolated from any community let alone specifically the LGBTQ+ community.

Although they tried dating and social apps to connect other people, Skyler was always at home and felt isolated from any community. In addition, at the end of the mental health section the survey, Skyler left the following comment. "I feel incredibly lonely as I have a very small social circle and have been working from home the entire time, and have a difficult time meeting new people." I asked, "Have you tried participating in online gatherings or meeting new people through social networking sites?"

> I have tried reaching out to new people through social and dating apps. ADHD/possible Autism make it difficult to navigate social encounters as well as to maintain relationships, but I have been able to meet people and currently have two or three remaining connections.

Skyler reflected on their experience being an LGBTQ+ person and foreigner in Japan. While they stand out in a crowd for being a foreigner who is exceptionally taller than average Japanese people, Skyler feels safer being an LGBTQ+ person there. At the same time, "the most uncomfortable things" about Japan to them is the "lack of protection and recognition the government provides."

"What about discrimination within the Japanese LGBTQ+ community?" Skyler responded:

> Within the LGBTQ+ community I would say most of the discrimination I've experienced, if it can be called that, exactly, would be related to nationality/race/ethnicity. I have felt tokenized/objectified somewhat frequently for being white, and have noticed in social media profiles sentiments such as "Japanese people only please!" or "No Chinese!," but I have not necessarily experienced hate speech or violence or anything.

Skyler believes that most of the discrimination are based on nationality, race, and/or ethnicity. For example, they feel objectified for being White. They also noticed some race-specific exclusive invitations online (e.g., "Japanese only").

To the question "What do you think about religion and sexual diversity in Japan compared to your home country", Skyler responded:

> It's hard for me to compare religion between Japan and the US, as Shinto-ism and even Japanese Buddhism to some degree strike me as much more cultural than religious per se, while in the US I was raised in an incredibly

devout LDS/Mormon family. I also don't know a terribly large amount about Shinto/Buddhism to begin with, but from what I do know, it seems that homosexuality is generally not even remarked upon, and if anything is even accepting of homosexuality.

In closing, Skyler stated that they are glad they belong to the LGBTQ+ community, because, "Simply put I wouldn't be who I am today if it weren't through growing up as an LGBTQ+ individual – I also believe it's provided me with more empathy and open-mindedness toward others."

5.1.11 A Latinx From Peru (Alejandro, FJ, Gay, 25–34)

Alejandro is a gay Peruvian and 25–34 years old. He identifies himself as Latinx. He is in a relationship but not living together, and his partner is Japanese. They met about five months ago in the gym they both go to. They are still in a brief relationship, so they are not thinking of living together or anything similar yet. He holds a bachelor's degree. He came to Japan in 2010 as a university student on a scholarship. He currently has a working visa and lives alone in Tokyo.

Alejandro says that his life has not been affected by the pandemic much, but he once thought that COVID-19 was a great threat to racial/ethnic minorities and immigrants. He explains that not so much now, but there was a time when many people believed COVID-19 was something that people who went overseas brought back, and immigrants and other people with foreign roots were specifically targeted. Many people (even at work) would ask him if he had recently returned home, fearing he was infected with COVID-19.

As an LGBTQ+ person, he thinks that social distancing measures have limited LGBTQ+ people's access to a "safe place":

> I think that gay/lesbian bars and similar establishments in general are a big part of daily life for many people in the lgbtq+ Community as they offer a safe place to talk openly about themselves, meet other lgbtq+ people, etc, which is something they would not do at work for instance. With the COVID-19 related restrictions to bars and such establishments, such interactions are now limited. . . . I feel like I've lost my connection to the lgbtq+ community staying indoors more often than before.

Concerning his experience at healthcare services, Alejandro noted some "inappropriate questions or curiosity" that he received from healthcare staff:

> I would not say so specifically about COVID-19, but in a few past visit to clinics some staff have not been really respectful of privacy (specially at urologists) and would ask questions such as "does it feel better to do it with boys or girls?" "How big (does your penis) get when erected? Etc".

If this were in the US, the staff would be sued for harassment. Except occasional annoyances, Alejandro thinks he feel comfortable being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan. He does not like talking about personal things openly, so he feels comfortable in the sense that Japanese people do not ask many questions about one's romantic/sex life there, so he feels he can live a normal life without having to talk about his sexuality. Incidentally, Alejandro has not come out to anyone in his family back in Peru.

Concerning different types of discrimination in Japan, Alejandro elaborates on his answers. He thinks that discrimination based on race or ethnic origin is fairly widespread:

> In my previous job and also in stories from other non-Japanese or mixed friends I would hear comments such as "he's handicapped since he doesn't speak Japanese natively" or "maybe in your country that's okay but in Japan . . .", so I think it is fairly widespread . . . I have noticed some people are not comfortable when staff in stores or restaurants are from a different country. They would look for native Japanese staff if available.

As for discrimination against LGBTQ+ people, Alejandro thinks that Japan lacks understanding of sexual or gender diversity that leads to prejudice and discrimination. At the same time, he noticed some Japanese people appear to be uncomfortable with interacting with foreigners. Nevertheless, he seems pretty happy being an LGBTQ+ Latinx in Japan.

5.1.12 A South Asian From Canada (Aanan, FJ, Gay, 45–54)

Aanan is a Canadian citizen and identifies as a South Asian. He is 45–54 years old and gay. He came to Japan in October 2020 with a professional visa. He previously came to Japan and spent a few years there as a scholar. He lives in Tokyo with his partner, who is Japanese, and a dog. He explains that they moved to Japan to be closer to his partner's family. They previously lived together in some different parts of the world before arriving in Japan. He has a PhD from a university in Tokyo and also completed post-graduate studies in the US. He is currently involved in a major redevelopment project in Tokyo. Aanan explains his difficult relationship with his parents related to his sexual orientation. His parents are still hoping that he will change his "lifestyle" and marry a woman. His culture places a great deal of responsibility and expectations on him as the eldest son of a conservative Muslim family. He is expected to carry on the family line, to be a practicing Muslim, and to care for his parents in their old age.

Aanan shared his difficult experience when entering Japan. He and his partner arrived together; however, he was forced to return to Canada:

> My partner and I were forced to live apart for 6 months because of the pandemic. It was a really difficult time as my visa was not processed before

the borders were closed. I was forced to return to Canada and he stayed in Japan. I worked remotely for that time and our lives were put on hold. I had rented a monthly-serviced apartment in central Tokyo but was not able to stay there with my partner. He stayed there for a month by himself and then moved in with his father. With so much uncertainty we were left wondering if we could be together in 2020 at all.

Their lives were "put on hold."

Once in Japan, Aanan faced various challenges. Aanan explained why he is worried about his health condition to considerable extent. Aanan was able to get his "first shot," but was forced to attend meetings in person through the pandemic, despite the fact that there were some reported cases of COVID-19 infection at work. Even during the pandemic, a great number of Japanese businesses run as usual. Upon request, his client was able to have meetings online; however, Aanan was still required to come in person occasionally, so he had to try shifting schedules to avoid traveling during rush hour.

Aanan explains his view on how COVID-19 is a threat to immigrants and racial/ethnic minorities in Japan. It is also a question of whether he can continue to stay in Japan and to be with his Japanese partner. As foreign workers and racial minorities, Aanan believe they are there to perform a service, and their visas are contingent on it. If he stopped going to meetings, his project would be jeopardized, and thus his life here with his partner would be jeopardized. As a visible minority, he feels especially vulnerable, so he don't reveal his sexuality to the entire client team. He has only come out to people who are more open and welcoming, or who have lived abroad and have an understanding of LGBTQ+ issues. Aanan eloquently explains:

> As a foreigner, I feel my situation here is tenuous and if something were to go wrong (ie. lose my job, coming out to clients or being outed to clients leading to ostracization etc.) I would lose everything and have to start over somewhere else. It would take more than a year for me to sponsor my partner to come to Canada so we're especially careful. Being LGBTQ+ in Japan puts you at the fringes of society with little to no support or security. We came here knowing these risks because we wanted to be together and to try and put down roots somewhere. We also considered Canada but in the end we love Japan and we love living in Tokyo. We missed our life here from when we first met when I was a student about 10 years ago. I'm hoping we can make it work and stay here long-term if I can get Permanent Residency.

After all, he says, "I am dependent on my visa to stay here with my partner."

Aanan also explains his experience of discrimination. He has faced discrimination in Japan in the past and continue to face discrimination today. He was assaulted once in a train station. People rarely sit next to him on the train. He

was once asked to leave a restaurant. He and his partner were turned down for housing because they were a gay couple. At a gay club in Ni–chōme, Aanan was accused of stealing someone's wallet. The police came to the club and demanded that he empty his pockets in front of everyone.

Aanan also offers an insightful comparative analysis between Canada and Japan:

> In Canada, I would say I've only experienced discrimination from within my own Muslim community. I've been teased and people mock me with overly effeminate mannerisms which are highly exaggerated. My work colleagues, friends and acquaintances are very open and welcoming.

So, considering the hostility and uncertainties in Japan, why did Aanan and his partner choose to relocate there? I did not ask Aanan the question, but it may be that the traditional family, regardless of religion or culture, is more burdensome for LGBTQ+ children than one might imagine.

Ultimately, Aanan is glad he belongs to the LGBTQ+ community. He explains, "I'm glad I'm part of a community which is creative, open-minded (for the most part), and pushing the boundaries. It feels good to be part of something bigger than oneself, to be part of a movement for freedom and emancipation." Although I am not sure if he supports the global LGBTQ+ movement, I believe Aanan meant that he was happy to be a part of an LGBTQ+ community beyond Japan's.

5.2 Conclusion

The diasporic accounts of their lived experiences in Japan during the pandemic share valuable experiences that are not easily discovered through quantitative analysis. For example, Chia-hao's lonely experience in Japan and disappointment to leave the country without getting know about the country or making any friends there. Even without the pandemic's effects, Niran experiences periods of time where life seems intolerably difficult. He calls himself an "outgoing extro-vert," has a boyfriend in his native country, and recently received an adjustment disorder diagnosis. Emma suffers from asthma and, at the same time, she feels unseen and unimportant because of her nationality. Chun-chieh has come to out to many but does not feel safe to do the same to his Japanese colleagues. Harry experienced racism and thinks that immigrants are treated like second–class citizens in Japan, whereas he experienced more overt forms of discrimination in the UK, his home country. Many of them struggled with language barriers, which prevented them from forming friendships, accessing high–quality medical care, or comprehending official directives regarding social distancing measures. Aanan's account demonstrates his positive attitude toward adversaries and, at the same time, points out some of the problems of Japanese society, including lack of marriage equality and racism. Aanan lives with his Japanese partner and says that

he seems to like living there, despite his adverse experiences. Amelie also noted that Japanese people treat her as if she does not exist. Emma also had a similar observation and compared how Japanese society treat foreigners and LGBTQ+ people alike.

On the other hand, some of them offered such insights. For example, it's fascinating to learn how Niran explains Japan's heteronormativity. Riku was born and raised in Japan and now lives in Japan as a returnee from the US. His response to one of the questions concerning human rights was odds. Upon inquiry, Riku explained that the Japanese word for "protection" is misleading. After living in the US for almost four decades, he was able to point out some subtle difference between the English word "protection" and the Japanese translation "*hogo*." As he pointed out, the use of the word suggest "special protection," not as in equal right. At the same time, some case studies, mostly of participants from Asian countries, suggested a comparative easiness of being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan. Rather their lives in Japan were affected by racist attitudes toward them. They are just notable examples.

Finally, it was fascinating to see how accepting and being positive some of them were of an LGBTQ+ person. I believe they have faced many challenges both before and through the pandemic. For example, Amelie thinks "the capacity to love anyone regardless of their gender" is a gift as an LGBTQ+ person. Skyler believes that growing up as an LGBTQ+ individual provided them "with more empathy and open-mindedness toward others." Aanan is glad he is "part of a community which is creative, open-minded, and pushing the boundaries. It feels good to be part of something bigger than oneself, to be part of a movement for freedom and emancipation." After all, the Japanese LGBTQ+ community may need role models like them.

6

BREAKING NEWS FROM SOUTH KOREA

An Analysis of Japanese Media Reporting of a "Gay" Cluster

6.1 Introduction

Chapters 6 and 7 offer an in-depth comparative analysis of the media reporting of breaking news from South Korea through a close examination of the media, paying particular attention to how each dealt with culturally sensitive topics, such as, homosexuality and privacy. Chapter 6 focuses on a cross-cultural analysis of media reporting of the incident by select South Korean and Western media outlets, as well as the Japanese media, whereas Chapter 7 illustrates the diversity of Japanese social media responses.

6.1.1 The Itaewon Incident

There was a COVID-19 outbreak in the Itaewon district of Seoul, South Korea, in the beginning of May 2020. Greater details will be discussed later. In summary, as reported by the media, the South Korean authorities identified a South Korean male individual who visited multiple night entertainment venues, including gay clubs, as the source. The outbreak was discovered only a day after then president made a public announcement addressing the victory of what the Japanese call "*K-ken'eki*" [K-quarantine] and a possible further relaxation of COVID-19–related restrictions. The news certainly upset the country and, subsequently, South Korean elementary schools announced a further postponement of the start of the new semester. As the incident involved several thousands of individuals who were at gay clubs, their sexuality and their privacy also became key topics of the press coverage. Itaewon is known as an exceptional area with a progressive atmosphere, unusual in a conservative country for its tradition and religion. Many American military personnel and foreign tourists visit, and it was designated as a special tourism zone in 1997.

6.2 A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Media Reporting

CHART 6.1   REPORTING OF THE ITAEWON INCIDENT BY SOUTH KOREAN AND WESTERN NEWS MEDIA (IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)

Select Articles

South Korean Media

SK.1.   "'Itaewon club outbreak' in South Korea . . . '15 people infected in connection with the outbreak'." *JoongAng Ilbo* (May 8, 2020)

SK.2.   "New corona cluster in South Korea's gay clubs . . . Government shocked by unusual announcement." *Sports Seoul* (May 8, 2020)

SK.3.   "Itaewon, South Korea, gay club with new corona infection . . . 'Estimated 2,000 people were there at the time'." *Sports Seoul* (May 8, 2020)

SK.4.   "From a club in Itaewon, South Korea, to the rest of the country . . . 34 new cases of new coronas, 26 of which are regional infections." *JoongAng Ilbo* (May 10, 2020)

SK.5.   "Some media coverage of 'sexual minority hatred' is interfering with quarantine." *Hankyoreh* (May 11, 2020)

SK.6.   "Itaewon clubgoers who don't want to be tested for corona, fearing they will be branded as a sexual minority." *Chosunilbo* (May 11, 2020)

SK.7.   "People hiding for fear of 'corona outing' . . . 'Concerned about a second Shincheonji situation.'" *JoongAng Iibo* (May 11, 2020)

SK.8.   Hong calls on LGBTs to "be brave and get tested for new coronas." *Chosunilbo* (May 13, 2020)

SK.9.   "South Korean club outbreak to 119 people = 69 in Seoul." Yonhap News (May 13, 2020)

SK.10. "Seoul: 24,000 people tested for club outbreaks, 8 times the number since anonymity was introduced." Yonhap News (May 14, 2020)

SK.11. "35,000 people tested related to the club, 131 positive = South Korea." Yonhap News (May 14, 2020)

SK.12. "More than 150 people infected with club-related infections in South Korea Secondary and tertiary infections nationwide." Yonhap News (May 15, 2020)

SK.13. "BTS' Jong-Guk and 4 other members were tested for corona due to their history of visiting drinking establishments in Itaewon . . . their agency apologized." *JoonAng Ilbo* (May 18, 2020)

SK.14. "Four popular group members including BTS Jong-Guk visit Itaewon, causing controversy." Yonhap News (May 18, 2020)

SK.15. "Itaewon club-related corona cases exceeded the Guro-gu call center, 168 people." *Chosunilbo* (May 18, 2020)

SK.16. "32 new corona cases in South Korea, re-spread at club-related and hospital." Yonhap News (May 20, 2020)

Western Media

UK

UK.1. "New corona cluster in Seoul club, authorities investigate." Reuters (May 8, 2020)

UK.2. "'#Cluster of #new corona' occurred at a club in Seoul, South Korea. The regulatory measures had just been eased." Reuters (May 8, 2020)

UK.3. "Outbreak in downtown Seoul, follow-up investigation continues." Reuters (May 12, 2020)

UK.4. "South Korean authorities struggle to suppress corona, challenges in tracking." Reuters (May 12, 2020)

UK.5. "#New coronavirus in South Korea, which has just eased restrictions, President Moon Jae-in warned of a second wave of infection spread on April 10." Reuters (May 12, 2020)

UK.6. "South Korea tracks club mass infection with cell phone data and card usage history." Reuters (May 12, 2020)

UK.7. "Outbreak again in Wuhan, China; second wave of outbreaks feared in Seoul, South Korea; 94 people infected." BBC News (May 12, 2020)

UK.8. "Cluster outbreak in South Korea. Authorities are trying to identify 1982 people who cannot be contacted through cell phone base station data and credit card usage history." Reuters (May 13, 2020)

UK.9. "In South Korea, cell phone data, credit card usage history, and security camera footage are used to track outbreaks." Reuters (May 13, 2020)

UK.10. "VIDEO: #Korea #BTS members apologize: 'It is true that I went to a bar in Itaewon'." Reuters (May 21, 2020)

UK.11. "Members of the popular South Korean group BTS have apologized for visiting bars and restaurants in Itaewon on April 25." Reuters (May 21, 2020)

UK.12. "Jong-Guk of the popular South Korean group BTS apologizes after it was discovered that he had gone to a bar and other places in Itaewon, a downtown area of Seoul, on April 25." Reuters (May 21, 2020)

UK.13. "Before the social distance rules were relaxed in early May, members of the popular South Korean group BTS were found to have visited the downtown area." Reuters (May 22, 2020)

France

FR.1. "Seoul, South Korea, bans clubs and other businesses, warns of second wave of corona due to outbreak of mass infection." AFP (May 10, 2020)

FR.2.   "South Korea's capital, Seoul, ordered all bars and clubs in the city to be closed for business on April 9, fearing a second wave of the new coronavirus outbreak. President Moon Jae-in continues to urge the public to remain vigilant in the wake of the new outbreak in Seoul." AFP (May 10, 2020)

FR.3.   "South Korean authorities revealed on May 12 that they are using cell phone information to track customers in an effort to combat a cluster of new coronavirus outbreaks in several nightclubs in the capital city of Seoul. The city has promised to conduct anonymous testing in consideration of prejudice against homosexual people and others." AFP (May 12, 2020)

FR.4.   "The South Korean government announced on May 11 that 35 new cases of the novel coronavirus have been confirmed in the country, the highest number of new cases in a single day in more than a month. The number of people infected in the country has been rising rapidly due to an outbreak at a nightclub in the capital, Seoul, and authorities have postponed the reopening of schools that had been scheduled for this week." AFP (May 12, 2020)

FR.5.   "South Korea to use cell phone data to track nightclub mass infection." AFP (May 12, 2020)

FR.6.   "South Korea introduces corona anonymous testing, surge in number of tests conducted homosexuals considered." AFP (May 13, 2020)

FR.7.   "South Korean authorities revealed on May 13 that the introduction of anonymous testing has led to a surge in the number of tests as they hasten their response to a new coronavirus outbreak at a nightclub in the capital city of Seoul. Concerns have been raised that prejudice against homosexuals and others in the country could hinder the response." AFP (May 14, 2020)

US

US.1.   "Self-restraint police, Itaewon club, celebrity STAY HOME. The new corona reveals the national characters of the U.S., Japan, and South Korea." *Newsweek Japan* (May 11, 2020)

US.2.   "South Korea's corona strategy, prejudice against sexual minorities a barrier – Mass infection at a nightclub." *Bloomberg* (May 12, 2020)

US.3.   "South Korean government warns against speculation reports on link between infection and homosexuals." CNN (May 12, 2020)

US.4.   "Will the 'second wave' of the new corona pandemic arrive? Shanghai Disney and Paris stores reopen." *Newsweek Japan* (May 13, 2020)

US.5.   "Cluster in Itaewon, South Korea, 101 people infected with new corona, bottleneck in tracking gay concentrated contacts – Reuters." *Newsweek Japan* (May 13, 2020)

US.6. "South Korea nightclub-related new corona infections increase to 131." *Bloomberg* (May 14, 2020)

US.7. "New corona global death toll tops 300,000, South Korean nightclub infections increase." *Bloomberg* (May 15, 2020)

US.8. "Korean outbreak raises privacy concerns for homosexuals." *Wall Street Journal* (May 16, 2020)

US.9. "Itaewon, where the South Korean cluster occurred, and celebrities including BTS members. Discrimination against sexual minorities in the shadow of tracking down infected people Downtown Seoul, where the cluster occurred at the same time that regulations were eased. But infection was not the only problem." *Newsweek Japan* (May 20, 2020)

US.10. "Stop reporting on the new corona, which promotes prejudice and discrimination." *HuffPost Japan* (May 21, 2020)

US.11. "In South Korea, bashing of homosexuals on social networking sites quickly heated up after the media reported that a restaurant where the new corona infection had spread was a 'gay club.'" *HuffPost Japan* (May 21, 2020)

US.12. "South Korea, nightclub-related new corona infections increase to a total of 233 cases." *Bloomberg* (May 25, 2020)

6.2.1 South Korean Media

A close examination of Japanese versions of South Korean newspaper articles reveals that there are a few important developments concerning the Itaewon incident: the breaking of the news and national panic, concerns for sexual minority and privacy, and digression into celebrity gossips and "black sleeping rooms."

The news concerning a COVID-19 outbreak in Itaewon in Seoul broke on May 8, 2020. It was a blow for the South Korean authorities, and they put hasty effort into containing the outbreak. For example, a news article by *the JoongAng Ilbo* at 11:50 a.m. Japan time reads:

> A series of new coronavirus cases linked to a man in his 20s living in Yongin, Gyeonggi Province, have been confirmed, raising concerns about the spread of the virus in the local community. In particular, a large number of cases have been confirmed from contacts at a club in Itaewon, which the man visited, and there is a possibility that the number of cases originating from the club will increase further.

The article concludes, quoting Kim Gang-Rip, the first general coordinator of the Central Disaster Prevention and Safety Headquarters and vice minister of the Ministry of Health and Welfare of South Korea:

the quarantine authorities are working with local authorities to quickly control the situation. . . . Twelve people who came into contact with one of the infected person's co-workers at the club have been confirmed infected, including three foreigners and one military personnel.

Sports Korea, a sports newspaper, offers further details:

> Itaewon, South Korea, gay club had "2,000 people at the time" infected with the new strain of corona.
>   Quarantine authorities have issued a warning to those who visited the Itaewon clubs "King," "Trunk," and "Queen" before dawn on May 2, to refrain from going out.

Two days later, the *JoongAng Ilbo* published an article titled "From Itaewon club to the rest of the nation," suggesting that if immediate countermeasures were not taken, it would result in a nationwide outbreak, encouraging those who had intense contact with an unspecified number of people in an enclosed space since the end of April to undergo a diagnostic examination at a screening clinic.

In order to "quickly control the situation," much information about parties visited gay entertainment venues in Itaewon was made public. The names of specific clubs were identified, so the readers now confirmed that "clubs" were in fact gay clubs through, for example, an Internet search. News reports associated it with homosexuality, and homophobic comments were spread on the country's social media. About 2,000 people were suspected of possible infection, as of the reporting, but authorities were unable to contact most of them.

The *Kookmin Ilbo*, for example, drew criticism among other South Korean news media outlets as promoting hatred of sexual minorities by putting sexual minorities front and center of their reporting, thus fostering an attitude that obstructs quarantine. According to the *Hankyoreh*:

> *The Kookmin Ilbo* on the 7th reported that a resident of Yongin, who was determined to be infected with COVID-19, had visited a club in Itaewon and titled the report "Infected person stopped by a gay club. After the publication of this article, which included information on the area of residence and workplace, there was a series of articles that similarly listed "gay clubs," and the Internet saw an increase in the number of posts estimating the sexual identities of the relevant infected persons.
>   *The Kookmin Ilbo* did not stop there, and on the 9th, it reported that an infected person visited a certain sleeping quarters (a simple lodging facility equipped with a sauna, etc.) located in Gangnam-gu, Seoul, and called it "a typical gay sauna visited by male homosexuals, a space where anonymous men have sexual intercourse" and "a gay sauna where the main purpose is to have sexual intercourse in a dark room.

The reporting, such as that by the *Kookmin Ilbo*, brings the infected person's sexuality to the forefront will rather hinder quarantine activities by making sexual minorities concentrate all the responsibility on them. This is because the concern about human rights violations and subsequent hatred caused by outing, which is unrelated to their intentions, can make them fearful of testing.

The *Chosunilbo*, likewise, points out that inciting hatred or discriminatory attitudes toward sexual minorities and feat among them is counterproductive, and urges for creation of an environment for quick testing without having to confirm the association with Itaewon clubs. At the same time, the same article mentions some examples of hatred toward gay people among the country's social media users, including "gays (male homosexuals) with no concept," "gay clubs ruining the whole country," and "dirty bastards," as well as the city of Incheon requesting the organizers of the Incheon Queer Culture Festival to submit a list of its members.

In response, the South Korean authorities implemented anonymity testing and the number of people tested for the club outbreak multiplied. According to the Yonhap News, the mayor of Seoul reported that the number of virus tests increased eight times the normal number after the introduction of anonymous testing, saying that the anonymous testing is having an effect. A few hours later, the Yonhap News updated the number to 35,000 tests. The number of positive cases continued to increase. Additionally, although they did not result in a great number of responses among Japanese social media users, some news articles, including from *JoongAng Ilbo* ("People hiding for fear of 'corona outing',") addressed the issue of corona outing in the midst of the South Korean authorities urging those who visited the Itaewon bars and clubs to get tested. In the news article

The same *JoongAng Ilbo* article contains the section "'Black Sleeping Room' Controversies," which explains inside gay clubs:

> Epidemiological investigations revealed that infected man 23 from Anyang-si and infected man 648 from Seoul, whose route of travel overlapped with that of this man, visited the "King Club" in Gangnam, Seoul, and the "King Club" in the fact that they had stopped at a "black sleep room" also came to light, and both black sleep rooms attracted attention. This sleeping room is said to be a space used by homosexual men. According to Yongsan-gu, a total of 7,222 people visited 5 clubs in Itaewon (King Club, Trunk, Queen, Soho, and Him) from the 30th of last month to the 5th of this month. Gangnam-gu is currently tracking sleeping room visitors.

There were some reports of K-pop band members visiting Itaewon a couple of weeks earlier. Both the *JoongAng Ilbo* and Yonhap News report with great details that four K-pop idols visited a restaurant and a drinking establishment in Itaewon on April 25, 2020, and were tested for COVID-19. The offices of the four idols

apologized for their failure to comply with "social distancing," clarifying that they had not visited the club where the outbreak occurred and that they had all tested negative. Park Gyuri, another K-pop star, also reportedly visited a club in Itaewon on the same day as the man who visited three clubs there and contracted COVID-19. She acknowledged the fact that she had visited the club, clarified that she was in self-isolation, and apologized.

In this situation of national panic, one of the very few openly gay South Korean persons was carried out to facilitate COVID-19 testing. The *Chosunilbo* reports Hong Seok-jeong, a TV personality, told visitors to clubs in Itaewon:

> It's a difficult time for everyone. . . . Everyone is working together to get through this. I urge the defense aircraft authorities, the medical personnel, and each and every one of our citizens to gather their courage now and go through the inspections so that all the effort and hard work that has been put in so far will not be in vain.

Addressing the people who visited the Itaewon bars and clubs in particular, he said, "Now is the time to be courageous; it is true that LGBT people are basically afraid of their identity being known by their families, acquaintances and society. So we need to be courageous."

6.2.2 The Western Media and Homonationalism

Western news media outlets generally followed the development of the incident, as the South Korean counterpart reported, particularly in the beginning of the incident. As Chart 6.1 demonstrates, three Western media outlets, Reuters of the UK, AFP of France, and *Newsweek Japan*, in particular, closely followed its development, each published a number of news articles on the subject in Japanese, and, like South Korean counterparts, their news digests were tweeted and relayed by online news portals.

Reuters' report of the Itaewon incident reached Japanese social media users as early as the South Korean newspapers on May 8, 2020. With a photograph of a warning about prevention of new corona infection posted in a club in Seoul provided by the Yonhap News, it outlines the incident, consistent with similar reports from the South Korean media; however, unlike the panicked tone of the South Korean media, the UK news media report, "Although the number of infected people is relatively small, it is expected to increase in the future, and authorities are hurrying to identify people who may have been infected." It also adds a quote from the director general of Korea Centers of Disease Control and Prevention regarding the club where the infection is believed to have occurred: "The most worrisome and dangerous conditions are present. We need to strengthen the management of such facilities. We need to avoid going to such places as much as possible."

The news report by BBC News on May 12 noted that it has been challenging to determine how this cluster became infected. Customers from the gay community frequent some of the clubs, and because homophobia is still present in South Korea, it is thought that some of them joined the clubs using fictitious names. On the same day, *Bloomberg* and CNN transmitted a news update on the Itaewon outbreak. Both articles clearly connect the incident to homophobia in South Korea. The *Bloomberg News* report begins with the following: "Korea has been successful in curbing the spread of the novel coronavirus by strongly encouraging its citizens to get tested. This strategy has hit a wall. There is a long-standing bias against sexual minorities." It continues and comments on South Korean discrimination against homosexuality.

The report concludes with a quote from a South Korean professor who co-authored research concerning the impact of homophobia on the healthcare system there: "There is considerable discrimination and hostility toward homosexuality. . . . This may prevent sexual minorities suspected of being infected with corona from voluntarily undergoing testing."

On the other hand, CNN reports that authorities in South Korea issued a warning on May 11 to be cautious while handling the personal information of those who have the disease in reaction to recent media stories that included conjecture linking homosexuals to a new cluster of new coronaviruses. In the previous week, a number of Korean media publications claimed that these locations served as "gay clubs" for homosexuals. Along with the age and residence of the infected person, who is thought to be the cluster's core character, some publications also included information about his occupation and place of employment, which was purportedly provided by an unnamed official. Concerning South Korean attitudes toward homosexuality, the CNN report comments:

> Korean society has always been known to be less accepting of homosexuality. Organizations advocating for the rights of sexual minorities have voiced concern that publicizing the sexual orientation of infected persons will further exacerbate discrimination against homosexuals. If the press coverage causes infected persons to go into hiding, isolation measures and testing could be negatively affected.

On the following day, AFP reported "number of anonymous corona tests introduced surges, [as a result of] consideration for homosexual people" and explained: "Concerns have been raised that prejudice against homosexual people and others in the country may hinder a response." On commenting South Korean prejudice against homosexual people, the report read: "In South Korea, a conservative society, prejudice against homosexuality is deeply rooted, and many nightclub patrons are believed to be reluctant to come forward." To address these concerns, Seoul authorities began anonymous inspections this week; however, AFP reports, the authorities are using cell phone information to

track nightclub patrons, and police will be dispatched to respond to those who cannot be reached.

On May 20, Azumi Warrick of *Newsweek Japan* reported a lengthy summary from South Korea of the Itaewon outbreak incident, which "has developed into criticism of celebrities who went to Itaewon for fun and discrimination against sexual minorities," in her words. Warrick describes Itaewon as Shinjuku Ni-chome being probably closer in terms of its anything-goes atmosphere that accepts gays and other minorities than any other cities in the country.

Warrick was critical in a subsection titled "Even the government is 'witch-hunting' (*majogari*) minorities," saying that South Korean authorities responded as if they were neglecting human rights, which quickly backfired. She mentioned:

> Anyang City even published the addresses and apartment names of the infected. As a result, a voluntary group of parents posted a sign at the home of the first infected male office worker, saying, "Because of you, school reopening has been delayed and our children are no longer able to go to school.

Warrick concluded her report, saying:

> As in the past, there will be a thorough disclosure of the footprints of those infected, but one cannot help but hope that this will not lead to further discrimination and prejudice against sexual minority people.

Western news media's reporting of the Itaewon incident typically focused on South Korean attitudes toward sexual minority and infringement of their privacy.

6.3 Japan's Mainstream Media: Homophobic System

CHART 6.2   JAPANESE MEDIA REPORTING OF THE ITAEWON INCIDENT AND SOCIAL MEDIA RESPONSES (BY MEDIA OUTLET AND CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)

Select Articles

TV Stations

NHK

NHK.1.   "South Korea: 12 people infected with new corona outbreak at a nightclub after restrictions were eased." (May 8, 2020)

NHK.2. "South Korea nightclub mass infection: 54 infected, including family members, confirmed." (May 10, 2020)

NHK.3. "South Korea: 79 people, including customers and family members, confirmed to be infected in a mass outbreak at a nightclub. Corona." (May 10, 2020)

NHK.4. "South Korea: 86 people infected at a nightclub, including customers and family members, confirmed to be infected with corona." (May 10, 2020, update)

NHK.5. "Corona outbreak at a Korean club affects 93 people; over 3,000 people have not been contacted." (May 11, 2020)

NHK.6. "Corona outbreak at a Korean club affects 102 people; over 3,000 people have not been contacted." (May 12, 2020, update)

NHK.7. "South Korea: 119 people infected in a club outbreak, with secondary infections in various locations." (May 13, 2020)

NHK.8. "South Korea nightclub mass infection outbreak rises to 133; Concerns grow of 'second wave.'" (May 14, 2020)

NHK.9. "South Korea: 153 people infected at nightclubs, tertiary infection, new strain of corona." (May 15, 2020)

NHK.10. "South Korea nightclub outbreak: 168 confirmed, with quaternary infection." (May 17, 2020)

NHK.11. "New corona issue: Widespread anxiety and concern among LGBT people." (May 17, 2020)

NHK.12. "South Korea nightclub mass infection exceeds 200 new corona." (May 21, 2020)

NTV

NTV.1. "A moment of carelessness . . . 40 people infected at a club in South Korea." (May 9, 2020)

NTV.2. "South Korea outbreak: 79 infected to date." (May 10, 2020)

NTV.3. "Despite a series of "easing of restrictions" around the world, the number of infected people in South Korea is increasing again." (May 11, 2020)

NTV.4. "86 infected at Korean club, school attendance postponed." (May 11, 2020)

TBS

TBS.1. "South Korea, another outbreak?" (May 8, 2020)

TBS.2. "South Korea: 86 people infected in club outbreak; some call for postponement of resumption of school." (May 11, 2020)

TBS.3. "South Korea postpones resumption of school due to club outbreak." (May 11, 2020)

Fuji TV/FNN

FNN.1. "Sexual minorities targeted . . . Human rights violations in South Korea corona infectious persons' traffic line disclosure." (May 8, 2020)

FNN.2. "Quarantine or economic reopening? The current state of 11 cities around the world slowly beginning to move. A man went club-hopping in downtown South Korea." (May 8, 2020)

FNN.3. "40 people infected in Seoul, South Korea, including customers and staff who visited a club." (May 9, 2020)

FNN.4. "Outbreak at South Korean club postpones reopening of school." (May 11, 2020)

FNN.5. "Former KARA member Gyuri apologizes for her behavior during her self-imposed self-restraint from going out . . . Visiting clubs in Korea." (May 11, 2020)

FNN.6. "Mass infection after the lifting of self-deterrence . . . A case of South Korea that Japan should know before the declaration of emergency is lifted." (May 12, 2020)

FNN.7. "South Korea's 'loosening of self-restraint' postpones reopening of schools, 106 people infected by club mass infection." (May 12, 2020)

FNN.8. "South Korea's 'second wave' expands to 119 people; First infected person in Wuhan, China in a month; In the U.S. . . . warns Key player President Trump." (May 13, 2020)

TV Asahi/ANN

ANN.1. "'Very close contact' also . . . outbreak at a club in South Korea." (May 8, 2020)

ANN.2. "Seoul clubs banned from operating due to mass infection." (May 9, 2020)

ANN.3. "Korean school reopening postponed for fifth time due to club outbreak." (May 11, 2020)

ANN.4. "South Korea: 86 people infected by a mass infection at a club postponed the start of school for a week." (May 12, 2020)

ANN.5. "Despite the self-restraint, popular Korean idols meet at a club." (May 18, 2020)

Newspapers

Yomiuri Shimbun

Yomi.1. "South Korean mass infection, over 3,000 club guests unreachable . . . prejudice and hatred on the Internet." (May 12, 2020)

Sankei Shimbun

Sankei.1. "Outbreak at a club in Seoul, South Korea: More infections?" (May 8, 2020; original, Kyodo News)

Sankei.2. "Outbreak at a club in Seoul, South Korea: More infections?" (May 8, 2020; original, Kyodo News) (an update)

Sankei.3. "Outbreak at a club in Seoul, South Korea: 15 people in total, possibly more." (May 8, 2020; original, Kyodo News)

Sankei.4. "Outbreak of infection in South Korea, no masks worn inside club." (May 9, 2020)

Sankei.5. "Outbreak of infection in South Korea: No masks worn in clubs, alarm again." (May 9, 2020)

Sankei.6. "Korean outbreak spreads to 40 people at a club (Order for amusement facilities to refrain from operating)." (May 9, 2020)

Sankei.7. "Korean club mass infection, public disclosure backfires . . . Over 3,000 people lost contact." (May 12, 2020)

Sankei.8. "South Korean outbreak continues to spread, with more than 160 people infected and also a quaternary infection." (May 16, 2020)

Asahi Shimbun

Asahi.1. "New corona cluster in Seoul club, authorities investigate." (May 8, 2020)

Asahi.2. "South Korean club outbreak spreads to Busan and other cities, infecting 86 customers." (May 11, 2020)

Asahi.3. "South Korea collects cell phone information of 10,000 people tracked in club mass infection." (May 13, 2020)

Asahi.4. "Behavioral history investigation of infected persons 'unsettling' 11 LGBT organizations request letter." (May 13, 2020)

Asahi.5. "New corona outbreak from a club in South Korea up to the 6th degree . . . Uncertainty about the route of infection." (May 30, 2020)

Nikkei Shimbun

Nikkei.1. "South Korea eases corona restrictions, outbreak at clubs." (May 9, 2020)

Nikkei.2. "A man with fever and other symptoms visited the club and 15 people were infected en masse. At least 1,500 people came and went at several clubs and bars. In South Korea, where measures to prevent new coronas have just been eased, there are concerns about a resurgence of the spread of infection in the city." (May 9, 2020)

Nikkei.3. "Corona reignited in South Korea: LGBTs in a corner." (May 15, 2020)

Local Newspapers

The following three newspapers are local newspapers.

Mainichi Shimbun

"I'm looking forward to seeing my friends, but I'm a little worried because we just had a mass infection at a nightclub. The start of the new school term, which had been postponed for about two and a half months, has begun in South Korea. Schools are paying close attention to prevent infection." (May 20, 2020)

Tokyo Shimbun

"South Korea: Concerns about second wave of new corona. Trial for exit strategy." (May 13, 2020)

Fukui Shimbun

"Seoul, Korea: New corona outbreak at a nightclub, 101 people in total, secondary infection spread from customers." (May 12, 2020)

Tokyo Chūnichi Sports Shimbun

"Fifi: 'Won't that increase the number of hidden infected people who don't come forward?' Local media reports on 'gay club visit' by South Korean man infected with corona." (May 9, 2020)

Tokyo Sports (evening)

"Ripples spreading in the Korean cluster . . . Lies in the list of names?" (May 12, 2020)

Sports Newspapers

There is no lack of Korean corona-related news in the country's leading sports newspapers, including *Sankei Sports, Daily Sports, Nikkan Sports, and Sports Hochi,* but it is mostly limited to sports-related items.

Evening Newspapers

Yūkan Fuji

"15 people in total infected at a club in Seoul, South Korea." (May 8, 2020)
  "Former KARA Gyuri apologizes for going to the club where the cluster occurred." (May 13, 2020)

"Koike Yuriko: Strong and Flexible. Outbreaks again in China and South Korea . . . Laxity will lead to the spread of the 'second wave of corona' infections! Beat the invisible virus with 'more haste, less speed.'" (May 15, 2020)

News Agencies

Kyodo News

"South Korea, Outbreak at a club – 15 people in total, more to come!" (May 8, 2020)

"Seoul outbreak exceeds 100, 73 are clubs, customers to family members." (May 12, 2020)

"Corona outbreak in South Korea continues to spread – over 160 people, 4th infection." (May 16, 2020)

Jiji News

"The South Korean government announced that 18 new cases of the new coronavirus have been confirmed. Seventeen of these cases are related to a man in his 20s who was found to be infected after visiting a club in Itaewon, downtown Seoul, raising fears of a mass infection." (May 8, 2020)

"New corona cases are on the rise again in South Korea, possibly due to mass infection at a club." (May 8, 2020)

"New corona infections increase again in South Korea, mass infection at clubs." (May 9, 2020)

"The South Korean government announced on January 12 that a total of 102 people had been confirmed infected as of noon that day in connection with the outbreak of a new type of coronavirus at a club in downtown Seoul. Of these, 73 were visitors to the club, and the remaining 29 were their family members, acquaintances, or colleagues." (May 12, 2020)

"Clubs in South Korea infected a total of 102 people. Tracked by security cameras – new corona." (May 12, 2020)

Online-Only News Sites

Yahoo! Japan News

"13 people tested positive for infection in South Korea." (May 7, 2020)

"South Korea: Infected cases are on the rise again." (May 9, 2020)

"Seoul: Entertainment facilities banned from operating." (May 9, 2020)

"New cases of infection in South Korea: 34." (May 9, 2020)

"79 people were infected in a mass outbreak in South Korea." (May 11, 2020)

"South Korea: Resumption of school attendance postponed for one week." (May 11, 2020)

"South Korea: 101 people infected by a club mass infection." (May 11, 2020)

"The number of infected patients in Itaewon, Seoul, has risen to 119. The battle to contain the 'unexpected' is a 'battle of speed.'" (May 13, 2020)

"35,000 people infected at a Korean club were inspected." (May 14, 2020)

"Clubs in South Korea, quaternary infection occurred." (May 16, 2020)

47 News

"South Korea, 15 people infected in a club outbreak, more to come." (May 8, 2020; original, Kyodo News)

Nico Nico News

"New Korean corona disaster, this time a mass infection at a gay bar." (May 12, 2020; original, *JBpress*)

Livedoor News

"Corona cluster outbreak at a gay club in Itaewon, South Korea, infecting 13 people." (May 8, 2020; original, *Sports Seoul*)

"Outbreak at a club in Seoul, South Korea, with 6,000 to 7,000 customers coming in and out of the club." (May 10, 2020; original?)

"New Korean corona disaster, this time a mass infection at a gay bar." (May 12, 2020; original, *JBpress*)

"Clustering in Korean clubs difficult to track, but could lead to public disclosure of sexual orientation." (May 15, 2020; original, *Smart Flash*)

Line News

"New corona cluster in South Korea's gay clubs. . . . Government shocked by unusual announcement." (May 8, 2020; original, *Sports Seoul*)

Wow! Korea

"Park Gyuri (ex-KARA) visits Itaewon club on the same day as Yongin's new corona case? Identification pending." (May 11, 2020)

> ### *Magazines*
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> *Weekly Bunshun*
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> > "What was happening in Korean gay clubs? 2000 people with false contact information are difficult to trace, and the public is outraged." (May 11, 2020)
> > "The day a gay club became a corona nest in South Korea, thinking about 'decency' will a system of state surveillance of citizens become the new normal?" (May 13, 2020)

Reporting of the Itaewon incident by Japanese media greatly vary, in particular, regarding culturally sensitive topics, such as sexuality, sexual minority, and privacy.

6.3.1 TV Networks

NHK is a leader in Japan's news media. The Itaewon incident is not an exception. NHK, through its multiple news channels, constantly updated Japanese audiences with new developments and details. As Chart 6.2 demonstrates, greatly more social media users respond to their news than to those by any other news media outlets in Japan, illuminating their exceptional presence in the country's news media. NHK in its news content is consistent with the use of "night club" (*naito kurabu*) to describe King Club (*Kingu kurabu*) the night entertainment venue in Itaewon in the spotlight. On occasion, NHK uses "entertainment facilities" (*yūkyō shisetsu*), a more generic term than "night club," instead. Most of the NHK news reports I examined, however, typically contains an edited photograph showing just "club" without "king" on the sign out front of the night club.

While it is obvious to those in the know, or can be inferred from the name shown on the photograph, it is observed, none of the NHK news reports concerning the Itaewon outbreak I examined uses any term related to sexuality. For example, their reporting the breaking news describes the "this man in his 20s was not wearing a mask at the nightclub." Besides, there are some descriptions with a little more detail but within reasonable limits of theirs. For example, it reports on May 13, "In Incheon, near Seoul, eight people, including a student, were found to have been infected by a tutor at a tutoring school who was a guest at a nightclub." On May 10, quoting Mayor Park of Seoul, "A moment of carelessness can lead to such an outbreak of infection. Due to the carelessness of a few, all our efforts to date will be undone," NHK News reports. NHK News reports constantly update Japanese audiences with key developments and new numbers; nevertheless, they typically lack some of the key words, as usually seen in the reporting by South Korean as well as Western news media outlets, and sound homophobic.

The coverage by Japanese commercial broadcasters is similar to that of NHK with a few minor variations, for example, calling the gay clubs "*yūkyō shisetsu*" [entertainment facilities] with regard to the use of culturally sensitive terms. There are a few notable exceptions. TV Asahi/ANN, in its first concerning the Itaewon outbreak, broadcasted the news "'Very close contact' (*hijōni shinmitsu na sesshoku*) also . . . outbreak at a club in South Korea," suggestive of intimate behavior beyond a violation of the COVID-19 code to maintain a proper distance. The video, which is available at Tere(bi) Asa(hi) News (TV Asahi News/ANN website), begins with a footage of the front of the club in question, showing its full name, offers details, and concludes, "The man was not wearing a mask when he entered the store, and there was also 'very close contact' in the store." The video was seen close to 150,000 times and received more than 300 comments on social media.

Fuji TV/FNN's switches the language reporting the same incident by the same correspondent on the same day. On May 8, the news broke in Japan, Watanabe Yasuhiro, Seoul bureau chief, reports from Seoul, as part of a program titled "Quarantine or economic reopening? The current state of 11 cities around the world slowly beginning to move. A man went club-hopping in downtown South Korea":

> This is Watanabe in Seoul. The number of new cases of infection has been in the low single-digit range every day, and the request for people to refrain from going out was lifted on the 6th. On the other hand, on the 7th, it was discovered that a man who had been to five clubs in Itaewon, downtown Seoul, was infected, and his contacts were quarantined. The battle against coronas continues.

Although it is online-only content, FNN Prime Online of Fuji TV published a news article on May 8, written by Watanabe, in contrast to his own coverage for the TV, contains sexuality-related terms, directly addressing the human rights of the sexual minority parties involved in the incident. The article is titled "Sexual minorities (*seiteki shōsūsha*) targeted . . . human rights violations in the publication of movement line of the infected individual in South Korea: Quarantine priority? Freedom and privacy first?" Watanabe discusses a "controversy on a different level than the spread of infection, introducing some examples of criticism surrounding South Korean reporting of the outbreak, using expressions such as "sexual minority group" (*seiteki shōsūsha dantai*), "prejudice and hatred towards sexual minority" (*seiteki shōsūsha ni taisuru henken to keno*), "retreat on human rights of sexual minorities" (*seiteki shōsūsha no jinken wo kōtai*), and "outing that reveal sexual secrets" (*seiteki na himitsu wo bakuro suru authingu*), among others.

Watanabe calls on the South Korean government to take action to stop the breaches of the human rights of its residents who identify as sexual minorities, as he wraps off his article by echoing the criticism leveled by Western media. Incidentally, the online report has a photograph of the gay night entertainment establishment yet with the first part of the name blurred out, at the discretion of FNN.

6.3.2 Japanese Newspapers

6.3.2.1 News Agencies

Two of Japan's news agencies, Kyōdō Tsūshin [Kyodo News] and Jiji Tsūshin [Jiji News], both transmitted a few news reports concerning the Itaewon outbreak. The news agencies gathered some of the news reports from outside sources, in particular from the South Korean media on this topic, and distributed them widely in and out of Japan. As such, their content seems consistent with others, rhetoric neutral, and use of expressions related to homosexuality, if any, are conservative to a considerable extent. A close examination of three news articles by Kyodo News and two by Jiji News revealed that the gay club in question is always and repeatedly referred to as "a club" (*kurabu*), not even as "a night club" (*naito kurabu*), throughout the reports. For example, Kyodo News on May 8 transmitted "South Korea, 15 people infected at clubs, more likely to increase" with a photograph of the entrance of the club, not showing the name with the caption "the club temporarily closed after an infected person was found to have visited the club."

6.3.2.1.1 National Newspapers

Although the newspaper has the highest number of subscribers in Japan, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* news on the Itaewon outbreak did not result in a great number of responses by Japanese social media users. A close examination of the three news articles related to the Itaewon outbreak reveals that, similar to the reports by Japan's other news media, as demonstrated previously, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* typically do not use any sexuality-related expressions. There were five *Sankei Shimbun* news transmissions that result in a great number of responses among Japanese social media users. While Kyodo News is consistent in using expressions not related to sexuality, for example, "clubs and restaurants in downtown Seoul" (*Sōru no hankagai ni aru kurabu ya inshokuten*), *Sankei Shimbun* articles replace "downtown" (*hankagai*) with "*kanrakugai*" [pleasure quarter, nightlife district, entertainment district] and contain more specific information concerning how the outbreak was confirmed than the one by Kyodo News. In *Sankei Shimbun*'s second news report on May 9, the man in question is identified as living in Yongin. Additionally, while Kyodo News has no photographs in either article, Sankei Shimbun articles feature a photograph of King Club with two masked young men in front of the club and the head of one of the men covers the first word of the club name.

Kamiya Takeshi, Seoul correspondent for *Sankei Shimbun*, points a problem, saying, "However, half of them could not be reached because of misrepresentation of their contact cell phone numbers or because they did not answer their phones." He elaborates, quoting a *Dong-a Ilbo* (*Tōa Nippō*) article, "Most of those infected this time were young people in their 20s and 30s, and about 35% were

'asymptomatic.' Since there is a risk of spreading the virus in their daily lives without being aware of it after infection, there is a growing concern about the 'quiet spread of the virus: state of emergency'" (*shizukana kakudai hijōjitai*) (Dong-a Ilbo). Likewise, *the Asahi Shimbun* argues that those who visited the nightclubs in Itaewon are causing a "state of emergency" by "quietly spreading the virus" (*shizukana kakudai*) regardless of testing status. Although these news reports do not use any expressions related to sexuality, it could be clearly inferred between the lines and also from others sources that sexual minorities are watch-listed as "quiet spreaders of the virus."

Without mentioning any issues related to sexuality, including homophobia, these articles accuse the hidden infected persons, who are presumably responsible for "uncertain routes of infection." Who are the hidden infected persons? Why do they need to hide? Is not discussing sexuality-related issues beneficial to the LGBTQ+ community? Is it even considered as a sign of "tolerance" (*kanyō*)? Even if it is not their intension, these articles by Japan's national newspapers indirectly but clearly blames sexual minorities for spreading the virus.

6.3.2.1.2 How to Report Content Not Safe for General Readers

On May 12, *the Yomiuri Shimbun* addresses issues related to sexual minorities that arose in connection of the Itaewon outbreak in the article "South Korean mass infection, over 3,000 club guests unreachable . . . prejudice and disgust on the Internet." Unlike previous outbreaks, this time the tracking by cell phone location data, which has been a weapon in South Korea's efforts to deter infection, has been difficult.

> Several Korean media outlets have reported that the clubs are "clubs for sexual minorities," based on publicly available information. It is believed that many people do not want their sexual orientation to be known, and the clubs' list of 5,517 customers from April 30 to May 5 included false telephone numbers.

While, they are "gay clubs" (*gei kurabu*) as commonly understood, the newspaper calls the establishments in the spotlight "clubs for sexual minorities" (*seiteki shōsūsha mure no kurabu*). regardless of the inaccuracy of the description.

6.3.2.1.3 Paid Subscribers Only

Sankei Shimbun's paid subscribers–only article "Korean club mass infection, public disclosure backfires. . . . Over 3,000 people lost contact" feature a photograph with the full name of the club. Sakurai Norio, Seoul correspondent, reports:

> Seoul, Korea, which had been said to have succeeded in controlling the spread of a new type of coronavirus, has been shaken by a mass infection

centered on clubs in Seoul's entertainment district. Many of the club patrons have been unreachable. The infection containment measures, which have been successful in terms of proactive information disclosure, are now under review, as people are afraid of exposing their personal information.

Sakurai continues and explain why people are apprehensive about disclosing personal information:

> It was reported that the infected had also visited gay clubs frequented by homosexual people, which led to a series of posts on the Internet attacking homosexual people. The number of people who took the test on the 11th was nearly double that of the previous day. The number has increased.

It is observed that a few expressions related to sexuality are present, including "gay clubs" (*gei kurabu*), "homosexual people" (*dōseiaisha*). According to the article, in South Korea, the government has been effective in controlling the spread of the disease by promptly disclosing where infected people have stopped by.

6.3.2.1.4 Editing Out

Asahi Shimbun Digital published partial translation of the Reuters' breaking news article "South Korea tracks new coronavirus outbreak in Seoul nightclubs" by Sangmi Cha and Josh Smith, journalists, on May 8:

> SEOUL (Reuters) – South Korean health authorities are investigating a small but growing coronavirus outbreak centred in a handful of Seoul nightclubs, seeking to keep infections in check as the country moves to less restrictive social distancing measures. . . . Authorities have asked anyone who visited the clubs over the weekend to self isolate for 14 days and be tested.
>
> *(Asahi Shimbun; Cha and Smith,*
> *Reuters, 2020, May 8)*

The original article continues; however, the Japanese version ends there completely omitting the journalists' concern for the "possible unintended side effects" of the country's invasive tracing policy over its LGBTQ+ individuals. The Reuters reporters make a few very important points concerning "South Korea's invasive tracing and wide public disclosure of some patient information" that could out "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) individuals against their will or lead to discrimination," using pertinent expressions, such as "gay," "gay people," "homosexuality," "gay clubs," "gay bars," "hate crimes," and "human rights."

6.3.2.1.5 Pathologizing Sexual Minorities

Asahi Shimbun Digital published "Behavioral history investigation of infected persons 'unsettling'. 11 LGBT organizations submitted a request" later on the same day, albeit on its dedicated medical site Asahi Shimbun Apitaru:

> Eleven LGBT organizations, including sexual minority parties and supporters active in Fukuoka Prefecture, submitted a written request to Governor Ogawa Hiroshi on December 12. They requested that privacy be ensured to prevent unintentional coming out when information on those infected with the new coronavirus is investigated and made public.
>
> *(Ito Mayuri)*

Fukuoka is Kyushu's northernmost prefecture and closest to South Korea. Unlike Kamiya's report, there has been a concern among the LGBTQ+ community there. Expressions relating to sexuality are also clearly present.

6.3.2.1.6 News Magazines: Exposé Journalism

Japanese weekly news magazines have a long history. Some of them were first published in the 1950s, including *the Weekly (Shūkan) Diamond, Weekly Bunshun, Weekly Shinchō*, and *Weekly Gendai*. In today's diminishing publishing industry in Japan, they still have some relevancy, especially among older readers. There were a few news articles concerning the Itaewon outbreak by Japan's news magazines that have echoed among social media users.

The *Weekly Bunshun* released "What was happening in Korean gay clubs (*gei kurabu*)? Clustering threatens to reintroduce the corona outbreak," by Kyungchul Kim, Seoul correspondent, on May 11. The article first describes "the epicenter" of this outbreak as "several clubs" (*fukusū no kurabu*) in Itaewon in Seoul, where "a man in his 20s living in Yongin, Gyeonggi-do, a bedroom community of Seoul," hustled. As a result, the article continues, a number of people infected with corona "mainly at King, a nightclub in Itaewon" (*Itewon no naito kurabu "King" wo chūshin'ni*) where this man stayed for a long time.

After a quick descriptive introduction of the background, using "several clubs" (*fukusū no kurabu*) and "a night club" (*naito kurabu*), it goes on to discuss "what 'a black sleeping room' is" (*"burakku suimin beya" toha?*). According to the author, "Further complicating the measures taken against this cluster is the fact that three of the clubs the 20-something man roamed, including 'The King,' were so-called 'gay clubs' (*gei kurabu*)." Due to the fact that three of the clubs were "so-called 'gay clubs'" (*iwayuru "gei kurabu"*), "club users fear outing (unwanted coming out)" (*authingu [hon'nin no nozomanai kamingu auto] wo osore*) many have failed to respond to investigations by quarantine authorities. "More seriously,"

the article continues to explain the "black sleeping room," quoting the Seoul newspaper:

> Some of those infected at the club also stopped by the "Black Sleeping Room," a rest area exclusively for homosexual men (*dansei dōseiaisha senyō*). The electronic version of the "Seoul Newspaper" (May 10) describes the "Black Sleeping Room" as follows.
>   "The Black Sleeping Rooms are called 'chim-bangs' and are used by homosexual men to relieve their sexual desires (*dansei dōseiaisha ga seiteki yokkyū wo kaishō suru tameni*). The place is even more crowded at night, and from Friday to Sunday there are so many people there that there is no room to step on the floor. The rooms range from cozy rooms for small groups to open spaces for large numbers of people. Since the main purpose of the dimly lit rooms is for sexual act including intercourse (*seikōi ga shumokuteki*), basic life precautions such as the use of hand sanitizers and the wearing of masks are rarely observed. Since this is a space for sexual act with anonymous men (*tokumei no dansei to seikōi wo suru kūkan*), visitors prefer to use cash rather than credit cards, which tend to disclose personal information."

This description of the black sleeping room is well beyond the narrow boundary of Japan's culturally sensitivity concerning sexuality, in particular homosexuality. It uses "homosexual men" (*dansei dōseiaisha senyō*), which is not common among Japan's mainstream media and, although quoting a South Korean source, its description of inside the gay club seems too detailed and unnecessary. It looks more like an expose article by tabloid journalism elsewhere.

This section concludes, describing, "In response to this situation, the Seoul Metropolitan Government and Gyeonggi Province issued a two-week assembly ban order against all adult/sex entertainment establishments (*zen fūzokuten*), including clubs." The term "adult/sex entertainment establishment" (*fūzokuten*) does not typically include clubs, including gay clubs; however, perhaps due to the black sleeping room that the Itaewon gay club King Club has, the article judgmentally called gay clubs adult/sex entertainment as if all gay clubs have a dimly lit black sleep room where gay men visit for sexual act with anonymous men in secrecy.

The article concludes asking, "What has the South Korean public been disappointed in?"

> In South Korean society, there is concern and anger about the senseless youth. . . .
>   The South Korean press has expressed concern about the hatred that may be triggered against homosexual people in the future.
>   But many outraged South Koreans would not have condemned them because they are homosexual people. They are angry and disappointed

that the rules of quarantine, which every South Korean had sacrificed his or her personal life to uphold, were blown out of the water by the actions of a few young people.

"The senseless youth" were condemned not because of their sexuality but because they broke the rules of quarantine.

Two days later, the *Weekly Bunshun* published another article, titled "The day gay clubs became corona's nest in South Korea, thinking about 'decency'" by Yamamoto Ichirō, writer. The author describes his first impression of the news when it broke:

> When I saw the news that a mass infection had started in Seoul, start-ing with a gay club, I thought, "This is it." The state of emergency was declared, the curfew was relaxed, and just when I was loosening up, the infection spread again! But I had no idea that the cluster was a gay club of all places.

Reflecting on the "stay out of the lewd places" (*inbi na tokoro niha deiri shinaiyōni*) message, he mentions the so-called nightlife clusters (*yoru no machi no kurasutā*) were alleged to have contributed to the spread of the infection in Japan. Under the section "Deviation to pleasure and clustering is a catastrophe," he recollects the news involving an SM lover:

> If you ask me, the president of a certain listed company who frequented an SM club in Tokyo in late February was infected, and after spreading the infection to other regular SM clubs, he went to the Sea of Japan side of the country on business, where the infection was spread by the whip being wielded in the nightlife district. . . .
>
> When the beautiful name of "coronavirus control" is used, everyone is trying to share in the difficulties. If one tries to put one's own position first or deviates for the sake of pleasure, and cause a cluster by mistake, one will receive a considerable amount of bashing.

In this quote, homosexuality is discussed as a sexual preference comparable to SM. Furthermore, if one selfishly deviates for the sake of pleasure, which includes homosexuality according to the author, a considerable amount of bashing is expected. Although he seems to question of the desirability of "the introduction of a system whereby the state monitors whether the people are well-behaved," his understanding of homosexuality seems minimal. If, for example, same-sex marriage is allowed, the great majority of gays have no reason to visit lewd places violating the COVID-19 protocols and possibly receiving bashing if caused a cluster.

In addition, the *Weekly Gendai* released "The 'gay club mass infection' (*gei shūdan kansen*) highlights . . . the reality of homophobic discrimination (*dōseiai*

sabetsu) in South Korea: deemed 'humanly defective' (*ningenteki ni kekkan ga aru*)" on June 2. The author seems to try to explain "the reality of homophobic discrimination" in South Korean culture and society. Explaining how the Itaewon outbreak occurred, the author says, "The epicenter was a gay club in Itaewon, Seoul. It was also revealed that the infected had been frequenting a place called a 'black sleeping room' where gay men engage in sexual acts with other gay men." It seems extremely difficult to find out the full story, "In many cases, they do not respond to investigations by quarantine authorities for fear of being outed as gay. . . . Behind this is the harsh view of Korean society toward sexual minorities."

The author lists some possible reasons. First, quoting a queer feminist South Korean activist, the author explains:

> In South Korea, sexual minorities face discrimination, of course, but there are very few places where they can make themselves known to the public. . . . Men should be like men and women like women. There is still a strong tendency for people to think that if you can't do that, you are a flawed human being. . . . Basically, the orientation toward anything other than heterosexuality, which is regarded as "perverted sexuality" (*hentai seiyoku*) is stronger than in Japan. Social oppression is still strong, with Christian groups protesting LGBT demonstrations. As a result, there are virtually no onē talents as in the Japanese entertainment industry. . . . Following the cluster at a club in Itaewon, Korean netizens have raised suspicions that Hong Seok-jeong may have gone to the club as well.

Hong is one of the few openly gay TV personality in South Korea. In addition, the article mentions "sex education that is too anachronistic" and the South Korean "military to be 'homophobic discrimination diffusion system'," and concludes commenting, "There are many issues that South Korea needs to address in sexual minority issues." Is Japan better than this? Is his assumption homosexuality is tolerated in Japanese culture and society? Even if it is, it's like "the pot calling the kettle black."

6.4 Conclusion

Chapter 6 used the COVID-19 outbreak in Itaewon, Seoul, South Korea, in May 2020 as a case study and compares and contrasts the Japanese media's coverage of the event. According to the news report, the outbreak started at a gay club there. South Korean authorities claimed that thousands of people had close contact with a man who was thought to be the cause of a "gay" cluster and urged them to immediately take a COVID-19 test. This sparked worries about privacy violations by the South Korean government, like the infamous "corona outing," which entails the disclosure of a person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity through cluster tracing. The possibility of a significant invasion of the

privacy of members of sexual minorities in societies where homophobic views are prevalent has received particular attention in Western media. However, the mainstream media in Japan avoided any discussion of sexuality and avoided using the word "gay" (*gei*) in their reporting, obfuscating the fact that prejudice against sexual minorities posed a danger to society as a whole. On the other hand, news magazines' articles concerning the South Korean outbreak are prejudiced and do nothing more than just increase the prejudice that gays are excessively sexual and promiscuous.

Did the Japanese media worry that mentioning sexual orientation in this news story would further exacerbate stereotypes and prejudice against sexual minorities? Whatever the reason, the almost complete exclusion of sexual orientation and the word "gay" from the news, as a result, can be taken as an indirect statement of intent that, as a result, the very existence of sexual minorities is not socially acceptable. Instead of helping sexual minorities, such a message further results in relegating sexual minorities to the margins or outside of society as inappropriate or not belonging. I believe this is a form of systemic discrimination against sexual minorities. While Japan's mainstream media has reservations about reporting anything about sexual orientation, social media users' discussions on the subject matter went uninhibited, reflecting homophobia, and other stereotypes and prejudices against gays and the LGBTQ+ community, as well as racist comments, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter.

These comments never appear in the public discourse, but they are hurtful indeed. The next chapter will demonstrate that the significance of news is not always provided by the media. Instead, certain news provided by the media contributes to the emergence of divergent discourse among social media users, particularly on topics that the media choose not to cover, for example, as deemed culturally inappropriate or sensitive subjects. A close examination of the comments on social media reveals that homophobia, stereotypes, and prejudice against gay men and, to some extent, the Japanese LGBTQ+ community are manifested in diverse ways. Can we still claim that Japan is "tolerant" (*kanyō*) toward the LGBTQ+ community?

This error exemplifies the lack of discourse concerning sexuality does not necessarily mean that the Japanese LGBTQ+ community is tolerated. Rather, the community is misunderstood and overly sexualized.

While hatred toward homosexual people did not appear much on the surface of the society, a close examination of social media in what follows demonstrates that social media is flooded with homophobic comments and prejudice against gays as well as the Korean.

7

SOCIAL MEDIA ON GAYS, SOUTH KOREA, AND MASS MEDIA

7.1 Introduction

This chapter demonstrates Japanese social media responses to the news concerning the Itaewon outbreak in South Korea in May, 2020. The Japanese social media sites to look into include NewsPicks, YouTube, and 2channel, focusing on the following major themes: how to call the "clubs" (*kurabu*) and what kind of business they are; sexuality; homophobia; anti-Korean stereotypes and prejudice, including Korean residents in Japan (*Zainichi*); South Korean attitudes toward homosexuality; xenophobia; Japan's mass media; privacy; and a gay cluster in Japan. As demonstrated, social media reactions on various platforms to news about the South Korean outbreak are often appear in different manifestations.

7.2 NewsPicks

Although some users express their candid opinions, comments on NewsPicks are similar to those on Japan's mainstream media. Their discussion on culturally sensitive topics, including homosexuality, seem to be rather constrained by their common sense with regard to acceptability in the public space. They at time even sound disingenuous when one takes into account that the information is already spread through various social media outlets. Some other notable topics include Japan's mass media as well as a possible "gay" cluster in Japan. On the other hand, a few of NewsPicks users discuss a possible infringement of privacy by South Korean authorities, while few of them users seem comfortable commenting on some topics, including LGBTQ+ issues including homosexuality. Additionally, apparently negative comments, including homophobic and anti-Korean hate expressions, which are common across other social media platforms are not observed.

7.2.1 How to Call the "Clubs" (**kurabu***)*

The great majority of NewsPicks users use "club" (*kurabu*) or "night club" (*naito kurabu*), while there are some other variations. For example, in her response to Jiji News' article on May 9, Kan Han-na, a South Korean actress active in Japan and "scholar of international society and culture," commented, "Clubs that young people gather" (*wakamono ga atsumaru kurabu*) and "limits to attention to youth" (*wakamono heno chūi no genkai*) are phrased in a rather generic language and can be taken multiple different ways. There are a few different "clubs," as one of the users explained. This comment received 193 likes, which is remarkable on this topic on the social media platform. Additionally, her similar post a few days later, "A corona cluster has occurred mainly in the Korean club district (*kurabu gai*)," received more than 100 likes.

Generally speaking, like the country's mainstream media, the majority of NewsPicks users do not use the term "gay club" (*gei kurabu*), which is indeed the right term for the South Korean establishment. The following are the terms NewsPicks users used, instead: "a club" (*kurabu*) (2, Notomi Seiji, a CIO and management system designer), "nightclubs and other venues" (*naito kurabu nado*) (2, Kenji A, US-based investment management company), "a Korean club" (*Kankoku no kurabu*) (3, Takesada Hideshi, a university professor), "the club" (*kurabu*) (3, Ujiie Natsuhiko, freelance media consultant), "clubs" (*kurabu*) (3, Arai Kaoru, certified public accountant), "clubs" (*kurabu*) (3, Kaisei Takai, an university student), "clubs and live music venues" (*kurabu ya raibu hausu*) (3, Y Daisuke, PG Project participatory seminar management), "Japanese clubs and clubbers" (3, Miyajima Shigeya, small and medium enterprise management consultant), "clubs" (*kurabu*) (3, Suzuki Kazuto, a graduate school professor), "clubs and the like" (3, Yuji Ishii, freelance CIO advisory), "clubs" (*kurabu*) and "nightlife" (*yoru no yūkyō*) (3, Sasaki Kazuhiro, investor), "clubs" (*kurabu*), "cabarets" (*kyabarē*), "host clubs" (*hosuto kurabu*), "hostesses" (*hosutesu*) (3, Yamamoto Daisuke, free person), "a club" (*kurabu*) (3, Ishino Shōtarō, in-house venture), "clubs" (*kurabu*), "private clubs (*rūmu saron*), and sex clubs (*sekksuru kurabu*) (3, Ogawa Alex, self-employed), "clubs" (*kurabu*), "cabarets" (*kyabakura*), "snack bars" (*sunakku*), (3, Sugimoto Kōichi, business development manager). Why can't they say "gay"?

On May 11th, T Kazuma, Chief of staff of a commercial company, aptly commented as follows:

> The news didn't mention it, but I saw a story about a gay club (*gei kurabu*) that asked customers to provide a phone number when entering the club so that the club could contact them if anything went wrong, but most of the numbers were fake and now they can't be reached. The fact that there is also an outing issue (*authingu no mondai*) involved seems to make this case more difficult.
>
> *(4, 33 likes)*

This comment seems to epitomize the confusion surrounding the Itaewon outbreak incident just broke a few days ago.

A response by Andō Yasushi, a CEO of a financial company, clarifies what "club" (*kurabu*) entails and has multiple connotations, saying, "In Japan, there are clubs for young people, hostess clubs for mainly middle-aged and older people, and cabaret clubs in between . . ." (3, 58 likes). Certainly, there was a confusion among many NewsPicks users as to what the "club" (*kurabu*) in the media reports denotes. For example, Watanabe S, director of an IT company commented, "I wouldn't have known if it didn't say 1,500 people" (1, 6 likes). On the 9th, Kunimitsu Hironao, a company CEO, expressed his surprise. "But I didn't realize they had lifted the ban on clubs (*kurabu*) of this size in Korea! I'm surprised about that too" (1, 2 likes).

The confusion derives from Japan's mainstream media's avoidance of the term "gay" (*gei*). At the same time, some users questions Japan's mainstream media's reservation to use "gay club" (*gei kurabu*). Naoya, Sato, a management consultant, wrote, eloquently clarifying the gap between official government/mainstream media and actual terms.

> What is a nightclub (*naito kurabu*)? I have never heard anyone who says, "I'm not a nightclub (*naito kurabu*) now!" Even the government agencies are using phrases like "request for self-restraint concerning nightclubs (*naito kurabu*)," but I wonder more about people who know where not to go now.
> *(4, 10 likes)*

Yamaguchi Yohei, an IT company employee, questions, "Is this different from the gay bar thing?" (3, 1 like).

On the other hand, some NewsPicks users defended Japan's mainstream media. Yasui Kazunori, an electronic company employee, wrote, "People who have never been to a club or live music club don't understand! It doesn't matter if it was LGBT oriented or not!" (4, 1 like). Likewise, Sugino Kaito, a telephone company employee, wrote,

> The problem is not that it was a gay club (*gei kurabu*) by any means, but simply that the cluster happened in a so-called three-intense-contact (*sanmitsu*) situation place (*iwayuru sanmitsu no basho*), but I feel that this situation opens up a distance from LGBT issues. In this situation, I would be careful not to mistake the situation or the people with whom we should be discussing.
> *(4, no likes)*

Suzuki Miyake, no company affiliation, expresses his concern about outing as a result of information disclosure than the spread of the infection.

> The article here expresses concern about the spread of the infection, but some reports disclosed that one of the clubs (*kurabu*) the man went to was a sexual minority facility (*seiteki mainorithī muke no shisetsu*), and also

disclosed the age, residence, occupation, and company location of the person who made this confirmation. I'm afraid that if this keeps up, the outing (*authingu*) will continue.

(3, 1 likes)

Miyake correctly addresses the problem of outing due to a cluster tracing, although the wording "a sexual minority facility (*seiteki mainorithī muke no shisetsu*)" seems odds with reality.

7.2.2 Japan's Mass Media

Not to a similar extent and intensity as other social media platforms, nevertheless, some NewsPicks users expressed their deep-rooted dissatisfactions with the media. On the 8th, I Yuriko, a lunchbox distribution staff member, sympathized with Japan's mainstream media. "Those of you who said yesterday that we should learn from them . . . too bad" (1, 9 likes). Another, Suzuki Masahiro, wrote, "Is this why the Japanese press is yearning for Korean countermeasures. . . . You can't wait to get to the club" (1, 6 likes). On the 9th, Tsuyama Ryota, a banking real estate agent, sarcastically wrote, "'Learn from Korea – Emulate Korea – Learn from Korea,' until yesterday. Please say something, you mass communication trash (*masu gomi*)" (3, 4 likes). Tokita Masao, a philosophy major responded, on the same day:

> Oh come on, young people are being treated as if they are irrational beasts (*riseitekidenai kemono*). Oh, and just so you know, I'm not defending Korea. TV needs to stop broadcasting this and stop glorifying Korea. . . . If there's one thing we've learned from corona, it's that the media is corrupt.
>
> *(3)*

This post alone received 227 likes. Not many comments on NewsPicks receive this many likes. While a candid opinion concerning sexuality receives very few likes, it seems acceptable to criticize the country's mainstream media among users on this social media platform.

7.2.3 Privacy

NewsPicks users' comments concerning privacy are mixed. On the 8th, Shigematsu Eisuke, General Manager of a pharmaceutical company, commented,

> What was surprising was that 1,500 club users were listed and that this one incident led to a recommendation for a month-long voluntary restraint of business for all amusement facilities nationwide. I was surprised at the restrictions on private rights that made me think it was a military government right."
>
> *(1, 16 likes)*

On the 9th, in contrast, Saito Jun, a licensed administrator, commented, "I think we must be concerned about the issue of dealing with personal privacy, but I also think it is unavoidable given the emergency situation" (3, 2 likes).

Shizu Keisuke, a machine manufacturer, also wrote, "I think it would be a good idea to require that all visitors to such bars wear a GPS band upon entry" (3, 5 likes). On the other hand, Nakajima Naoto, "Undesirable Adult (*furyō otona*) in Shimokitazawa," Tokyo, expressed his concern over the South Korean media's handling of private information, including the sexuality of the man who supposedly caused the outbreak:

> I saw the news on the Internet, but what impressed me most was not so much the content about personal privacy as the re-infection after deactivation. They traced the route this man took that day and revealed the names of the clubs, etc. he visited, and the stores where gay people go there. In the end, there were many slanderous comments about gay people on the Internet, and the land and others reported the problem. The Korean organization issued a statement of protest against the way the personal information was handled, saying that the media's response was overly and unnecessarily leading public opinion in the wrong direction, and that it was a gross lack of care. The media had their reasons, but I thought it was really important to pay attention to the way personal information is handled.
>
> *(3, 61 likes) May 8*

On the 12th, Yatsu Akio, a general manager of a B2B company, wrote, "That's right. It's a gay bar. But in his country, the police force will identify the contact person" (1 like).

7.2.4 A Possible "Gay" Cluster in Japan

Although seems not an imminent concern, a few NewsPicks users expressed their concern about a possible similar outbreak in Japan. As early as the breaking of the news on May 8, Tanabe Osamu (1), an engineer, wrote, "The same thing is likely to happen in Japan." The comment received eight likes (*iine*). On the 9th, the following day, as the news spread and an outbreak originated from a club was confirmed, some other NewsPicks users commented, "Don't think it's somebody else's problem" (3, Taguchi Yūdai, 3 likes). "It could happen in Japan, too" (3, Abe Yoyohiko, 3 likes). "Japan needs to be careful" (3, Shige Kauhiro, 5 likes). "I hear Kabukichō is coming back, and the same thing will happen in Japan" (3, Sunagawa Yū, 1 like). On the 12th too, Mikami Shunsuke, president of an employment company, expressed his concern: "The same thing will happen in Japan, so basically live houses, clubs, cabarets, host clubs, etc. will have difficulty continuing business in the medium to long term" (4). This comment alone received 28 likes, probably reflecting an increasing concern among Japanese social media users that Japan would have a similar outbreak in the near future.

7.3 YouTube

As noted by a few studies already, YouTube is full of hate speech, stereotypes, and prejudices. Japanese YouTube users are not an exception. Unlike those on NewsPicks, comments on the news concerning the South Korean outbreak seem rather unrestrained. They include straightforward sexual terms as well as hate speech with discriminatory terms, targeting, mostly gays, Koreans, and Japan's mass media. Many also expressed concern about privacy concerns and the spread of gay clusters in Japan. At the same time, as I demonstrated in what follows, mixed with emojis and emoticons (*kaomoji*), these comments look harmless and inviting, despite the content.

7.3.1 "Very Close Contact"

The phrase "very close contact" (*hijō ni missetsu na sesshoku*) was used in the headline of ANN news released on YouTube on May 8. It is slightly different from "intense contact" (*nōkō sesshoku*), a phrase commonly used by Japanese authorities and media. It seems that YouTube viewers were intrigued by it. Some viewers expressed their excitement by just repeating the phrase "very close contact" (*hijō ni missetsu na sesshoku*) (1, ELECTRIFY HEARTS). Some other commented: "This indeed is an intense contact" (1, Masamasa, 1 like), "A very, very, very intense contact!!!!! (○෴•○•෴ ○෴) Wow" (1, ROVO, 2 likes), and "There will be infected people, because of the close contact" (1, Reika, 2 likes).

One user urges caution, "A very close contact. . . . The town at night is very vigilant" (1, vome saupa, 3 likes). Some other users question what "a very close contact" (*hijō ni missetsu na sesshoku*) entails. "A very close contact" (1, R I, 2 likes), "A very close contact . . . 🥴" (1, m hiro, 11 likes), "What's a very close contact?" (1, Tā, 0 likes), and "What does very close contact look like?" (1, kazuyoshi Sakamoto, 0 likes). Three users commented that the phrase is "suggestive" (*imishin*) (e.g., 1, Iyayo, g g, Tansaku Yarō, 0 likes). Some others also write: "That sounds far-fetched, but it's pretty direct, isn't it? Haha" (1, Matayoshi, 1 like), and "Very close contact? . . . gulp (*gokuri*)" (1, Amarayawa, 10 likes, 4 replies). This last comment received four replies: "I'm sure it's a kiss. lol" (Hikain TV, 2 likes), "Aaaaah!!!" (Spirit's fountain, 3 likes), "Riding on the lap of a gentleman" (Miharu, 1 like), and this string of replies was terminated when another wrote reminding, "Sorry to ruin your wank, but that's a gay club" (GyeongJu Jeon, 1 like).

Some comments are explicitly sexual. One viewer bluntly commented, "He did something naughty (*ecchi na koto*), didn't he?" (1, Kasutera, 2 likes). Some other sexual comments include: "I think it's mistaken about the very intimate copulation (*setsugō*)" (1, Flower Flower, 3 likes), "By 'very close contact,' it means sex (*sekurosu*★), right?" (1, Deruderuta, 1 like) ★The word "*sekurosu*" is a Japanese Internet term for sex. "It's hard to go to brothels (*sōpu*[*rando*]) when I see things like this, but when I see the girls (*jō*) working, I want to go to them. I'm not sure

what to do" (1, Y M, 1 like), "I'm off to the club (*kurabu*) for some very close contact too!" (1, Tsukkāsā, 1 like), and "Very close contact to go (*omochikaeri*)" (1, Yabassugi-kun, 1 like).

In addition, three users mentioned "gay" in the context of "very close contact," including, "Very close contact at a gay club (*gei kurabu*)" (1, Arisugawa, 6 likes), "There was very close contact in the club. What kind of contact specifically in the gay bar? (*gei bā*)" (1, nagare ryoma, 1 like). A different user questions, "This person seems to be gay. In other words, what is intense contact? . . . I'll leave it to your imagination. . . . You can watch videos of Karate Clubs (*karate kurabu*), Black Luxury Cars (*kuronuri no kōkyūsha*), etc." (1, ri no, 5 likes), suggestive of the popular gay porn movie *A Midsummer Night's Nasty Dream* (*Manatsu no yoru no inmu*). Reference to "very close contact" is limited to comments for this particular video news; however, there are some other comments that made a direct reference to "intense contact" (*nōkō sesshoku*), suggestive of sexual contact.

7.3.2 Homophobia

One user made an explicitly sexual comment referring to gay sexual intercourse. "I thought we were talking about buttholes" (5, Ikechanneru, 0 likes). Another calls his sexuality "special disposition" (*tokushuna seiheki*). "It seems to have been a club for people with special disposition" (2, fukifuki, 8 likes). Some viewers use the offensive term "homo" referring to the sexuality of the man in the spotlight. "What are you, a homo or something? This is all kinds of fucked up" (1, Starlight, 0 likes). "Gay, homo, 86 people in intense contact, spreading in multiple locations. I don't want to think about it. Sweat hehe" (5, Yamato hasshin! . . ., 43 likes). In reply to the last comment, MiMITA, a user, wrote, "Am I the only one who thinks that when it comes to gay/homo intense contact, it sounds suggestive?" (5, MiMITA, 12 likes). A different user called the club the man visited "a homo party venue" (*homopa kaijō*). "The escapees must be desperate because the world will know they were at a homo party venue" (2, Koume, 9 likes).

There are also some who call homosexuality a pervert. "Homos are dangerous in school because many of them are boy lovers (*shota*)" (4, xxxKAWAUSOxxx, 1 like). "He was a homo, and he was quite the lover, since he club-hopped. lol lol" (3, dr.x, 1 like). A different user posed a question, "Why are gay people so greedy?" (3, Kaonashi, 12 likes). There were two replies. "They must be a lot like the Beast Senpai (irresponsible)" (3, Kyūkō bot, 2 likes). "Because gay people have a higher percentage of AIDS, so I don't think they care about intense contact" (3, yuki). Another user commented, "I think it is too reckless to go to a gay bar at this time" (5, Leon Eden, 4 likes). Two replied. "It would be a no-no even under normal circumstances" (5, Ikechanneru). "AIDS and other things could be bad" (5, astg). In addition, another viewer calls it "a dirty infection" (*kitanai kansen*) (2, Sagara Sagara, 2 likes) and a different viewer called the man "unpatriotic" (*hikokumin*). "There are unpatriotic people in every country, aren't there? Remove unpatriotic people" (4, Komagome Masaru, 3 likes).

Although uncommon on YouTube, some commented in reference to their understanding of LGBTQ+ community in society. One user worries, "Bisexual gays are the most troublesome in these situations. They spread the infection to their children, grandparents, and friends via their deceived wives without their knowledge" (5, Hero Tak, 1 likes). Two others wrote, "It's a gay club, so it's okay" (2, V, 0 likes), possibly implying that it is a problem the user has no concern for. "This is completely other people's business. A super spreader in a gay bar. That's hilarious" (2, Yoshi, 9 likes).

7.3.3 Anti-Korean Stereotypes and Prejudice and Zainichi Korean

This topic probably is one of the most prevalent topics on the South Korean outbreak among YouTube users. The outbreak seems to have created a unique pretext to engage in an anti-Korean rant, as one user laments, "As expected, a lot of Korean haters" (5, 37.5 Haechan, 1 like). There are indeed over 50 comments of various kinds that could be considered as anti-Korean hate speech. A few YouTube users mock President Moon's speech on the so-called K-quarantine (*K-bōeki*): "Moon: 'World, learn from Korea!'" (5, Tomorrow is another day, 20 likes); "'We have become the leading country in the world!' And who was the president who was so eager to make speeches about 'K-quarantine'? I'm surprised that this happened so soon after the speech. . . . I'm sorry. I laughed. No comedian can compete with this country" (3, Berugon, 0 likes); "This is the 'Korean standard' that Moon Jae-in is communicating to the world" (5, Kōjī, 31 likes). Some wrote that, instead of a role model (*tehon*), this South Korean case is a bad example (*hanmen kyōshi*): "A model for the world to follow, a model for mass infection" (5, Butsuzōman, 36 likes); "This is K-Style!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! The world should follow this example! Okay, let's learn from the opposite side of the coin (*hanmen kyōshi*)" (5, M Pii, 9 likes); "A bad role model (*hanmen kyōshi*). I understand" (5, Jījī Taro, 1 like). "✕ a role model (*otehon*) ◯ a bad role model (*hanmen kyōshi*)" (5, Jiyūjin, 1 like).

Some comments are made specifically in reference to "gay": "Next to cults, gays. Korea is really great at hitting the right buttons for the netizens" (3, Ad Bc, 0 likes); "From now on, we're not going to have a K-quarantine, we're going to have a gay-quarantine" (3, Kialo720, 2 likes). They are *kei-bōeki* and *gei-bōeki* in Japanese. "OMG (LOL). Even the pride of Japan, the Beast Senpai himself, would be surprised by such a thing" (5, Nakayama Takafumi, 0 likes). *Yajū Senpai* is a popular gay porn star. Some referred to South Korean military and soldiers in the context of the gay club outbreak. "Oh my god, is this a gay bar where military men inject themselves in people's asses!?" (2, Sei G). "Next to the cult religion cluster is the gay club cluster. Looks like it's going to spread to the military this time. lol" (2, vvv 666, 1 like).

On the other hand, a different user cut South Korea down as "a shame of the world" (*sekai no haji*) (5, Nomura Yui, 3 likes). Some use ethnic/racial slurs: "As expected of Cho★," ★ with ○ (1, TTM KK, 4 likes); "That's very South Chosun

(*Minami Chōsen*) (´Д｀;●) Oooooh, watch out Japan!" (2, Jitensha, 2 likes). In addition, two wrote "*Bakankoku*" in *hiragana*, the first part "*baka*" meaning "stupid" and "[K]ankoku" "South Korea," together "stupid South Korea" (2, Ajiwai karupisu, 2 like; 2, Shiorin, 1 like). A number of users try to attack South Korean national character in general terms. "You guys really don't disappoint" (3, takafumi xxx, 18 likes); "Shameful country" (*hazukashii kuni*) (4, Lai Đại Hàn, 8 likes); and, "Don't you have any pride as a country?" (4, Nakano Hideyuki, 3 likes).

Referring specifically to the outbreak, some despise South Korea: "After a religious organization, now clubs are singled out? As one would expect from a gag nation, there is never a shortage of material for each and every story" (2, Seraphim, 7 likes); "The only thing we can learn from this country is "failure" (2, DEER-LIVE Takibi, 2 likes); Well, if I say, 'it's just like that country,' that's all I can say. I'll use it as a lesson to the contrary" (*hanmen kyōshi*) (2, T Y, 4 likes); and "Good experimenter, keep the goofiness out of it" (3, kou M, 16 likes). Some commented in reference to some unrelated measures: "Does that mean the big rally is back on in Daegu? You people can't learn anything and that's why you can't win Nobel Prizes. It's jaw-dropping, we say. LOL" (1, Nemui neko); "Hahahahaha, the goofiness is so typical of the *ri* area. Wasn't it a model for the rest of the world?" (4, Isewan taifū no otoshigo, 11 likes). According to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, the *ri* designation means the lowest confidence level among all 13 levels of destinations (destinations of goods, etc.) in the security trade control. "Our country will not be swayed by information from a neighboring country that is not worthy of trust from the start, until our people solemnly fulfill their obligations" (3, Yuria, 3 likes).

There also seems to be some historical misunderstanding. Some try to attack South Korean in reference to some historical issues between the two countries. "Maybe it's Japan's fault. [South Korea] must demand apology and compensation" (2, Yōmuin). "Don't worry, you can say it's because the Japanese were here again" (3, Jagaimo monster, 2 likes). "They'll have to make a 'Corona Statue'" (3, K801104, 6 likes), in reference to the so-called Comfort Woman Statue. Some call for the severance of diplomatic relations between the two countries: "Good luck! Restrictions on entry forever" (2, t t, 32 likes); "I hope this is an opportunity to get rid of the peninsula 😳" (3, Poyopoyo, 12 likes); "Oh my (LOL), let's have a Japan-Korea cross" (2, Nakayama Takafumi, 11 likes). Few rebut anti-Korean comments. In response to the comment: "Clubs at this time? It's a national character, isn't it?" (5, Kouchi Roman, 13 likes), a user with a Korean name wrote, "National character. . . . Then I guess it's the Japanese national character to be lazy. You should have a go to pachinko parlor campaign. If not, pandemic police or something. Go outside and cool off" (5, GyeongJu Jeon).

Pachinko parlors in Japan, which are presumably owned and run by Zainichi Koreans, are a target of criticism: "It's time to be careful in Japan, but the pachinko parlors are . . . I'm sure the serious recluse [South Korean] public is outraged" (5, Chatora, 48 likes); Pachinko parlors were open in Kanto prefectures

on May 9. Korea is not about the situation, it's about the pachinko parlors!" (2, Nekohachi, 34 likes); "In Japan, pachinko parlors" (2, Usagi patsun, 11 likes); "Pachinko parlors ignore request for voluntary restraint" (2, Mantarō kin'niku, 2 likes); "@Kazuno Maybe there's a Korean–affiliated pachinko parlor operating there?" (2, Little Joe); "All the money goes only to Korea. The most wasteful in Japan and unneeded facilities" (5, Okaeri, 5 likes).

There are few other mockery comments, objections to news concerning Korea, and xenophobic views. "You can all die" (1, ni'ichini'ichi, 1 like). "They must have been saying '*omoni omoni*' and doing [saying] "*kimchee*" (1, Ishikawa Gouemon). "*Omoni*" is a Korean term for one's mother. "*Kimchee*" probably a pun referring to the Japanese expression "*kimochi ii*" (feeling good). Some are not interested in South Korea and question the legitimacy of news related to the country. "I don't want to hear about Seoul. I don't need it" (5, Ikuo-job channel). "I don't know why they would give out Korean information in Japan" (5, Dynamite Shikoku). In addition, two viewers made a xenophobic comment. "I don't want to accept foreigners for a while" (2, Anata, 1 like). "Beware of foreign hostesses!" (2, Matsukuma Yasuhiro, 26 likes).

7.3.4 On Japan's Mass Media

There seems to be a shared distrust of the mass media in Japan. Concerning the confusion regarding of the meaning of the term "club" (*kurabu*), a number of users expressed their frustrations. "They can't say the infection spread in a gay bar"(4, Anioni, 17 likes); "They don't say 'gay bar' if they don't mean it!" (5, Pii, 77 likes); "They can't for the life of them call it a gay bar correctly" (5, Gungnir 0, 50 likes); "Still no mention of the gay bar and the coverage of the toxic gas problem in India?" (5, Tatsuya, 19 likes); "I thought it was a gay bar? I guess they can't say that in the news indeed" (2, Unkoshige, 36 likes); "Letters are missing. Gay club! Gay is missing" (2, Kusumoto Takako, 2 likes); "What's with the mosaic of names? It's easy to find out if you look it up, but this is a club, but a gay club. Huh? What? Transgender people say? Oh, I see" (2, Nyan-kichi Nyanda, 2 likes); "Say it's a gay bar. (̄∇ ̄)" (2, Daisuke Hashimoto, 7 likes).

A number of users also question Japanese mass media pro-South Korean stance after the outbreak. "The Japanese media said, 'We should learn from South Korea's anti-corona measures'" (2, Akitasuta, 5 likes); "Is the Japanese media watching this news?" (2, Zentarō Kakinoki, 2 likes); "Wasn't there someone screaming for us to learn from Korea?" (5, Maejima Daigo, 2 likes); "Are we going to learn from this? Are they insane?" (5, jima naka, 3 likes); "I wonder if the person who said, 'Take a lesson from Korea!' would also say, 'Take a lesson from this,' too?" (2, Mioyamotosumikurainushinoōmikami, 5 likes); "This is laughable after so much TV praise of Korea" (2, Kōdo, 4 likes); "Is this a role model? In a way, a role model" (4, TAJIMA RIKO, 3 likes); "To all those who say we should learn from Korea, let's learn from Korea this

time" (5, K. Hieda, 108 likes); and, "It's a gay bar, and thanks to the government's surveillance system, the customers are having a hard time when their families find out about their sexual interests. It's amazing how corrupt the mass media is, because they want us to follow their example" (2, Hakusai, 4 likes).

Some, possibly sarcastically, commented on the media reporting of the outbreak, in lieu of their enthusiastic pro–South Korean stance regarding COVID-19 control so far. "It's certainly surprising that they would report on what's wrong with Korea" (1, Senhan Minami Chōsen . . ., 14 likes). "It is surprising that the Japanese media would report on this" (1, Red SUN rider house, 86 likes). One user noted that ANN is one whole day behind. "The coverage of this outbreak was a full day later than other stations" (3, ؟• ټ•؟؟• ټ•؟, 9 likes). Others called for their comments in response to the outbreak: "Come out the critics who said we should learn from the Korean way" (2, Tentai bōenkyō, 5 likes); "I knew it! They're getting too carried away. It's true that they were good at first, but lately they've been slackening their guard and are in intense contact in three ways all over the place. I wish Tomoaki Ogura would comment on this news" (1, Hachimine Keita). The user whose arias is Himajin tadano criticizes a particular freelance TV announcer:

> Some male freelance announcer said on a TV program that he would like to ask that country to teach us a lesson. I admit that there are some things we can learn from them, such as their quick response, but I would like to see what kind of comments he would make after seeing this situation. Although there is a difference in national character, this case could happen even in Japan right after the lifting of the self-restraint, so it was very informative.
>
> *(2, Himajin tadano, 1 like)*

These comments seem to exemplify a widespread distrust of the media.

Some question the accuracy of the reporting, for example, not saying "gay club." "I don't have a problem with gay people, but why aren't you reporting that this is a gay club?" (3, Tatsuya, 6 likes). A user replied, "Clubs are clubs, so there's no need to report them separately, especially" (3, Yamada Chiharu, 3 likes). A possible consequence of an omission of such critical information concerning this outbreak is, "Nice . . . infection spread at a gay bar. I couldn't say . . . so it spread further. lol" (2, hide kun, 3 likes). A different user questions the pixelation of the club's name. "Why are they putting a mosaic over the name of the club?" (2, Amitaso). There were some comments that attacked some TV commentators: "As I recall, a famous Japanese Zula commentator said to use it as a model. ︵(^ω^)" whoops (2, hashizou48, 4 likes); "Tomoaki Ogura should bow down and go to a gay bar" (2, Sonosuji, 3 likes); and, "If we're supposed to follow South Korea's example, is that guy a homo too?" (2, Sadaharu, 4 likes).

7.3.5 Privacy

Some commented that, if infected, their sexual orientation will be revealed and express their concern for privacy. "Because there are few infected people, if you take a day off, there may be a fear of being identified as an individual who has been going to that type of club" (1, Yamas, 31 likes).

> It seems to be a system where if the infection is discovered, the workplace, friends, parents, siblings, and even wives and children of some people can find out about your sexual habits. It's scary, isn't it?
>
> *(3, Spirit's fountain, 0 likes)*

"When the infection is discovered, there is a risk that his wife, children, friends, and even his workplace will find out about his sexuality" (5, Spirit's fountain). The so-called corona outing is a major concern. A few others expressed a similar concern: "That country will disclose the infected and they will disclose the gays" (3, nippon chax3, 9 likes); "You're going to be exposed as a gay man!" (5, delloss jann, 1 like); "Because it's sexual minority related, that's what people are desperate to hide" (2, Funa, 6 likes); "The public will beat them up more when they are outed as gay [than as infected] they can't come forward" (2, Q45Mania, 8 likes); "This sounds like a gay bar, so there will be plenty of people who will have trouble being tracked" (2, rebootsys, 1 like); and "They can't say that they went to a gay bar" (2, mille feuille, 10 likes). These comments fill in the void that were created by the mainstream media and also NewPicks and engage in a necessary discussion concerning the infringement of privacy, including a possible corona outing.

Additionally, some expressed their concern over the South Korean approach for testing, although a small minority. "You're threatening to barge into your house and inspect you if you won't return the calls . . . but it's going to reveal your sexual orientation to your family" (5, kegi deon, 65 likes).

7.3.6 A "Gay" Cluster Spread to Japan

One user worries that the South Korean outbreak would spread to Japan. "There are definitely some Japanese in this" (2, takeshi sasaki). Some concerned with a similar outbreak in Japan. "The same thing will happen in Japan. The government is too weak to enforce it" (5, Gūtarabocchi). "It's disgraceful to say 'The same thing happened in Japan!' Please stop it, seriously" (1, Iueoā, 6 likes). Another viewer predicts, "I wonder if this kind of news will also be heard in Japan from the 14th onward" (5, Godai, 17 likes). "Well, I wouldn't be surprised if it happens in Japan too. . . . It could happen in any country" (3, ✾ojiji✾, 4 likes).

Three viewers expressed their concern particular with a similar outbreak in Shinjuku Ni-chōme. "Isn't Shinjuku 2-chome in Tokyo also quite dangerous?" (2, Brian Cony, 2 likes). "I think Shinjuku Ni-Chome in Tokyo is also

dangerous. Especially in *hattenba*" (1, Brian Cony). "It's amazing~ In Japan, it's like the infection spread in Ni-chōme. Korea is a model for the rest of the world. I don't know" (4, blue sky, 17 likes).

7.4 2Channel

Besides blogs that explore and offer some details about news concerning the Itaewon outbreak and related topics, there are a few "alternate news" blog sites that quote highlights of trending discussions on 2channel that have spun out of the South Korean news, including Itai 2channel Nyūsu (Ouch 2channel News) by livedoor, which "pick up the cringy news found on 2chan and report," and Yabai! Nyūsu (・∀・) (Bad! News), which "is a 2chan/5chan news and summary site that brings oh no! amazing! and interesting stories to you!" The name Yabai! Nyūsu is a pun on the name of the popular online news site Yahoo! News Japan.

For example, on May 10, Itai 2channel Nyūsu quoted comments about the NTV's news "54 people were infected at a gay bar in South Korea. 7,000 customers came in and out of the bar and were in close contact with each other." Yabai! News (・∀・), on the other hand, posted the thread "【Images】: Homos gather at APA Hotel, Hellish Scene wwwwwwwwwwwww," on the last day of the month, with a few graphic images corroborating that APA Hotel rooms have become *hattenba*.

In the following, I will demonstrate examples of 2channel comments from several threads, created in response to a number of news reports concerning the Itaewon outbreak and one regarding the NHK's "New corona issue: Widespread anxiety and concern among LGBT people," which were released from May 8 to 18, 2020, as well as these about APA Hotels as *hattenba* from May 31 to June 30, 2020, as listed in Table 7.1. 2channel comments are presented in the order in which threads were created. Needless to say, there is a limit to the number of pages I can present here. Since there is a sort of storyline, or rather a flow to each thread, I will illustrate with select comments from the first 50 for each thread, except the one concerning APA Hotels as *hattenba* as its topic develops significantly later.

Generally speaking, each thread is unique addressing a few conspicuous topics, often found in the new headlines for the threads related to the South Korean outbreak. At the same time, comments are often derogatory and similar themes, reflecting some deep-rooted conservative biases toward, for example, the LGBTQ+ community and Koreans, as well as Japanese attitudes toward the mass media, resurface constantly throughout different threads. Those who try to rebuttal or criticize comments on 2channel are a small minority. As mentioned earlier, some threads resulted in thousands of replies that went off on tangents that had nothing to do with the South Korean outbreak. Of note, since 2channel is an anonymous site and all participants on a same thread has a same handle. In the following quote, Kazefukeba Nanashi (if the wind blows, nameless) is the

TABLE 7.1 News Commented on Social Media

NewsPicks

1. "South Korea, Outbreak at a club – 15 people in total, more to come!" by Kyodo News (May 8, 2020): 55 picks
2. "New corona cases are on the rise again in South Korea, possibly due to mass infection at a club" by Jiji News (May 9, 2020): 22 picks
3. "New corona infections increase again in South Korea, mass infection at clubs" by Jiji News (May 9, 2020): 457 picks
4. "Corona outbreak at a Korean club affects 102 people; over 3,000 people have not been contacted" by NHK News (May 11, 2020): 209 picks
5. "Corona outbreak in South Korea continues to spread – over 160 people, 4th infection" by Kyodo News (May 16, 2020): 12 picks

YouTube

1. "'Very close contact' also . . . outbreak at a club in South Korea" (May 8, 2020) by TV Asahi/ANN: 334 comments
2. "40 people infected in Seoul, South Korea, including customers and staff who visited a club" (May 9, 2020) by Fuji TV/FNN: 1598 comments
3. "Seoul clubs banned from operating due to mass infection" (May 9, 2020) by TV Asahi/ANN: 281 comments
4. "Outbreak at South Korean club postpones reopening of school" (May 11, 2020) by Fuji TV/FNN: 83 comments
5. "South Korea: 86 people infected by a mass infection at a club postponed the start of school for a week" (May 11, 2020) by TV Asahi/ANN: 270 comments

Twitter

1. "New corona cluster in Seoul club, authorities investigate." (4:57 am, May 8, 2020) by Reuters (*Asahi Shimbun*): 106 comments
2. "Outbreak at a club in Seoul, South Korea: More infections?" (6:21 pm, May 8, 2020) by Sankei News (original by Kyodo News): 275 comments
3. "South Korea: 12 people infected with new corona outbreak at a nightclub after restrictions were eased." (7:33 pm, May 8, 2020) by NHK News: 152 comments
4. "Outbreak of infection in South Korea: No masks worn in clubs, alarm again." (7:04 pm, May 9, 2020) by Sankei News: 65 comments
5. "Korean outbreak spreads to 40 people at a club. (Order for amusement facilities to refrain from operating)" (8:12 pm, May 9, 2020) by Sankei News: 87 comments
6. "South Korea nightclub mass infection: 54 infected, including family members, confirmed." (6:01 pm, May 10, 2020) by NHK News: 183 comments
7. "South Korea: 86 people infected at a nightclub, including customers and family members, confirmed to be infected with corona." (6:58 pm, May 11, 2020) by NHK News: 165 comments
8. "Corona outbreak at a Korean club affects 102 people; over 3,000 people have not been contacted." (4:51 pm, May 12, 2020) by NHK News: 139 comments

2channel

1. "New corona cluster in South Korea's gay clubs. . . . Government shocked by unusual announcement" (May 8, 2020; original by Sports Seoul) by LINE, two threads by Kazefukeba Nanashi and Kitsune Udon (31 and 44 replies)
2. "【South Korea】 What was happening in Korean gay clubs? <<Clustering threatens corona re-emergence>> [Toy Soldiers★]" (May 11, 2020) by *the Weekly Bunshun*, a thread Toy Soldiers★ (over 1,000 replies)
3. "【What are you doing in a gay bar?】 Park Gyuri (ex-KARA) visited a club in Itaewon on the same day as the man who contracted the new type of corona in Sunin? "Confirming the identity of the person"[May 11] [Shinshu no Hokemon★]" (Original news by WoW! Korea and distributed by Yohoo! News on May 11, 2020), a thread created by Shinshu no Hokemon★, (251 replies)
4. "【Gay-pop】 Bulletproof Boyband's Jong-Guk and 4 other members were tested for corona due to their history of visiting drinking establishments in Itaewon . . . their agency apologized [May 18][Shinshu no Hokemon★]" (May 18, 2020), original news by the JoongAng Ilbo and distributed by Jiji News, a thread created by Shinshu no Hokemon★ (406 replies)
5. "【Domestic】 New corona issue: Widespread anxiety and concern among LGBT people [Sakai★]" (May 18, 2020) by NHK News on May 17, 2020, a thread created by Sakai★ (99 replies)
6. "APA Hotel Shinjuku Kabukichō, after a period of self-restraint, has turned into a gigantic *hattenba*. [962614482] on May 31, 2020, a thread created by Bangumi no tochū desuga afi saito heno ＼(^o^)／desu (751 replies)
7. "APA President says, 'APA Hotel's conversion to a *hattenba* is a hoax.' [377482965]" (June 30, 2020), a thread created by Bangumi no tochū desuga afi saito heno ＼(^o^)／desu (auaukā Sac3–r4oZ) (17 replies)

handle. Their comments are identified only with the sequence and identification numbers assigned to each post, unless users choose to identify themselves with unique handles.

"*Kankoku no gei kurabu de shingata corona no kurasutā ga hassei . . . Seifu ga irei no happyō de shōgeki hashiru*" [New corona cluster in South Korea's gay clubs. . . . Government shocked by unusual announcement] was originally published by *the Sports Seoul*, a South Korean sports newspaper. The Japanese translation of the news was distributed by LINE, which is a popular messaging app in Japan, on May 8, one of the earliest news reports to reach Japanese readers reporting the Itaewon outbreak.

A thread by Kazefukeba Nanashi:

4:   Coronaviruses also live in sperm. . . . Oh . . . 😅
9:   Fuck you, homo.
10: >>9 Don't discriminate 😔.
11: Lock down Shinjuku.
13: I knew discrimination was necessary.

15: Korea has a lot of dumb mass infections. LOL
18: Let's be homo only at home.
19: >>4 What happens when corona sperm meets corona feces?
22: Isn't it because of gays and religion that the Western world is so infected?
23: But it doesn't seem like homo sex would be too contagious.
26: I heard Korea is very strict about gays.
27: >>22 A theory of contact infection through the anus? Seems likely.

Gays are repeatedly referred to as "homo." One user wonders if gays and religion are responsible for major outbreaks in the West. Because of this incident, another tries to justify discrimination again gays. A reference to Shinjuku was also made, suggesting a possible similar outbreak in Japan.

A different thread initiated by Kitsune Udon:

 3: Gee (ﾟДﾟ)
 4: Gay club wwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww
 9: I thought they'd loosened up because they've controlled the spread of the infection. But it was their butt that loosened up.
11: Stupid Korean [Ba～～～～～ka Chon Chon] wwww
13: What are you doing in a shit-eating backward country? w
14: They have an army.
15: The best infection control measure is "No Homo!" Right? w
16: In Korea, discrimination is so severe.
17: New corona or AIDS, that is the question.
19: Eh~? Eh~? Eh~? Eh~? Eh~? Eh~? Eh~? You were saying, "Korea is a big win~~! TV Asahi, you do this kind of reporting, don't you? You should~~!
20: Oh, Korean boys are all homos after all . . . disgusting [*kimochi waru*] . . .
21: Deep kissing with 12 people . . .
22: I'm sure it will be the foreigners' fault.
27: New religions, gay clubs. I thought they wanted to find some kind of scapegoat and blame it on these guys.
28: Did they get it with AIDS?
29: The whole world is going to laugh at them.
30: TBS: "Take a cue from Korea."
40: Megacluster explosion with a penis that is tired of self-restraint.
41: What is the view of TBS and Asahi, who were barking at us to follow the example of Korea? Are they just going to keep quiet again?
44: You don't report on this at all, do you, trash media (*masu gomi*)? You keep telling us to follow Korea's example, but now there's a huge cluster in the gay clubs!

A few explicit references to gay sexuality are made, including expressions such as "butt that loosened up" and "a penis that is tired of self-restraint." The word "homo" is commonly used and does not seem to be perceived as a discriminatory

term. One suggests "No Homo!" as the best infection control. On the other hand, there are some comments that criticize Japan's mass media, which one of them call "trash media," such as TV Asahi and TBS, for their unilateral praise of the so-called K-Quarantine of South Korea before this incident occurred. Anti-Korean comments are also noticeable. For example, one user wrote, "Korean boys are all homos after all . . . disgusting."

"【*South Korea*】*Gei kurabu de nani ga okite itanoka?* 《*Kurasutā-ka de Korona sai-ryūkō no kiki*》 " [【South Korea】What was happening in Korean gay clubs? <<Clustering threatens corona re-emergence>> [Toy Soldiers★]] (May 11, 2020) by the *Weekly Bunshun*, a thread by Toy Soldiers★ (over 1,000 replies).

The title of the magazine article askes, "What was happening in Korean gay clubs?" A few users responded the question. Some of their responses include: "Of course, his dick was erect"; "anal sex"; "*tokoroten*" [Ejaculation without stimulation of the partner's penis by inserting the male genitalia into the partner's anus]; and "make love in a gay bar." Their responses give the impression that the question is ridiculous. As to what kind of business it was, which is one of the most talked about topics among social media users concerning the South Korean outbreak, some users bluntly wrote: "*hattenba*," "happening bar," and "fuck club." In reference to South Korea, some users called the country "home nation" and "Anal Republic of Korea."

"【*Yū ha nani shini geibā he*】*Paku Gyuri (moto KARA), Sunin no shingata korona kansensha to onaji hi ni Itewon no kurabu hōmon ka? "Hon'nin kakuninchū" [May 11] [Shinshu no hokemon★]*" [【What are you doing in a gay bar?】Park Gyuri (ex-KARA) visited a club in Itaewon on the same day as the man who contracted the new type of corona in Sunin. "Confirming the identity of the person."] (May 11), original news source: WoW! Korea, distributed by Yahoo! News.

I believe one of the problems the 2channel users found regarding the former female K-pop star visiting a Itaewon gay bar, which seems quite possible in Japan, too, for example at the so-called tourist bars (*kankō bā*), as one of the posts here mentions. Many of them suspected of her gender and sexuality and described her as "gay," "homo," "pretty beautiful home," "man," "cross-dresser," "*okama*," and "beautiful transsexual who's shooting hormones." Because of this, some speculate in detail about her sexual behavior. Post 29, in particular, is especially descriptive: "Park Gyuri 'You guys are idiots (*nida*)! Aside from gay men, bi men want to penetrate their girlfriend after being fucked by a man (*nida*). Then they will penetrate [their girlfriend] very hard (*nida*).'" Of note, "*nida*" is a typical sentence final expression in the Korean language. 2channel users often used the expression to mock statements by Koreans.

"【*Gay-pop*】*Bōdan shōnendan Jong-Guk ra 4-nin, Itewon no inshokuten raitenreki de Korona kensa . . . Shozoku jimusho ga shazai*" [【Gay-pop】Bulletproof Boyband's Jong-Guk and 4 other members were tested for corona due to their history of visiting drinking establishments in Itaewon . . . their agency apologized [5/18] [Shinshu no Hokemon★]"] (May 18, 2020), original news by *the JoongAng Ilbo* and distributed by Jiji News, a thread created by Shinshu no Hokemon★ (406 replies).

The South Korean International sensation BTS is mocked throughout in this thread. They are called with various terms, including, "gay-pop," "gay boy group," "homo idol," "gay club boys," "homo [o]kama boys' club," "BL boys' club," and "A-bomb moho boys." "Moho" is a back slang for "homo." Their appearance is also a target of their disapproval. One user wrote, "they all had homo-face plastic surgery and gross makeup." Others described the boy band members with such terms as "creepie" and "disgusting."

"【*Kokunai*】*Shingata Korona mondai LGBT no hitotachi ga kakaeru fuan ya nayami hirogaru*" [【Domestic】 New corona issue: Widespread anxiety and concern among LGBT people [Sakai★]] (May 18, 2020) by NHK News on May 17, 2020, a thread created by Sakai★ (99 replies).

The original source of this thread is an NHK program concerning LGBTQ+ people during the pandemic. As demonstrated earlier, Twitter's retweet comments on this particular program contained a few counterarguments, which were expressed modestly, comparatively speaking. Similar themes appear in comments on this thread on 2channel, in particular, Posts 7 and 8. There are no minorities when everyone else is going through a difficult time. It seems that the "filthy" desire for "special treatment" for LGBTQ+ people themselves made sense to those who post their comments on this thread. I believe the "special treatment" this post refers to is human rights. There are comments that are blunt and indicate their homophobic views, such as "live in Shibuya-ku," "don't use your asshole," "self-centered," "pretending," "it's natural to dislike [LGBTQ+ people]," "homos are being eliminated," "discrimination [against LGBTQ+ people] is a disease control," "scarier than corona," "intensely unimportant," "I'm sick of *okama*," and "noisy. Shut up." Post 37 reads, "My body is male, my mind is female, and my sexuality is lesbian." This is such an insensitive thing to say, and it shows that the person who posted this comment don't understand the struggles that LGBTQ+ people go through every day.

7.5 APA Hotels as *Hattenba*

"*APA hoteru Shinjuku Kabukichō-ten, jishuku ake de kyodai na hattenba to kasu*" [APA Hotel Shinjuku Kabukichō, after a period of self-restraint, has turned into a gigantic *hattenba*] (May 31, 2020), a thread created by Bangumi no tochū desuga afi saito heno \(^o^)/ desu (751 replies).

In the beginning of the thread, there are a few comments that connect this rumor on Japan's social media concerning the APA Hotel in Shinjuku Ni-chōme and the South Korean outbreak. "The Japs are going to get a homo cluster too." "You haven't learned anything from the Korean homo cluster." "Just like with the homos in Korea, are homos trying to spread infection?" "After South Korea, the homo hunt is coming to Japan, too?" Some users call gays "insects" and "cockroaches" because, according to Post 38, they gather in droves as soon as the word goes out, "it's safe here." Another user calls, "Root out the homos." I believe this particular post was a turning point in this thread. After this call to root out the homos, many comments expressing their homophobic views flooded in.

There are also a few posts that note gay sexuality, especially their "abnormal libido." One user wrote, "Homo libido is abnormal." "Why do homos and oka-mas have to be so full of sexual desires?" Some users commented on the assumptions that gay sex is dirty. Post 119 reads, "I bet the showerheads smell like feces, don't they? I can't go back to APA hotels." Following in on that, another user wrote, "I'm afraid of infection, so I bring my own show nozzle." Although its veracity is not clear, one commented, "There was cum floating in the bathtub." "[Gays] are just pain dirty. Homos should be persecuted." "Homos are unhygienic." "I'll never use APA hole again."

A user expressed emotionally charged comment, reflecting his homophobic view. For example, it is noted in Post 78, "I'm really going to throw up if the corona-poz homos are spreading in the Tokyo Metropolitan area again." Some demand that gays must die. One user wrote, "You're already digging half a hole. (laughs)," because of their risky behavior. Another post reads, "I know it's just a made-up story, but kill the homos and all that." "I hope they die of corona and AIDS together." "Homos must die." "Kill the homos who don't contribute at all to population growth."

7.6 APA President's Response

On the last day of June, *President Digital* published an article titled "*Korona kanja ukeire, ippaku 2500-yen... APA shachō no kyūkyoku keiei handan to 'hattenba-ka no zehi' Naze APA ha Nihonjin ni aisareru no ka*" [Accepting corona patients, 2,500 yen per night . . . APA President Motoya Fumiko's ultimate business decision and the pros and cons of "turning into a *hattenba*." Why is APA Loved by the Japanese?] The magazine interviewer asks,

> APA Hotel embodied the phrase "a pinch is an opportunity" with its corona response. By the way. There was also information scattered on the Internet that low prices have caused a storm in the clientele. There are also stories of homosexual men engaging in sexual activity at APA hotels with large baths in Shinjuku.

In the section "*APA Hotel shachō ga hattenba-ka no zehi wo kataru*" [APA Hotel President discusses pros and cons of becoming a *hattenba*] Motoya responds,

> After finding such posts on the Internet, we took measures such as stepping up inspections of the large bathrooms and reducing the late-night opening hours of the large bathrooms. We do not want to inconvenience other guests. It would be meaningless to ask each guest the purpose of his/her stay, so we have to take action as soon as we find them, but so far we have not confirmed such a fact.

The section dedicated to this topic is unexpectedly short, despite the fact that it was mentioned in the title of the article; however, there probably were enough interest and concern among *President* readers and Motoya felt the need to deny

the rumor that sprung up from the social media on the pages of an established magazine that rarely covers the topics of similar nature.

"*APA shachō 'APA Hoteru no hattenba-ka' ha dema*" [APA President says, "APA Hotel's conversion to a *hattenba*" is a hoax]. (June 30, 2020), a thread created by Bangumi no tochū desuga afi saito heno ＼(^o^)／ desu (auaukā Sac3-r4oZ) (17 replies).

As users on this thread discusses, the truth has not been revealed, but what is revealed through a close examination of the threads on 2channel is that considerably alarming homophobic views are being expressed anonymously and freely. Some of them can be taken as a guileless joke. However, can we dismiss comments such as "kill homos" or "persecute them" as just jokes? While it may be less likely that such an event will actually take place, these words definitely hurt the minds of gays and other LGBTQ+ people. These comments of hate speech are a reflection of their stereotypical and prejudiced views of gays. Gays as sexually voracious was mentioned in a study of the images of gay men in Japan's mainstream popular culture more than two decades ago (McLelland, 2000). A strong aversion to anal sex in Japanese culture was also discussed in a pioneering work in gay studies in the late 1990s (Kawaguchi et al., 1997).

7.7 Conclusion

Social media users' discussions on the subject were unrestrained, reflecting racism, homophobia, and other stereotypes and prejudices against gay people and the LGBTQ+ community, as well as Koreans. Equally alarming is the discoveries of the lack of sex education. It seems that many social media users seem not understand the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity. At the same time, through social media comments concerning the NHK special program on LGBTQ+ people and the pandemic, it was revealed that there seems a profound lack of understand of human rights. A common rhetoric against the protection of the human rights of LGBTQ+ people is that everyone is same. During the pandemic, everyone is suffering. Yes, most everyone is suffering, but people suffer from same adversarial situations differently. A right is not a special treatment. This is in contrast to Japan's mainstream media, which is reluctant to report anything about sexual orientation. These comments never appear in the public discourse, but they are hurtful indeed.

At the same time, through a close examination of a few different social media platforms, this chapter demonstrated that these stereotypes and prejudices are expressed in a variety of ways. NewsPicks is not an anonymous site and the majority of the users use their own names and institutional affiliations. The comments I examined previously are by and large in line with the country's mainstream media. Although there are few who question the integrity of the mainstream media, the great majority of the users engage more or less formally, or in a politically correct way, and leave superficial comments. On the other hand, YouTube and Twitter comments are full of homophobic and racist

comments. Comparatively speaking, I believe, users on these two social media platforms express their true feelings and, at the same time, purposely catchy or exaggerated comments to get noticed. Lastly, 2channel comments are as offensive as they can get. Their expressions of hate speech against gays and Koreans are rather straightforward and dangerous to the extent that they could be criminally charged depending on the law. At the same time, these comments reveal some of the deep-rooted problems Japanese society is facing with regard to the LGBTQ+ community.

8

DIVERSE COMMUNITY, DIVERSE EXPERIENCES, AND THE PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

8.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter brings together findings from this interdisciplinary project on the Japanese LGBTQ community in order to closely analyze the community as embedded in the dynamic society around it from a wholistic perspective. I will discuss a number of important findings concerning experiences of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community during the COVID-19 pandemic, including key findings from the survey, a close analysis of the findings through an intersectional lens, and an in-depth analysis of Japan's multilayered media and its (mis)representations of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community. Whenever available, discussions will be supplemented with select existing literature on relevant topics, in order to highlight common experiences as well as unique challenges the Japanese LGBTQ+ community is facing. Another important goal of the present study is to draw plans for the future. As such, through an international comparative analysis of major trends concerning LGBTQ+ communities in the US, the UK, and EU beyond the scope of the pandemic, I will outline major challenges facing the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, through an intersectional lens, and its future prospects, including suggestions and recommendations for LGBTQ+ activists and policymakers.

8.2 Effect of Social Distancing Measures

While the actual number of the infected is relatively small, there is no denying that Japanese LGBTQ+ community people were deeply affected by the pandemic, particularly by social distancing measures, including stay-at-home orders, enforced utilizing Japanese cultural ethos of *sanmitsu* [the Three C's], *jijo* [self-help], and *fuyō fukyū* [nonessential nonurgent] by Japanese authorities.

8.2.1 Healthcare Services

The present study identified a few serious issues concerning healthcare services. During the pandemic, the majority of participants were able to access healthcare services, although many did not or could not. A study by Suen et al. (2021), concerning Chinese-speaking gay and bisexual men in Hong Kong who were needing to access HIV services, found that difficulties accessing services during the pandemic were positively associated with concern about the possibility of COVID-19 infection. The present study found that, like Suen et al.'s study, "concern about the possibility of the viral infection" was one of the major reasons. In the present study, however, a comparable number of participants selected "not knowing where to go." This finding has a further implication, as I will discuss later.

Participants' concern about the possibility of COVID-19 infection is not just out of fear for the virus. They are also concerned about privacy, including outing through a cluster tracing, or as commonly understood as "corona outing" (*korona authingu*) through the news concerning the "gay cluster" of the South Korean outbreak, as I discussed in detail in Chapter 6. For example, one of the participants noted that he had to postpone a simple dental procedure for almost two years due to his concerns. His concern about the viral infection was compounded by a worry about a possible violation of privacy. Throughout the pandemic, as in many places in the world, healthcare services in Japan became hotbeds of COVID-19. If they visited healthcare services and infected, authorities would implement a rigorous tracing procedure, in order to determine whom they have been in close contact with. Since many Japanese LGBTQ+ people have not come out to their family members or coworkers, they were afraid of their privacy, including sexual orientation and/or gender identity would be revealed to the public. Needless to say, for the majority of Japanese LGBTQ+ people who are in the closet, these concerns are an extra burden. Additionally, a few non-Japanese people seem not to trust regular healthcare services in Japan and look for alternatives, for example, special healthcare facilities designated for third culture kids. On the other hand, among those who accessed healthcare services, many did not disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity on the grounds that it had nothing to do with their visits or out of concern for privacy. A study by Marriage for All Japan also reported privacy as one of the major concerns among their respondents (2020).

8.2.1.1 Visitation Right

For same-sex couples, a lack of visitation rights was another major concern. Since Japan does not legally recognize a same-sex union, same-sex couples worry that they would not be able to visit their partners if hospitalized due to COVID-19 infection and vice versa. A study by Marriage for All Japan also mentioned a similar concern (2020). As noted before, an increasing number of municipalities in

Japan are now issuing a partnership certificate; however, it does not have valid-ity under Japanese laws. Therefore, for example, if their partners are in a critical condition, even if they were dying, they may not be allowed to see their partners. Of note, while there is no guarantee under different circumstances, those in an adoptive relationship can be exempt from this worry, although they are mostly gay couples. In the US, it is said that problems similar to those that occurred during the AIDS epidemic triggered a major social movement toward same-sex marriage, and it will be interesting to see whether the COVID-19 pandemic will have similar results in Japan. Incidentally, some participants commented that it is in fact same for everyone, not just same-sex couples. Considering the urgency of the situation surround the pandemic, it may be true to some extent, but, I believe, there is a critical difference between same-sex couples and married opposite-sex couples. Requests by same-sex partners, including visitation rights, will be easily dismissed by virtue of the fact that they are not officially in a legal relationship with their partners. The inability of Japanese LGBTQ+ people to understand the impact of being LGBTQ+ may be a significant barrier to achiev-ing sexual equality in Japanese society, as I will discuss here.

8.2.2 Mental Health

Some studies pointed out that Japanese people tend to disregard mental health issues due partly to their emphasis on cultural values such as *ganbaru* [try one's best], and, generally speaking, Japanese people tend to score unrealistically low on similar mental health tests (Hoshino et al., 2018; Levis et al., 2020). Cul-tural impact on mental health during the pandemic is documented through an international comparative study (Gato et al., 2021), although it does not include participants from Japan or any Asian countries.

8.2.2.1 Anxiety and Depression

Results of present study demonstrated that mental health is another major con-cern among the Japanese LGBTQ+ community. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, a great number of participants suffer from anxiety and depression. About a quarter of participants fall in the range of moderate to severe anxiety and one-third in the range of moderate to severe depression. These findings seem consistent with some studies in the US that attest to the deterioration of mental health among sexual minorities (Baumel et al., 2021) and the effect of the pandemic specifi-cally on depressive and anxiety symptoms among LGBTQ+ participants that are above the thresholds of clinical concerns in the US (Moore et al., 2021) and Hong Kong (Suen et al., 2020).

Suen et al.'s study identified sexual minority–specific COVID-19–related stressors, for example, a reduced connection to the LGBTQ+ community, as a major cause of depressive and anxiety symptoms among participants in Hong Kong (Suen et al., 2020), whereas the present study found that participants'

experience of family conflict related to their sexual orientation or gender identity explained significant variance in depressive and anxiety symptoms among participants. According to a study conducted by Nijiiro Diversity and CGS at ICU (2020), economic poor, social isolation, and concern about the future are all factors contributing to their mental health degradation among Japanese LGBTQ+ youth (2020). A study by Gato et al. (2021) found among LGBTQ+ youth in Portugal some conditions to be associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety, including not having a college degree and a negative family environment. The present study found no association with educational level of participants, although the educational level was found to be associated with participants' worry about health.

8.2.2.2 Loneliness

Another major cause of mental health problem is loneliness. A great majority of Japanese LGBTQ+ people are in the closet and live alone or with parents. Those who live together as an LGBTQ+ couple is a small minority, suggesting that a great majority of them do not have their own chosen family to spend time together when the authorities are insisting on complying with social distancing measures. As I explain in Chapter 1, *jijo* [self-help] mandates mutual assistance in the family, based on the idea of heteronormative family as the basic unit of Japanese society. The problem does not seem to be unique to the Japanese LGBTQ+ community. In Singapore, Mano (2021) explains, similar measures were enforced allowing only certain types of interaction deemed necessary based on the country's heteronormative logic. As same-sex couples are not allowed to form a family legally, they are subject to an accusatory stare condemning the "unnecessary and unurgent" (*fuyū fukyū*) nature of their union in the eye of the public.

If they live alone, as do a quarter of participants in the present study, they are left alone without help from anyone. If they live with their parents, they are likely to be involved in family conflict, which is one of the major causes of mental health problems among participants in the present study. Their experiences at home will be discussed in what follows.

8.2.3 "Stuck at Home"

8.2.3.1 Vanishing of LGBTQ+ Social Life

It is not just family support that many Japanese LGBTQ+ people were deprived of; they were also denied access to LGBTQ+ venues, such as bars, clubs, and social services, that have been significant parts of their lives, not just among those who were in the closet but also many Japanese LGBTQ+ people, as society marginalizes LGBTQ+ people and pushes them to the fringes of society as where they belong, as Kakefuda insightfully pointed out almost three decades ago. Unfortunately,

the same situation persists. Bars, clubs, and social services are social venues. As such, they would fall under the *sanmitsu* rules, which mandate avoiding confined and enclosed spaces, crowded places, and close-contact settings. *Fuyō fukyū* adds another complication, as LGBTQ+ social life, which is in fact essential part of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, is not seen as necessary, as they are "entertainment" venues, from a perspective of the majority. The Pride House Tokyo Consortium also reported a similar concern regarding Japanese LGBTQ+ youth's weakened connections to the LGBTQ+ community as a result of social distancing measures by Japanese authorities (2020). During the pandemic, many Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals, young and old, were definitely "stuck at home."

8.2.3.2 Uchi *Homophobia*

At home, a great number of participants experienced family conflict and stress. One of the major reasons is that due to social distancing measures LGBTQ+ individuals were forced to spend more time together with their family members who do not understand their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, which is similar to "I'm Kinda Stuck at Home with Unsupportive Parents Right Now" (Fish et al., 2020). A study by the Niiiro Diversity and CGS at ICU (2020) and one by the Pride House Tokyo Consortium also reported similar experiences among LGBTQ+ respondents (2020). A great number of participants in this study experienced homophobic and transphobic remarks and/or physical alterations. The perpetrators were mostly their parents, and more often their mothers than fathers. These findings are consistent with the author's study on "Coming Out to Parents in Japan" (2018). A great majority of them did not report to anyone, thinking they would not be taken seriously or even embarrassed, similar to the findings in the UK study (2018). Many of them worried that they would have to explain the nature of the incident and, subsequently, reveal their being an LGBTQ+ person when reporting. That probably deterred them from reporting, imagining they would never be understand or did not want to expose themselves to a condescending gaze, just because they are LGBTQ+. Sunagawa's explanation of the general repression against Japanese people who identify as LGBTQ+ from speaking out appears consistent with these findings (2021, p. 30). This study discovered that victims of domestic violence against LGBTQ+ family members were not restricted to younger Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals. Due to the inability to form their own families and the *jijo* [self-help] mandate by the government, even older ones were compelled to live with their parents. *Uchi*, which is a Japanese term for home, means a place where one belongs. During the pandemic, many Japanese LGBTQ+ people are stuck in *uchi*, which excluded them.

8.3 Who Is Most Infected?

There were several participants who responded that they had been infected by the virus. Although the number was very small, some statistical tests suggest that

there were certain attributes of participants that make them more susceptible to COVID-19 infection than others. They were in a relationship, not living alone, and non–Japanese nationals who spent some time in Japan during the pandemic and were forced to return to their home countries. In a study by Martino et al. (2021), test results for LGBTQ+ individuals varied by sociodemographic characteristics; for example, participants who were cisgender gay men had higher positive results, suggesting that a person's sociodemographic attributes may influence COVID-19 infection.

Besides the elder who were already reported by multiple sources as one of the most susceptible subpopulations, other attributes can be explained with regard to the likelihood of their contact with other people. Those who in a relationship or not living alone have more contact with others, although limited due to the social distancing measures, and those who had no choice but to leave Japan during the pandemic could have been exposed to the virus en route to their destinations where the virus was more widespread. Some of them could have stayed in Japan if they could have gained a legal status to remain in Japan, for example, through same-sex marriage. Although the infection rate in Japan as a whole around the time of the survey (March 29 to June 16, 2021) was considerable low, considering the low rate among participants in the present study, I believe, it is sensible to suggest that people in the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, despite its exceptionally diverse population, abided by the authorities' guidelines, including the social distancing order, and were able to avoid infection, like or more so than others in the country.

While there was no significant difference among LGBTQ+ subgroups, the study found that racial/ethnic minority Japanese nationals were more likely than racial/ethnic majority counterparts to be infected with COVID-19. Needless to say, racial or ethnic identity is not likely to be a direct cause of the viral infection. Xenophobes would support the idea that the virus was brought from abroad together with them. A racist myth would add racial and ethnic minorities as essentially non-Japanese and a threat to Japanese society. As demonstrated earlier, however, non–Japanese nationals living in Japan did not show a higher rate of the virus infection than others, so even an active connection to outside Japan really does not imply any significant difference. Furthermore, Japanese nationals who identify as racial or ethnic minority are likely to have lived in Japan for generations and may not have any cultural or emotional ties outside Japan, like many other Japanese nationals.

In total, the findings suggest a significance of race and ethnicity in Japanese society, possibly more so than sexual orientation and gender identity to racial/ethnic minority Japanese people. The findings also suggest that they identify as racial and/or ethnic as well as sexual and/or gender minorities and their dual-minority status could somehow put them in a more disadvantageous situation than others. In other words, their dual-minority status made them more susceptible to the virus than others. It is a result of the intersectionality of their experience that multiplied their susceptivity, well beyond their racial/ethnic or

sexual/gender attributes alone. Unfortunately, the number of the subsample for the infected is too small to make any further comments.

8.4 The Japanese LGBTQ+ Community Through an Intersectional Lens

8.4.1 Nationality/Place of Residence

8.4.1.1 Japanese Nationals Living in Japan

The present study found that the experiences of Japanese LGBTQ+ people are further differentiated by various other attributes of theirs. Japanese nationals living in Japan are the majority of the present study. Their daily routine had been least disrupted, although comparatively, and, at the same time, they were the least prepared to support themselves financially if infected with COVID-19 and quarantined. Generally speaking, I believe, these results suggests that their lives are more stable and they were less worried about uncertainties than others. Besides these findings, Japanese nationals living in Japan stand out in their lack of understanding of human rights. They are least likely to agree that "it is important to have a law that protect human rights in Japan." Japanese nationals living in Japan also consist of the great majority of participants who answered: "there is no such things as human rights" or "don't know or can't say either"; laws protecting human rights will make "no difference" or "fairly negative difference" to their lives as an LGBTQ+ person. In particular, the differences between them and Japanese nationals or immigrants overseas are noteworthy. While more than 30% of the former selected either "no difference," "fairly negative difference," or "very negative," none among the latter did. Additionally, Japanese nationals living in Japan are least likely to favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally.

These results could be suggestive of their relative ease with the status quo, for example, they would not need a marriage visa to stay in the country; however, they did not necessarily assessed living in Japan as an LGBTQ+ person more favorable than others. Therefore, the results may not necessarily be a direct result of their inability to recognize the relevance of being an LGBTQ+ person to the issues that arise for them. Rather, it could be an issue regarding how they understand the term "human rights." Many of them may not have felt that their rights were violated, had no chance to learn about the importance of human rights, or understand human rights differently. Next, I will discuss implications of these findings including the Japanese semantics of human rights.

8.4.1.1.1 Racial/Ethnic Minority Japanese Nationals

Race is often one of the most commonly integrated perspectives in studies in intersectionality of sexuality (e.g., Lorde, 2007; Cane, 2017). Besides, their

being more susceptible to COVID-19 infection, racial/ethnic minority Japanese nationals demonstrated a few additional distinctive experiences, which further suggest the significance of race and ethnicity in Japanese society, in sharp contrast to the government's position. Concerning opportunities to meet LGBTQ+ friends, they were less likely to have their lives negatively affected than racial/ethnic majority Japanese nationals. It could be that they had tended to be connected with some other communities than LGBTQ+ ones, as Pastrana et al.'s study (2018) implies, a sort of housebound even before the pandemic due to societal discrimination because of their race and/or ethnicity. Their experiences at healthcare facilities or healthcare matters were more negatively affected by social distancing measures, although the causes of the negative effects were not reported or cannot be specified with the data the present study obtained alone. At the same time, at home, they reported higher incidents of verbal harassment and their experiences at home were also more adversely affected than racial/ethnic majority Japanese nationals by social distancing measures. About two-thirds of racial/ethnic minority Japanese nationals disagreed that most of the bad things in their lives happen because of homophobia and/or transphobia, suggesting that they face some other major difficulties. Considering their already difficult lives as an LGBTQ+ person, these findings are suggestive of a significance of race/ethnicity among Japanese LGBTQ+ people, which made their lives even harder during the pandemic, indicating that difficulties arising from their being an LGBTQ+ person and a racial or ethnic minority intersect affecting their lives multifold ways. As discussed later, race and ethnicity is a significant factor affecting the experiences of non–Japanese nationals living in Japan, as well as Japanese nationals or immigrants overseas.

8.4.1.2 Non-Japanese Nationals Living in Japan

Non–Japanese nationals living in Japan consist of a great variety of people. Unlike Japanese nationals living in Japan, they are most prepared to support themselves if infected and quarantined. Their lives as LGBTQ+ individuals were most affected by social distancing measures. It also may be that they were able to perceive the effect of being an LGBTQ+ person on their lives during the pandemic more so than Japanese nationals living in Japan. Some other results also seem to indicate that, prior to the pandemic, the lives of non-Japanese nationals had been more centered around their LGBTQ+ friends, LGBTQ+ social services, and LGBTQ+ entertainment venues, as they were more likely than others to be adversely affected by social distancing measures in these accounts than other opportunities. In this sense, it could be said that, comparatively speaking, their identify as an LGBTQ+ person has more significance than other identities and they were more involved in LGBTQ+ communities than other communities available to them (e.g., communities of people from the same countries or racial or ethnic communities), as some studies suggest varying senses of belonging among minorities (Pastrana et al., 2018).

At the same time, non–Japanese nationals living in Japan were less likely than others to reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity at healthcare services in Japan. Although they are more open about and comfortable being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan, perhaps they seem to be more cautious about revealing their sexual orientation or gender identity when they are healthcare staff or may be with the public in general, beyond their trusted LGBTQ+ friends and colleagues. Bill (FJ, 45–54 years old) is a bisexual White man from the US. He explained that he lives in a small community. He already stands out among the local crowd, and everyone knows him. He was afraid of being outed by mistake and labeled by the townspeople. On the other hand, Aanan, a second-generation South Asian Canadian, worries that if for any reason his homosexuality is leaked, he could possibly lose his job and he would be deported from Japan. After all, although they gave these reasons in response to the question asking why they did not disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity at healthcare services, their explanations could also suggest their general mistrust of Japanese society as homo/transphobic. Incidentally, Alejandro was asked a few intimate questions about his private parts that had nothing to do with his health conditions. This may be an instance of a racist fetishism that racial Others (Han in Manalansan et al., 2021) or Global Others (Vidal-Ortiz et al., 2018) are often sexualized in a stereotypical way. In addition, a few non-Japanese nationals living in Japan identified as bisexual and they are in opposite-sex marriages. No information is available concerning their sexual interests before arriving in Japan; however, their experience living in Japan may have had some impact on their sexualities, as an intriguing study on how transnational immigration has impacted on people's sexualities demonstrates (Carrillo, 2018).

8.4.1.2.1 International Couples Arriving in Japan

For international couples, it seemed a lot easier to leave than to come to Japan. Aanan's story of international transfer with his Japanese boyfriend seems rather daunting, as some intersectional studies involving sexuality and migration suggest that heteronormative immigration policies put sexual minority immigrants into an unjustified state (e.g., Luibhéid, 2002). Prior to arriving in Japan, the couple had lived in the Middle East and North America together. When they entered Japan, however, they were separated at immigration. Aanan did not carry an appropriate visa to enter the country because of the extra restrictions imposed on all foreigners entering the country due to the pandemic. A similar concern was noted by Marriage for All Japan (2020). Needless to say, if Japan recognizes same-sex marriage and Aanan and his Japanese partner were married legally, they should have been able to enter the country together. Aanan was sent back to North America alone, and they could not see each other in person more than half a year. Aanan's experience is really a stark contrast to that of Makoto, who married his American husband, as discussed later.

Aanan's hardship does not end there. Once he entered the country, Aanan met new challenges. First, his client insisted on meeting in person, so he had to risk COVID-19 infection, which could have further adverse implications including losing his job and then no legal status to remain in Japan. Even if his client did not fire him because of his COVID-19 status, Aanan was concerned that his sexual orientation would be revealed, such as through a cluster tracing, which could have unintended consequences. Furthermore, it seems like Aanan experienced racism time to time, even among the Japanese LGBTQ+ community. His experience of being accused of stealing another customer's wallet at a gay club sounds unrealistic just by the look of Japanese society, or as much as I want to believe so, but, considering these examples of hate speech against Koreans on various social media sites, as I demonstrated in Chapter 7, it could be said that Aanan's experience was just the tip of the iceberg. There might be numerous incidents of racism and hate speech happening on an almost regular basis in Japan. The Japanese media is not willing to report such incidents, as in the case of the sexuality of the person who visited gay clubs causing a COVID-19 outbreak in Itaewon, South Korea.

8.4.1.2.2 Double-Edged Racism

Experiences of non-Japanese LGBTQ+ people in Japan illustrate some of the major problems Japanese society is facing, not just concerning LGBTQ+ people but also other social issues. Racism against Asians is of a serious concern. A participant from China saw an apartment for rent, and the advertisement even said specifically that "foreigners were welcome." However, upon contacting the landlord, he was told that they would not rent the apartment to him because he is Chinese. The media has an obligation to report such discrimination. Doesn't the government need to take steps to ensure that this kind of discrimination never happens again? A Taiwanese gay person had such a lonely experience at his work. His colleagues were not willing to chat with him, and he blames his poor Japanese skills.

There was another intriguing finding concerning race and ethnicity in Japanese society. Among non-Japanese nationals living in Japan, the average anxiety level among those who identified as White/European was beyond the mild anxiety level and greatly higher than those who did not identify as White/European. While people from other Asian countries are typically invisible in everyday life in Japan unless they identify so or speak less frequently than native speakers, White/European people always stand out in a crowd. As one of the participants explained, a xenophobic stare suggestive of accusing a Westerner carrying COVID-19 may have resulted in a higher level of anxiety among them, as the media reported major COVID-19 outbreaks in Western societies. Considering the bluntness, stereotypical and inconsiderate, of Japanese attitudes toward non-Japanese nationals living in Japan in these cases, it might be sensible to conjecture that racial/ethnic minority Japanese nationals have similar

experiences, although the present study does not have any information on this, and Japan's media rarely report incidents of discrimination against racial/ethnic minorities in Japan.

8.4.1.2.3 A Language Barrier

A study by the author revealed that a language barrier was one of the major problems among Japanese LGBTQ+ diasporas in the US, Canada, and Australia (2020). Non-Japanese nationals also had a unique problem because of their limited skills in the Japanese language. Due to the quick spread of the virus, Japanese authorities issued information updates and guidelines one after another in order to help citizens cope with the rapidly changing situation; however, Japanese authorities typically made them available only in Japanese, and not even in an easy Japanese that people who are not fluent in the language would be able to understand and follow the. This was also true regarding COVID-19 vaccination, domestic travel restrictions, and the like. Additionally, one of the main reasons participants did not access healthcare services during the pandemic was that they "didn't know where to go." It seems that Japanese authority presumptively assumes that there are only people who understand the language with complete fluency in their country. Japanese language skills also seem critical in determining one's quality of life while in Japan. A great number of them seems to have some background in the language; however, reading and writing in Japanese can be extremely difficult for those who are not familiar with the character system. One participant complained that, although her conversational Japanese seems enough for everyday conversation, she was not able to understand these guidelines that were issued in quick succession. Japanese authorities do not consider that she would be reading their guidelines. They are ignored and forgotten. One of the participants who worked for a Japanese school described her observation of how her school treats LGBTQ+ kids. She finds a parallel between foreigners, like herself, and LGBTQ+ people in Japanese society in that the authorities assume that they do not exist.

8.4.1.2.4 Lost in a Foreign Land

Loneliness seemed particularly a serious concern among non-Japanese nationals living in Japan. As Japanese society does acknowledge the existence and they are always treated as *gaijin* or outsiders, LGBTQ+ entertainment venues were one of the very few places where they could be themselves. During the pandemic, the entertainment venues were closed. At the same time, a few – particularly foreigners from Asian countries – shared their experiences of discrimination within the Japanese LGBTQ+ community. With the social distancing measured imposed with the trio of *sanmitus, jijo*, and *fuyō fukyū*, based on the premise of the traditional Japanese family by Japanese authorities, many non-Japanese people during the pandemic had no place to go but to stay home alone.

8.4.1.2.5 Comfortable Living in Japan

On the other hand, although it may sound contradictory, non-Japanese nationals living in Japan feel that the Japanese LGBTQ+ community is socially accepted and comfortable living in Japan more so than others, including Japanese nationals living in Japan. As non-Japanese nationals living in Japan consist of people of various backgrounds, it might be difficult to generalize, but there are some possible explanations. While in Japan, they may not receive interference from homo/transphobic religious groups, and oppressive totalitarian regime, or their conservative parents, as they might have experienced in their home countries. At the same time, they are most likely free from Japanese parents who are often considered the perpetrators of homo/transphobia (Tamagawa, 2017). Additionally, since a great number of them seem not fluent in the Japanese language, they may not have exposed to the homo/transphobic and xenophobic dark world of social media, as I demonstrated in Chapter 7.

8.4.1.3 Japanese Nationals or Immigrants Overseas

The daily routine of Japanese nationals or immigrants living overseas had been most disrupted, according the results of the survey. Their places of residence greatly vary, so it is difficult to make any generalizations. It is possible that COVID-19 was more prevalent at their places of residence than in Japan. As discussed later, some of them might have become exposed to the rising anti-Asian sentiments. Or, as an ethnic Japanese person overseas, their lives could have been subject to uncertainties beyond their controls even before the pandemic. There is also a major difference between Japanese nationals living in Japan and them, concerning they live openly as LGBTQ+ individuals. While more than 70% of the latter are open about being an LGBTQ+ person to their family members, about a quarter of the former are. This finding possibly suggests that it is not some aspect of Japanese cultural values per se that make Japanese parents homo/transphobic. Rather, it is the systemic homo/transphobia that exists in Japan and is enforced in a myriad of ways in everyday life there that prevents Japanese LGBTQ+ people from coming out, especially to their families.

8.4.1.3.1 Rise of Anti-Asian Sentiments

The number of participants who were identified as Japanese nationals or immigrants living overseas is limited, but there are some discoveries about their lives through this study. One of them is that their lives have been deeply affected by the rise of anti-Asian sentiments since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the conservative media repeatedly called the virus "a Chinese virus." While a study by the author concerning Japanese LGBT diasporas (2020) found that the actual experience of racial discrimination is rare, limited to certain occasions, or a media phenomenon, the findings of the present study suggested otherwise,

reminding that it could happen depending on the circumstances, as, for example, the incarceration of tens of thousands of Japanese immigrants as well as American citizens of Japanese descent as "enemies" during World War II (Takaki, 1994). For those who are in the US, for example, their being Asian became more significant than their being an LGBTQ+ person, as one of the participants in the US described.

8.4.1.3.2 Living a Married Life in the US

One of the participants is married to an American man and lives in his country with his family. There is no question that he has a lot of problems in everyday life. For example, he explains about his experience of visiting a doctor. His English is not good enough, he explained, so his husband comes with him and chats with his doctor on his behalf. He also deals with his mother-in-law who has Alzheimer's disease. It seems that since his husband works, he is often left alone with her, which he finds difficult. However, his struggles in daily life sound more like everyone's, regardless of sexuality, and his life as a gay person seems brighter and happier. One of the participants in *Japanese LGBT Diasporas* (Tamagawa, 2020) calls his living in Canada with his husband a "paradise." I believe his case proves to be another example.

8.4.1.4 Non-Japanese Nationals Overseas

Non-Japanese nationals who spent some time in Japan and relocated to their home countries during the pandemic demonstrate some concerning trends. The small subsample size evades any generalizations, but family conflict seems a major issue and, on average, their depression scores are alarmingly high in the range of severe depression. The results seem indicative of some important factors, which the data the survey for the present study collected alone may not be able to decipher. They could have lost their jobs due to the pandemic and were forced to return to their home countries against their will, possibly leaving behind their loved ones in Japan. I believe this is a conceivable scenario after reviewing all the data and comments participants left me to examine, although I cannot reveal any further details on these individuals due to privacy concerns.

8.4.2 Relationship Status and Living Situation

There are some important findings concerning relationship status and living situation. Those in a legal partnership are the most likely to be able to support themselves if they become infected and isolated. This finding suggests that a legal relationship brings financial stability to LGBTQ+ couples. Concerning their psychological well-being, participants who said they were living with a spouse or partner scored significantly lower on the anxiety test than those who said they were not living with a spouse or partner. Living with a spouse or

partner would also bring emotional stability. On the other hand, single (unmarried) participants and those in a relationship but not living together had significantly greater depression levels than others. In a relationship alone is not enough to limit depression. The present study also revealed that participants' limited opportunities to meet their partner as a result of social distancing measures influenced their depression level more than any other predictor. Additionally, when it came to their ability to use LGBTQ+ entertainment venues, single participants were less likely than those in a (legal) relationship, such as same-sex marriage, opposite-sex marriage, partnership, living with a partner, or in a relationship but not living together, to be negatively affected by social distancing measures, possibly as they worried less about bringing the virus back home to infect their loved ones. This finding suggests that, although sometime LGBTQ+ people are stereotyped as *hentai* sexual athletes and promiscuous, they are concerned about and feel responsible for the well-being of their partners if they are in a relationship. At the same time, it indicates that a legal relationship is an important factor that bring same-sex couples financial as well as mental stabilities. It is a right to marry, like everyone else in society, not a privilege.

Japanese LGBTQ+ people's lives were particularly adversely affected with regard to their relationships for various reasons. First, if they are in a relationship but not living together, their chances of meeting have almost completely diminished due to social distancing measures. For example, one of the participants was able to meet his boyfriend for only three days in the past two years. Another participant felt even guilty to go out to see her girlfriend while everyone else is complying with the authorities. Some studies pointed out that social distancing measures significantly affected their sexual lives (e.g., Holloway et al., 2021). Although the present study did not specifically ask if they were satisfied with their current sex lives, I believe that some of them felt no choice but to practice asceticism or divert to social technologies to alleviate the situation, as Holloway et al.'s study found.

Even when LGBTQ+ persons live as a couple, they were forced to lead a stressful life together. Hiding their partners when working remotely and being afraid of caught in the process of cluster tracing, among others, became major sources of psychological burden. Even when they were able to hide, or did not have to hide, or were not infected, they went through a lot together as a couple. A few participants reported that they fought frequently with their partners, just like any other couples, including opposite-sex ones, I believe. Incidentally, a few participants reported a positive impact of the pandemic. One participant used the pandemic as an excuse not to see their parents, who are conservative and do not accept their children's sexual orientation and/or gender identity. For example, one of the participants shared his story of unplanned coming out to his parents after a fight with his partner, who insisted that he should tell his parents about his being gay. He, otherwise, had no intention of coming out to his parents, despite the fact that, due to the *jijo* mandate, he was forced to live with his parents, leaving his non-Japanese partner alone.

8.4.2.1 Not Legally Binding Same-Sex Union Versus Parents

There are same-sex couples who are in a partnership in some municipalities or in a legal marital relationship from other countries. As Japan does not recognize same-sex marriage, those who married overseas do not have a legal standing in Japan. A partnership sounds more like a means to silence those who want same-sex marriage as it does not give any real benefits as a couple besides commercial ones. As I mentioned before, a few participants expressed their worries that they would not be given visitation rights when their partners were hospitalized for COVID-19. As the authorities insist avoiding anything "nonessential and nonurgent" (*fuyō fukyū*), it seems that many Japanese couples wonder if their relationships are accepted as essential unions when the government does not recognize them. Does their unofficial relationships be considered within the realm of self-help (*jijo*)? Do they have to choose between their relationships that are not recognized by the laws in Japan and their parents, to which they have legal obligations, if they have to? At least one of the participants chose his parents, as described earlier. This is another example that same-sex marriage, an equal right as opposite-sex couples, is necessary.

8.4.2.2 Incidental Cozy Family Time

Some participants commented that they were glad that they were able to spend more time together uninterrupted than before the pandemic. Needless to say, such couples live together with a partner and have a privileged life together, due to some other factors, such as being full-time employees, which is a privilege mostly exclusive to gay and bisexual male workers, especially when they are in closet. Due to sexism in employment and at work, female workers tend to work as supplemental workers than as regular full-time employees.

Incidentally, at work or work-related matters too, a few participants reported a positive impact of the pandemic. Some noted that shift to remote work was beneficial to them since they no longer need to see their homophobic and/or transphobic colleagues in person. While working remotely gave some participants, particularly couples, advantages to same-sex couples, it posed new challenges to them too. Some participants explained that, while online for work, their partners tried their best not to be seen or even not let their colleagues notice that they are there, by for example, holding a breath and/or hiding anything in the room that could be suggestive of their secret lives.

8.4.3 Work and Employment

Japanese LGBTQ+ community people's work and employment status also explain some variations in their experiences of the pandemic. These who are full-time workers are most prepared to support themselves financially if infected and isolated. Concerning opportunities to meet LGBTQ+ friends, both full-time

workers and dispatched workers were more adversely affected by social distancing measures than others. Likewise, full-time workers, dispatched workers, and the unemployed were more adversely affected by social distance measures to use LGBTQ+ entertainment venues. The results are suggestive of their lost opportunities to meet their LGBTQ+ friends or entertain themselves at their favorite gay bars and the like on their way home from work, as a great number of full-time positions were switched to remote work during the pandemic. Unemployed people seem to have lost their opportunity to even leave their home due to the authorities' insistence on refraining from nonessential and nonurgent errands. Japanese probably would not consider visiting LGBTQ+ entertainment venues as necessary. In fact, the unemployed were most adversely affected at home or family relations matters by social distancing measures. It is possible that their situations at home or related to family became aggravated because they were forced to stay at home not working, it was impossible to find a job during the pandemic, and they were prevented from entertaining themselves at LGBTQ+ venues. Similar to the unemployed, self-employed and full-time remote workers were also negatively affected at home by social distancing measures. In addition, concerning work, the present study found that the lives of those in the distribution/retailing sector were most affected by social distancing measurers. They were also least prepared to support themselves financially if infected by COVID-19 and quarantined.

8.4.3.1 Supplemental Labor Classes

The present study also found that those who are in supplemental labor class, including dispatched workers, part-timers, freeters, and so on were particularly vulnerable during the pandemic. They were worried about the financial impact of the pandemic, and in fact their financial situations were more affected by the pandemic. As a result, their daily routine was most disrupted during the pandemic. As mentioned earlier, since the collapse of the bubble economy in the early 1990s, the Japanese economy underwent a major structural change. One of the major consequences of the change is that Japanese companies in general began to fill in an increasing portion of positions with various supplemental labor classes instead of full-time workers. An increasing number of workers are also relegated to some casual sectors, including the service sector, which appeared to be the most adversely affected during the pandemic.

According to a study by the Nijiiro Diversity and CGS at ICU (2020), LGBTQ+ people, particularly transgender people, are less likely than non-LGBTQ+ people to work remotely. This is most likely because they are frequently employed and work in roles that demand them to be on site. It also claims that LGBTQ+ respondents, particularly transgender respondents, have lost more jobs and money than non-LGBTQ+ respondents. A study by JobRainbow explains that because many LGBTQ+ people work in the service, food, retail, and travel industries, the pandemic's effects are more immediate and severe, such as lower

earnings, layoffs, and shortened working hours (2020). Positions in these sectors are typically filled with supplemental labor class workers.

8.4.3.2 On LGBTQ+ Friendly Initiatives

Although some companies have implemented their LGBTQ+-friendly anti-discrimination initiatives, Japan does not have any laws that protect LGBTQ+ workers at the national level. Some studies already have demonstrated some ambivalence toward LGBTQ+ colleagues. I believe that a great number of LGBTQ+ have been put in disadvantageous situations for some different reasons. Even when they "pass" a LGBTQ+ screening test during the hiring process, they still have to deal with a hassle of hiding their being an LGBTQ+ person. In fact, a number of participants shared their experience of worrying about accidentally revealing their same-sex partner when their work was switched to working remotely. It has been several years since the LGBTQ+ friendly initiatives by Japanese companies, but many workers are still desperately hiding their sexual orientation and/or gender identity at work. The real effect of such initiatives is uncertain. As it is now, it looks more like a PR gimmick. Or, as Altman (1971) warned almost half a century ago, "LGBTQ+" has become commodified in the name of "tolerance." A study by JobRainbow explains that the lack of knowledge of LGBTQ+ by Japanese firms was stated by more than a quarter of respondents as the reason for leaving employment, implying that the lack of understanding of LGBTQ+ by Japanese companies is directly tied to the outflow of human resources (2020).

8.4.4 Age

The present study found that age explains some aspects of Japanese LGBTQ+ people' experience. The older they are, the more open they are to their family members living together about being an LGBTQ+ person. As noted earlier, the great majority of LGBTQ+ people in Japan are not open about their being an LGBTQ+ person. This finding may suggest that over the time some of them eventually came out to their family members. Or it may be that their family members found out that they were an LGBTQ+ person whether they liked it or not.

However, it does not necessary mean that they are accepted by their family members as an LGBTQ+ person. Social distancing measures are more likely to have a negative impact on their life at home or family-related matters, due possibly to a major generational gap concerning attitudes toward sexual as well as gender diversity. Due possibly to being sick of family drama concerning their being an LGBTQ+ person, the older the participants, the more they favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally. Interestingly, a greater number of those who are 55–64 years old than younger ones in particularly think that Japanese society is less accepting of LGBTQ+ people than 10 years ago. I believe they are

referring to the Japanese society before the introduction of the term "LGBT" as well as the commercialistic LGBT-friendly initiatives. Like it or not, the Japanese LGBTQ+ community is evolving and so is Japanese society.

On the other hand, the younger they are, the less their lives are adversely affected at home or family-related matters by social distancing measures. This finding is significant as many of the existing literature concerning effect of social distancing focuses on the youth, whose lives were adversely affected at home (for example, Fish et al., 2020). The finding of the present study is probably due to the fact that a great majority of younger LGBTQ+ people in Japan are in the closet. Or, possibly by suggested by some studies (for example, Woznicki et al., 2021), they may be able to establish some sort of metasocial relationship online. The present study also found that the younger people feel that the problems faced by the local LGBTQ+ community are also their problems. They are also glad they belong to the LGBTQ+ community. Although many of them have not come out to their general significant others, including their family members, they are open to a select few LGBTQ+ friends and tend to form an LGBTQ+ identity among themselves, as a study by Moriyama (2012) suggests. So, instead of living as an openly LGBTQ+ person in the mainstream Japanese society, it may be that they consider their small circle of LGBTQ+ friends as a bastion of their LGBTQ+ identity, not necessarily identifying with the Japanese LGBTQ+ community.

8.4.5 Gender

Participants of the present study assessed gender as the most cause of discrimination in Japanese society. As I reviewed in detail, a great number of studies also demonstrated that sexism is one of the major problems facing Japanese society today. As such, results of the present study seem to indicate less significance of gender during the pandemic. For example, the present study found that women are less likely than men to have their lives adversely affected at home or in family-related matters by social distancing measures. Incidentally, according to Peterson et al. (2021), sexual minority and female participants experienced more general mental distress and peritraumatic stress as a result of the pandemic than their sexual majority and male counterparts. There seems also some noticeable difference between the levels of depression among women and men in the present study; however, the difference was not statistically significant. Although speculative, the results may suggest that since women tend to face discriminatory treatments more often in the public domain than at home, which is considered a woman's domain, social distancing measures – stay-at-home orders in particular – worked in their favor. Or the absence of a patriarchal figure at home and not needing to see overbearing men outside have made their lives at home easier if they are lesbians and live as a couple.

In contrast, men are more likely than women to have their lives adversely affected at home or family-related matters by social distancing measures. Men

are also less likely than women to support same-sex marriage. Additionally, close to a quarter of men think that compared with 10 years ago, Japanese society today is less accepting the LGBTQ+ community. Comparatively speaking, Japanese men (particularly gay men) enjoy certain privileges, including the so-called gay adoption, as an alternative to same-sex marriage. As mentioned earlier, with the advent of the LGBT-friendly initiatives, societal interests in sexual and gender minorities have become more diverse than before, notably the so-called gay boom of the 1990s. Gay Japanese men, particular the older ones who have good memories of the past, may be holding a nostalgic feeling. Incidentally, more gay men work full-time than other, and their income level is higher than others.

8.4.6 Gender Identity

Concerning the mental health among transgender people, the present study found that, while there was no significant difference between transgender and non-transgender participants regarding anxiety level, the depression level among transgender participants is moderate and is significantly higher than that of non-transgender people. This finding seems consistent with studies I reviewed here. As reported by TRanS (2020), some of them had to pause transition due to limited access to gender clinics. To begin with, Japan does not have enough healthcare services for transgender patients, and many of the hospitals and clinics transgender where people can receive diagnosis and treatment are in major metropolitan areas, such as Tokyo. Therefore, those in local towns were not able to continue their treatments, as people were prohibited to travel out of prefecture, as enforced by "the Three Cs" and "nonessential and nonurgent" orders. In addition, like other healthcare services, many gender clinics were also closed due to concerns for COVID-19 infection, so some transgender participants in metropolitan areas also suffered from lack of services they required. A study by the Nijiiro Diversity and CGS at ICU (2020) notes a rapidly worsening mental health among transgender people. Reduced LGBTQ+/TGNB (transgender/nonbinary) community support and interruption in gender-affirming care were found to be predictors of psychological distress during the pandemic in a study by Kidd et al. (2021).

   Although the present study has not identified any direct causes of their psychological distress, there are some possible reasons. Transgender people experienced more family conflict than any other LGBTQ+ subgroups. About 30% of transgender people answered that they "sometimes," "very often," or "always" experienced family conflict, which is more than twice of that figure of non-transgender counterparts. Transgender people also reported higher incidents of verbal harassment at home. As such, the home seems to be a particularly bleak place for transgender people. More than three-quarters of transgender people answered that they do not feel comfortable being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan, which is significantly higher than the proportion for non-transgender people.

Transgender people also tend to less pleased to be part of the LGBTQ+ community than non-transgender counterparts. About one-third of transgender people, while more than 60% of non-transgender people, are glad they belong the LGBTQ+ community. Additionally, transgender people tend to agree more than others that most of the bad things in their lives happen because of transphobia. Incidentally, perhaps out of necessity, close to 30% of participants who identify as transgender responded "most of the time" or "always" that they discussed or disclosed their gender identity, whereas about 7% of those who do not identify as transgender did the same.

The present study also found some significant differences between the MtF/X and FtM/X transgender people. About one-fifth of FtM/X transgender people strongly disagreed with the statement that they are glad they belong the LGBTQ+ community, which is significantly higher than overall. FtM/X transgender people have more experience of family conflict than MtF/X. Unremitting gendered hierarchy of Japan's heteronormative family, which subjugates women and disregards their life choices, may explain the differences, as I will discuss in detail later.

8.4.7 Sexual Orientation

The present study also found that, similar to FtM/X transgender people, bi/pansexual women and lesbians tend to experience family conflict often more than bi/pansexual men and gays. As I demonstrated in "Coming Out to Parents in Japan" (2018), women tend to receive unfavorable or often no responses from their parents upon coming out, as if female sexuality is inconsiderable. There is also a great variation among LGBTQ+ subgroups concerning anxiety, while gays and lesbians scored the lowest, bi/pansexual men and women scored the highest. Similar findings were reported among Portuguese-speaking LGB people. According to Mendes and Pereira (2021), bisexual participants scored higher on "fear of COVID-19" and "negative effect of COVID-19" than others. Further, through a closer examination, the present study found that gays scored the lowest and pansexual men scored the highest. In addition, the depression level among gays and lesbians is the lowest among the LGBTQ+ subgroups. These findings suggests an asymmetry of experiences among the LGBTQ+ community depending on sexual orientation and gender identity, that female sexuality is mistreated, and that pan/bisexuality is an extra psychological burden among Japanese people.

8.4.7.1 Gays and Asexual Women

The present study a few other significant differences among the LGBTQ+ subgroups. Gay and bisexual men feel more comfortable being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan than others, due probably to male privileges, as, for example, Keith's study (2017) suggests. Considering they were the only mainstream queer

until lately, they typical enjoy privileges the attention given to them. In contrast, asexual women's impressions of being an LGBTQ+ person is the second lowest only after these by MtF/X transgender people. On the other hand, less homosexual participants, as well as transgender MtF/X and FtM/X counterparts, think that, compared to 10 years ago, Japanese society today is accepting LGBTQ+ people more. Incidentally, an overwhelming majority of those who identified as "queer" and "asexual," responded that the LGBTQ+ community is more accepted in Japanese society as compared with 10 years ago. As Japanese LGBTQ+ community has become more diversified and inclusive, those who identify as "queer" and "asexual" feel more recognized than before; however, asexual women particularly do not feel comfortable being an LGBTQ+ person in Japanese society.

In addition, there are some additional studies that shed lights on the intersectionality of sexuality concerning rural experience (Gray et al., 2016) and body (Whitesel, 2014). There are some studies that attest to the significance of rural experience (Kawaguchi) and body type (Baudinette, 2021) among the Japanese LGBTQ+ community; however, the present study did not find the intersected significance of neither of them, due, I believe, to the overwhelming effect of the pandemic. For example, some findings allude to some significant differences between urban and rural experiences among participants in the present study (e.g., the level of anxiety caused by the pandemic); however, a close examination revealed a rather complex picture, involving some important factors, including the family size, besides their involvement with LGBTQ+ communities, which were almost completely disrupted across the country because of social distancing measures.

8.4.8 Education

Educational attainment appears to be an indicator of some important characteristics that would contribute to their general well-being. Those with a bachelor's degree or higher are the best prepared to survive if infected with COVID-19 and quarantined. They complied more with social distancing measures than those who were less educated. For example, the more educated they were, the less connected they became to the LGBTQ+ community during the pandemic. Participants' knowledge of human rights also is closely linked to their education. The more educated they were, the more they knew about human rights. The degree to which participants agree with having a law that protects human rights in Japan is also related to their educational level. The more educated they were, the more they agreed to having a law to protect human rights in Japan. Incidentally, the more education they have completed, the more comfortable being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan. These findings suggest that, rather than the educational level of the survey participants, the results can be read as concerning the educational level of those with whom they associate. Usually, people associate with people of the same educational level.

8.5 Multifaceted Homophobic Media

Although different from one news outlet to another, South Korean news media as a whole seems to have reported a comprehensive picture of the outbreak and matters related to the incident. As I demonstrated in Chapter 6, through various South Korean news reports, readers learn that the cluster originated from Itaewon, spread by a man who visited multiple gay clubs. Some of the clubs have the so-called black sleeping room, where gay men have anonymous sex. Due to the media report, homophobic comments appeared on South Korean social media to the extent that South Korean authorities concerned that a great number of people who visited the clubs would not voluntarily show up for a test out of fear for the so-called corona outing, a revelation of one's sexual orientation through a cluster tracing. The authorities estimated that there were several thousands who had visited the area of concern, so required to have tested for COVID-19. An openly gay South Korean celebrity then appeared on the media and encouraged those hiding in fear to get tested, as South Korean authorities promised an anonymous testing. Later, there were reports of K-pop stars visiting the area. On the other hand, Western news media expressed their concerns for the privacy of the parties involved, noting the homophobic culture of South Korea, demonstrating their homonationalistic stance against the Asian country. Needless to say, the sexuality of the parties who were of concern was an indispensable piece of information concerning the outbreak and a further spread of the infection.

8.5.1 Mainstream Media and the LGBTQ+ Community

Through an analysis of media reports of the Itaewon outbreak in Japan, I demonstrated that not mentioning anything sexual at all was one of the notable characteristics of Japan's mainstream media. Japan's mainstream media treats gays as if they do not exist. It was not a careless omission. Rather, it was a deliberate exclusion not to use the word "gay" in reporting a cluster caused by a South Korean man who visited a gay club in Itaewon. The omission has further implication regarding the situation surrounding the LGBTQ+ community in Japan. It was symbolic in that they do not accept gays and, to some extent, other sexual and gender minorities, within the realm of everyday "normal" Japanese society, which is fact is a reflection of their homophobic view of the society. Gays are treated as perverts or *hentai* with a deviant sexual desire, unsuitable for their regular news viewers and readers, not worthy of mentioning. Incidentally, this ignoration of sexual minority by Japan's mainstream media is in stark contrast to their daily coverage of news concerning an *AV hō*, an adult, de facto, pornographic, video law, in the name of saving young female victims, which ran from March to June 15, 2022, when the law was passed unanimously and enacted as the AV Performers Relief Act (*AV shutsuen kyūzai hō*) (*Asahi Shimbun.* (2022, June 15). *AV shutsuen kyūzai hō ga seiritsu. Kōhyō kara ichi-nen kan, mujōken no keiyaku kaijo kanō ni* [AV appearance relief law passed, allowing unconditional termination of contracts for one year after publication]. Retrieved October 31, 2022 from https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASQ6H468QQ6GUTFL02X.html).

8.5.1.1 LGBTQ+ Community as an Out-of-Daily Existence

Even when there is an absolute necessity or they are compelled to report LGBTQ+ issues, topics concerning sexual and gender minorities are classified as welfare by NHK, which indicates an official designation of sexual and gender minorities as equivalent of disabilities or handicaps that require special assistance. *The Asahi Shimbun*, for example, treated the news concerning a request by LGBTQ+ organizations that privacy be ensued as something that does not fit in their narrowly stipulated boundaries of normalcy defined by the country's heteronormativity as a medical condition. *The Sankei Shimbun* also posted a news article concerning the public backfire caused by the disclosure of personal information as a feature topic only paid-subscribers have access to, suggestive of not for general readers. Although different ways, they all streamline that gays and other LGBTQ+ people exist outside of normal life, not integral part of everyday life in Japan.

8.5.2 Multilayered Social Media

While the mainstream media, as well as major online news portals, tried to ignore gays exist, Japan's diversified social media showed various reactions from the users. As demonstrated in Chapter 7, the great majority of responses on News-Picks, a social media platform for professionals, are in general in line with the mainstream media reporting. Although there are some who raised a question, for example, concerning what the word "club" (*kurabu*) in the news indicates, few replied and the majority engaged in discussion concerning the cluster that spread from a gay club in South Korea without using the word "gay," mentioning what kind of entertainment venues they were, thus its rather complicated situation due to privacy concern because of it. In fact, some NewsPicks users referred the gay club as a night club, as Japan's mainstream media did. While in Japanese what a night club refers to is a quintessential heteronormative space where younger female hostesses serve and pamper older men to entertain them, a gay club is a place where gay people feel safe and entertain themselves.

On the other hand, through a close examination of comments on other social media platforms, I demonstrated that, while some users may be confused, the majority of the users know that the club in the spotlight is a gay club and openly talk about it, although differently. For example, Ameba bloggers typically offer an in-depth analysis of the incident, including its media reports, often from an insider's perspective. Although there is no guarantee as to the accuracy of the information, the blogs I examined sound mostly informative. One blogger added "gay" to the news article to fill in the void. Another blogger offered Japanese readers some additional information that were not covered by Japan's media, revealing that there were schoolteachers, nurses, and military personnel among others at the gay club. Yet, another blogger tries to explain the outbreak from a Korean cultural perspective, showing his implicit stereotypes and prejudice against Korean people. In addition, I did not find any instances of hate speech

against gays and other LGBTQ+ people or Koreans on NewsPicks or Ameba Blog.

YouTube comments, which are short and direct, are nothing short of hate speech against gays as well as Koreans. In comparison, although hate speech against gays often appear on Japan's TV shows, hate speech against Koreans rarely appears. In reference to the gay club and the South Korean man in the spotlight, YouTuber often use "homo" and, although a lesser extent, "*okama*," which has been criticized for decades as discriminatory. As for Koreans, every expression of hate speech that I do not wish to describe here is used as a matter of course, including those against Koreans living in Japan. Like Japan's TV variety shows, YouTube comments are being sent out to an unspecified number of people. The difference between YouTube and TV shows is that YouTube comments are anonymous, whereas in TV shows they are not. As the country's "Stop! Hate Speech" campaign by the Ministry of Justice narrowly focuses on eliminating hate speech against foreigners, while not even mentioning hate speech against LGBTQ+ people, there might be a consensus among Japan's public that hate speech against foreigners including Koreans is not acceptable.

Nothing is elaborate to the extent that these expressions of hate speech against gays and Koreans seem more like a reactionary mockery without any serious malicious intent to the general users; however, just like the guileless and silly comments repeatedly appear on the TV variety shows, it seems as if gays and Koreans are seen as easy targets and it is acceptable to ridicule gays and Koreans in the public space, although anonymously. These expressions of hate speech seem playful, similar to Japan's notoriously "queer" TV shows, as Miller (2000) mentioned, nevertheless, they marginalize sexual and gender minorities, like the TV shows, as well as Koreans including Korean residents in Japan. Twitter comments are similar to YouTube counterparts as they contain a great number of casual hate speech expressions against gays and Koreans. The present study examined Twitter users' comments contained in retweets. Twitter users retweet certain tweets to share them and their thoughts with their followers. Unlike YouTube comments or regular Twitter counterparts, Twitter retweet comments are more elaborate and explanatory, although a great number of them reveal their deep-rooted homophobic views as well as anti-Korean sentiments.

2channel, on the other hand, looks more like a platform of free expression without any censorship or discretion, due largely to its anonymity. Of note, because its features it sounds like a niche online bulletin board, it is not. 2channel is an online open forum accessed by millions of people every day.

8.5.3 Mainstream Media and Social Media

The present study revealed Japan's layered media and diverse realities and their voices. As discussed previously, Japan has a greatly developed system of digital media. Does this suggest that many Japanese people are netizens of the so-called global village? No. As I demonstrated through a close examination of the news

concerning the South Korean outbreak in May 2020, digital media does not unite the world as one. Instead, it further divides the world. With the advent of digital media, the media world is further diversified and multilayered beyond the traditional and new (digital) media, and each layer has its own views and protocol and enjoys exchanging opinions within their niche community.

However, this is not due to a conservative backlash, as a reactionary response to a further westernization of the global Others, as Massad argued. Rather, as Ōtsuka theorized, each small world interprets a grand narrative in their own way and creates and enjoys their own take (metanarrative) of the story (grand narrative) regardless of the original message. As a result, it does not necessarily mean that the original message is clearly transmitted to the furthest reach of the digital world, for example, 2channel. As demonstrated earlier, as far as the news regarding the South Korean outbreak is concerned, the story grew so diverted to the extent social media's supposed contributions to the evolving knowledge on the news, for example, especially with regard to the infringement of privacy rights, which is one of the major focuses of the South Korean and the Western media, was minimal and, by playfully communicating stereotypes and prejudice against gays and Koreans, social media become a platform where the rights of minorities are under threat. Needless to say, 2channel is an extreme case of social media and other social media platforms are mixed with various contents.

With the advent of digital communications, there is no question that the speed of communication has become increasingly faster, as the term "information highway" may suggest. Then, new developments in LGBTQ+ theories, for example, are supposed to reach Japanese end users faster than before. Ideally, instead of just being passive readers, social media users actively seek new information and participate in creating and adding content on the Internet, as prosumers. There are some crucial problems. First, there is a language barrier. With online translation techniques, Internet users can read almost any content in translation. However, in order to find the right material, they would have to know some key terms to search for it. Sometimes, end users may not be familiar with them, as the introduction of new knowledge is regulated by mass media who are able to select the right content for the Japanese readers and translate into Japanese.

At the same time, the information highway is one way, with mass media controlling the flow internationally and domestically. Social media comments are ignored or just rejected, as in the case of the buzz concerning APA Hotels among social media users. In this sense, social media users are not prosumers but more like passive users, as they are deprived of opportunities to participate in the production of knowledge. On the other hand, the Galapagosization analogy is plausible. However, Japan is not completely isolated and the topics of its discourses are not determined according to its own internal logic but must be constantly appropriated from outside sources, albeit any topics are subject to transculturalism in the multilayered Japan's media.

Despite the fact that the mainstream media and social media appear to be irreconcilable, they represent two sides of the same coin: Japanese cultural ignorance and insensitivity toward minorities. On the surface, it appears that there is no discrimination against minorities in Japanese society; however, stereotypes and prejudices are prevalent. As long as the mainstream media does not acknowledge the problem, discrimination will continue to exist. Denial not only prevents the resolution of problems, but also promotes the propagation of stereotypes and prejudices. In addition, there are some major issues with lack of sex education as well as understanding of human rights. I will discuss them in the next chapter.

8.6 The Japanese LGBTQ+ Community by International Comparison

8.6.1 On Human Rights

The present study found that a greatly more proportion, about 45% of all participants and 35% of JJ participants, responded that they know a great deal or a fair amount about human rights than 16% of Japanese participants in Ipsos' study. At the same time, 52.3% of all and about 61% of JJ participants responded that they know little or nothing about human rights, which are more than 10 points less for all and 4 points less for JJ participants than 65% in Ipsos' study. As far as JJ participants' responses are concerned, the difference between the results from this study and Ipsos' are due partly to the numbers of participants who responded "don't know." While 17% of Japanese participants in Ipsos' study responded that they don't know about human rights, about 4% of JJ participants in this study answered the same. The findings suggest that, although a greater proportion of the LGBTQ+ subpopulation than the general population in Japan knows about human rights, proportions of those who do not know about human rights for LGBTQ+ subpopulation and general population in Japan are similar and the highest of the 28 countries that participated in Ipsos' study.

On the other hand, for the other human rights questions, LGBTQ+ participants in this study clearly showed their support of human rights than Japan's general population in Ipsos' study. The overwhelming majority (about 93%) of all participants in this study, compared to 62% of participants in Ipsos' study, answered that they strongly agree or tend to agree to the statement: "It is important to have a law that protects human rights in Japan." Close to 80% (79.7%) of all and about 75.4% of JJ participants in this study, and 56% of participants in Ipsos' study, answered that there is such a thing as human rights. Of note, as mentioned earlier, those who answered "there is no such thing as human rights" or "don't know/can't say either" are all but three JJ participants. More than twice as many participants (67.1%) in this study as Ipsos' study (27%) responded that laws protecting human rights make to their lives (as an LGBTQ+ person) a fairly or very positive difference.

8.6.2 Challenges Facing Japanese LGBTQ+ Community in International Comparison

According to the study of LGBT Americans by Pew Research, which was conducted April 2013, two years before the legalization of same-sex marriage in the US, 93% of participants favored or strongly favored allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally. While Japan has not legalized same-sex marriage, 95% of participants in this study answered the same. I believe this is a reflection of more acceptance of same-sex marriage around the world now than almost a decade ago.

Concerning the most important problems facing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people today, participants in this study chose, in order of frequency, "ignorance/misunderstanding/stupidity/fear/stereotyping," "lack of general equality/discrimination/prejudice/bigotry/stigma," and "legal rights other than same-sex marriage/general)," while American participants chose, in order of frequency, "lack of general equality/discrimination/prejudice/bigotry/stigma," "legal rights other than same-sex marriage/general)," and "lack of acceptance." Their responses are similar to a considerable extent, although results for the present study place "lack of acceptance" and "religious opposition/the religious rights" lower than these of the American study.

Results of the EU LGBT study show that the three measures participants selected the most as something that would allow them to be more comfortable living as a lesbian, gay, or bisexual person are, in order of percentage: recognition of same-sex partnerships across the EU (83%), better acceptance by religious leaders (71%), and measures implemented at school (71%). The EU study asked the same question to transgender participants, and the results were measures implemented at school (64%), training of public servants (e.g., police, teachers) on the rights of transgender people (61%), and better acceptance by religious leaders (59%).

Results of the present study suggest that the Japanese LGBTQ+ community desires the possibility to marry and/or register a partnership (75.1%), recognition of same-sex partnership across Japan (70.9%), training of public servants (e.g., police, teachers) on the rights of LGBT people (63.8%), and measures implemented at school (63%). Although some slight differences are observed, results of both the EU 2012 study and the present study show similar measures that LGBTQ+ people desire to have implemented to live more comfortably, except the measure concerning acceptance by religious leaders. In fact, participants for the present study chose the measure the least (36.4%).

Participants for the present study chose "helps a lot" the three most for the following: people knowing someone who is LGBTQ+ (77.1%), LGBTQ+ people raising families (71.9%), and open support for LGBTQ+ issues from public figures who are not LGBTQ+ (69.4%). At the same time, results suggest that participants for the present study rated LGBTQ+ characters in TV shows and movies and LGBT pride events the lowest, each receiving "does not help" greatly more than other options.

For the US study, participants chose, in order of proportion who chose "helps a lot," people knowing someone who is LGBTQ+ (77%), well-known public figures who are open about being LGBT (67%), and open support for LGBTQ+ issues from public figures who are not LGBTQ+ (66%). When compared the results from these studies, the proportion of Japanese participants who chose "LGBTQ+ people raising families" seems noticeably high, while well-known public figures who are open about being LGBT seem to have less trust than the American counterparts.

"How comfortable do you feel being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan?" Overall, 15.2% of participants in this study scored their comfort being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan as "comfortable" or "very comfortable," while 56% of participants in the National LGBT Survey of the UK (Government Equalities Office of the UK, 2018) responded the same. At the same time, for the UK study, the comfort level of participants grew with age: 43% of 16- to 17-year-olds, compared to 68% of those aged 65 and over rated "comfortable" or "very comfortable," while the present study did not find a significant impact of age on participants' comfort being an LGBTQ+ person.

"In your opinion, in your country, how widespread is discrimination because a person is . . .?" According to the EU study (2014), discrimination against transgender people is perceived to be more widespread than discrimination against other LGBT groups: 84% of all respondents believe discrimination against transgender people is widespread, whereas the figures for discrimination against gay, lesbian, or bisexual people are lower: 73%, 52% and 36%, respectively. The present study suggests similar results, except that discrimination against gays is perceived to be more widespread than discrimination against other LGBTQ+ groups.

"Thinking about the level of social acceptance of different groups of LGBT people in Japan today, how much social acceptance, if any, do you think there is of each of the following?" Results by the US study and these of the present study show a similar pattern. Although there are a few subtle differences, gays, lesbians, and bisexual women are perceived to be more accepted than other LGBT groups and transgender people are perceived to be less accepted than other LGBT groups. Yet, while the great majority of the American study (71% for gay, 85% for lesbian, and 78% for bisexual women) think that they are socially accepted "a lot" or "some," the present study found about one-third of participants (36% for gay, 33.6% for lesbian, and 37.1% for bisexual women) responded the same.

"Overall, how much social acceptance, if any, of LGBTQ+ people do you think there is in Japan today?" Less than 1% and about a quarter of participants for this study answered, "a lot" and "some," while 19% and 59% of participants in the American study responded the same accessing the social acceptance in their country.

8.6.3 Prospects for the Future in International Comparison

"Compared with 10 years ago, would you say the level of social acceptance of LGBTQ+ people in Japan today is . . .?" Ninety-two percent of American study

participants responded either "a lot more accepting" or "a little more accept-ing," while a little more than two-thirds (67.9%) of participants for the present study responded the same. As for 10 years from now, 92% of American study participants and 74.5% of participants for the present study answered either "a lot more accepting" or "a little more accepting." At the same time, more than 15% of the latter study responded, "no difference," while 6% of the American study participants answered the same, suggesting possible disappointment concerning the country's slow progress toward sexual equality.

In response to the statement, "Japan needs to legalize same-sex marriage," the overwhelming majority (95%) of participants in the present study supported it, and this figure exceeds 93% in the US study in 2013. The time seems ripe. There are some concerns even among LGBTQ+ people in Japan that legalization of their relationships would take away some important aspects of their lifestyle and impose some extra burdens, like those in an opposite-sex marriage. These opponents will need to be reminded that it is about a right to marry. If they want to marry legally, they have a right to do so. Needless to say, if they do not want to be in a legal relationship for any reason, they have an option or right not to do so. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Japan's majority party attempted to enact the "LGBT Understanding Promotion" bill, insisting that country's men and women need to understand the term "LGBT" better before enacting any mea-sures, and failed it successfully. In fact, the term "LGBT" had been circulating in the country more than a decade prior to this attempt. Who would need to benefit from this bill? Like the country's mainstream media, the LDP lawmakers seem clueless concerning matters regarding the LGBTQ+ community, while the great majority of the country's social media users seem completely confident, although stereotypes and prejudice against LGBTQ+ people are rampant, due largely to the lack of sex education in Japan. I will discuss about sex education in what follows.

As some of the participants of the study voiced, same-sex marriage would be a stepping stone for the future. Remember Makoto. He is married to his Ameri-can husband and lives with his American family. He is not good at English and requires assistant from his husband and is obligated to take care of his mother-in-law who suffers from Alzheimer's disease. Still, his life looks brighter and he sounded happier than those closeted people who lead a double life, lying about a very important part of who they are. In addition, as demonstrated previously, while current partnership certificates that an increasing number of municipali-ties issue have no legal standing, legalization of their relationships stabilizes their lives financially as well as mentally. COVID-19 may go away soon, but same-sex couples remain. They need a right to be in a legal relationship, just as any straight folks in the country.

In contrast to the US study, participants in the present study chose "igno-rance/misunderstanding/stupidity/fear/stereotypes" as the most important problems facing the Japanese LGBTQ+ community. As I demonstrated earlier, lack of sex education seems obvious from comments on various social media

platforms. Unlike the US study, the present study also found "religious opposition/the religious rights" to be a significantly lower priority than others. As some participants commented, Japan lacks any major anti–LGBTQ+ sentiments based on some religious beliefs. Yes, indeed, but then, how come Japan seems so slow in achieving marriage equality and some other measures to protect the rights of LGBTQ+ people that are common in many parts of the world? I would call it the cult of the heteronormative family, or *ie*, that rationalizes and have succeeded their oppositions to implementation of any laws that would benefit Japanese LGBTQ+ people at a national level so far. Just like Christianity does not have any real reason to be homophobic, Japan's cult of the heteronormative family is just a belief system. Additionally, within the realm of this belief system, individual rights can be nuisance.

The EU study and the present study chose similar measures, except "better acceptance by religious leaders" in the EU study. The four top priorities that the present study chose are the possibility to marry and/or register a partnership, recognition of same-sex partnership across Japan, training of public servants on the rights of LGBTQ+ people, and measures implemented at school. I believe they are all important. Training of public servants may require education on human rights first. I would also add an equal employment opportunity law for LGBTQ+ workers, similar to the equal employment opportunity law of 1985, which facilitates the advancement of women into the workplace. As I demonstrated before, in terms of employment status, there was a clear distinction between full-time workers and others, and full-time workers are advantageous in multiple accounts. LGBTQ+ workers should not be denied any opportunities, including hiring and promotion, because they are LGBTQ+ workers. LGBTQ+ workers also do not need to feel compelled to hide their sexual orientation, gender identity, or even their same-sex partner, being afraid of negative consequences.

Participants for the present study chose "people knowing someone who is LGBTQ+," "LGBTQ+ people raising families," "open support for LGBTQ+ issues from public figures who are not LGBTQ+," while rating "LGBTQ+ characters in TV shows and movies" and "LGBT pride events" the lowest. I believe it is important for people to know someone who is LGBTQ+, as some other studies already demonstrated. At the same time, one of the major problems facing Japanese LGBTQ+ community is their invisibility. Of course, there are certain reasons LGBTQ+ people cannot come out. For example, some of them are afraid of verbal harassment from their own family members, due to familial homophobia. They may also lose their jobs. Therefore, it is not wise just to encourage LGBTQ+ people to come out to make them more visible. There are certain steps that have to be taken before an increasing number of LGBTQ+ feel safe to come out. Again, I believe legalization of same-sex marriage would be an important step forward to bring measures to make Japanese society more comfortable place to live for LGBTQ+ people than now.

I believe LGBTQ+ raising families would serve an important step, as it would help alter the meaning of Japanese family. I also believe that it is their intension

behind their choice. *Koseki* family registry is one of the key systems that maintain and perpetuate the cult of the heteronormative family by subjugating women and excluding LGBTQ+ children. At the same time, when one marries, it is recorded with the family registry. LGBTQ+ families would help the family registry altered or dismantled. Incidentally, there is no room for non–Japanese individuals without their own *koseki* family registry to legally marry in Japan's judicial system, regardless of the sexuality. In this sense, too, Japan's old fashioned family registry system needs major revisions.

Concerning LGBTQ+ characters in TV shows and movies, I believe that Japanese society does not need any LGBTQ+ TV characters who try to use their LGBTQ+ status to their own advantage, by, for example, openly declaring, "I'm *okama*." *Okama* is a derogatory term that designates any men who deviate from the strict definition of a "man" defined by the country's strict heteronormativity. On the other hand, pride events in many places in the world have become increasingly commercialized and problematic, as they do not serve the original purpose to raise "pride" among LGBTQ+ people. As a few participants commented, pride events have become entertainment venues to satisfy the needs of non–LGBTQ+ audiences.

Fifteen percent of participants in the present study think it is comfortable to be an LGBTQ+ person in Japan, as compared with more than half of participants in the UK study felt the same (2018). The UK study also found that their comfort level increased with age, which was not true for the present study. The difference is remarkably big. I believe that one of the major differences between Japan and the UK lies differing societal support systems. Just for example, Japan does not have any measures to protect the basic human rights of LGBTQ+ individuals, including marriage equality. LGBTQ+ people throughout their lives are subject to constant condescending stares and bullying. Even as couples, they meet numerous obstacles that prevent their relationship from maturing. In this sense, the notion of tolerance is a myth, possibly a propaganda to relegate LGBTQ+ people from the mainstay of the society confining them on the fringe of society remain silenced. Likewise, less than 1% of participants in the present study responded that they think LGBTQ+ people are accepted "a lot" in Japan today, while 19% of participants in the US study answered the same assessing social acceptance of LGBTQ+ people in their country almost a decade ago. It looks like Japan has a long way to go. Japan seems far behind. Still, according to participants' assessments, Japan is changing even slower than the US in social acceptance of LGBTQ+ people, compared with 10 years ago and 10 years from now.

8.7 Conclusions

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Japanese LGBTQ+ community faced unique challenges and, as argued by a few scholars and researchers, their disadvantageous situations became further aggravated. As I demonstrated, in particular, social distancing measures, enforced with the trio of *sanmitsu, jijo*, and *fuyō*

fukyū, framed with Japanese cultural ethos, adversely affected the lives of Japanese LGBTQ+ people. The great majority of them lost or significantly reduced their connection to the LGBTQ+ community. Their financial situations deteriorated due to the fact that a great number of LGBTQ+ workers belong to a supplemental labor class, such as part-time, and employed in the tertiary sector, which was most affected by the pandemic. Those who were stuck with their parents at home suffered from family conflict. Their mental health was also severely affected to the extent that a significant number of them had a suicide ideation, and their levels of anxiety and depressions fall in the range that requires an immediate intervention.

8.7.1 Intersectionality of Sexuality

The lives of many LGBTQ+ people were already adversely affected because of their being LGBTQ+ even before the pandemic. Nonetheless, their lives as LGBTQ+ people was further aggravated by an intersectional effect of some other factors. For example, the intersectional effect of gender was somewhat overshadowed by the forces of the pandemic; however, a close examination of female participants revealed some of the major differences between lesbians and gays, between bi/pansexual women and men, and between FtM/X and MtF/X people, in particular at home. These findings highlight a significance of gender, particularly concerning female sexuality, under the heteronormative family creed. Women are subjugated, and their sexuality is not taken seriously other than to produce the next generation for the family. Race/ethnicity appears to have another significant intersectional effect on the lives of Japanese LGBTQ+ people. The findings also suggested that racial/ethnic minority LGBTQ+ people have less of a connection to the LGBTQ+ community. At the same time, they tend to have more family conflict than others. This is one of the areas that have not been researched or covered by the media enough. Although Japan's central government implemented the "Stop! Hate Speech" campaign in order to protect the rights of "foreigners," it lacks actual measures to support it; therefore, its actual effect is doubtful. The results may suggest that, due to their being a racial/ethnic minority, racial/ethnic minority LGBTQ+ individuals face discrimination in Japanese society, including within the LGBTQ+ community. Even at home, which should be a safe haven to them to escape racist society, they are subject to familial homo/transphobia. Their mental health and other issues are of great concern. They are disadvantaged in various ways and each disadvantage multiplies intersectionally. An increasing number of Japanese companies have a large number of positions filled by supplemental employees instead of full-time counterparts. Needless to say, those who are socioculturally disadvantaged, including LGBTQ+ workers, are more likely than others to fill in these positions. The findings of the present study indicated an implication of being an LGBTQ+ person who have supplemental labor experience, such as their augmented concerns for actual deleterious financial impact.

Nationality was also found to be another important intersected factor. Experiences of non-Japanese nationals living in Japan demonstrated a few important factors affecting their lives as being an LGBTQ+ person as well as non-Japanese national in Japan during the pandemic. They are most affected by their reduced connection to the LGBTQ+ community. While they may experience discrimination or feel alienated in Japanese society, due, for example, to a language barrier and/or racism, they might feel accepted and comfortable being with the LGBTQ+ community by sharing the fact that they are LGBTQ+ people. In this sense, Japan's well-developed LGBTQ+ entertainment venues may be advantageous to them if it was not during the pandemic. This could also partly explain why they on average feel more comfortable being an LGBTQ+ person in Japan than others. According to some studies, many LGBTQ+ workers work in non-regular employment.

Experiences of non-Japanese nationals living in Japan, on the other hand, give insights into some of the important trends among Japanese nationals living in Japan, who were the great majority of the present study. While both groups understand the importance of human rights roughly on a similar level, a great number of Japanese nationals living in Japan are not certain if they know about it. The finding suggests a lack of appropriate human rights education or general lack of understanding in Japan. Non-Japanese nationals living in Japan also feel more comfortable living as LGBTQ+ in Japan than others. This finding sounds contradictory in that, while they understand the meaning of human rights, non-Japanese nationals feel comfortable as LGBTQ+ in the country where human rights is least understood and most disregarded in the world. As I discussed before, these findings in turn implicate the unfavorable effect of being a member of Japanese family and, in particular, under the influence of Japanese parents who are typically brainwashed with the idea of the Japanese heteronormative family, which non-Japanese nationals usually do not experience firsthand. Due also to their limited linguistic skills, especially in reading authentic Japanese text written in casual forms, they might not have discovered the dark world of 2channel, which is full of homophobic, transphobic, and racist comments. As a number of well-documented studies indicate, these expressions of hate speech have a lasting adverse effect on LGBTQ+ in various ways. The finding that perception of the effect of being an LGBTQ+ person during the pandemic among non-Japanese nationals living in Japan is significantly higher than others indicates that Japanese nationals living in Japan are not able to perceive the effect of being LGBTQ+, although it actually does affect their lives, due possibly to some pertinent reasons, for example, the effect of belief in the heteronormative family, which latently sweeps in the minds of Japanese LGBTQ+ people through their everyday experience in Japan, as well as desensitization in self-defense in the face of incessant exclusion and humiliation of LGBTQ+ people.

An intersectional analysis of the experience of the Japanese LGBTQ+ community during the pandemic gives a glimpse of the experience of Japan's general

population, as there are a few attributes that both the LGBTQ+ community and general population share.

8.7.2 Is Japan LGBTQ+-Friendly?

Is Japan LGBTQ+ friendly? No, the answer is a definite no. As I demonstrated throughout the preceding chapters, LGBTQ+ individuals are systematically excluded, ignored, and deliberately overlooked as if they do not exist in Japanese society. Is this a kind of *otonashii* or quiet homophobia? *Otonashii* homophobia denotes a kind of homophobia that does not surface in everyday life but quietly exists; however, as I demonstrated, LGBTQ+ individuals are routinely excepted as *hentai* Others, subject to constant condescending stares and ridiculed in various spheres of everyday life in Japan, for example, as a result of *uchi* homophobia, desperate attempts of parents (especially mothers) to correct their children's behavior that is deemed not enough for the gender roles according to the country's relentless heteronormativity, bullying at schools, discrimination in employment and promotion, barred from legally marrying, and so on.

8.7.2.1 The Cult of the Heteronormative Family

I ponder why Japan is so behind in incorporating measures to protect the basic human rights of its LGBTQ+ citizens. Is this another example of backlash, similar to what we have observed in other parts of the world, including Poland, Hungary (Corrales, 2020), and South Korea (Han, 2016)? In the US, where I live, too, we often hear news reporting homophobic and transphobic incidents, frequently framed in religious beliefs and freedom. However, as well documented and also testified by a few participants of the present study, for example, two major religions of Japan, Shinto and Buddhism, are not considered anti–LGBTQ+ and they are rarely used as a justification for anti–LGBTQ+ hate speech, unlike Western religions.

As discussed by scholars in the non-Western world, the global LGBTQ+ rights movement is seen in a negative light, for example, as another instance of the imposition of Western ideals and its devastating consequences, including the destruction of local cultures, which, arguably, had room for sexual and gender minorities. In fact, there are some Japanese gay scholars and activists who are skeptical of further westernization of Japanese gay identity and lifestyle, although LGBTQ+ people are treated as second-class citizens, excluded and silenced, allowed to exist only on the fringe of Japanese society, as tolerated, as I will discuss more later.

In this light, Japan's conservative majority party's resistance to the introduction of LGBTQ+ rights could be seen as a backlash to another instance of a further westernization of the country, although sexuality in Japan seem to have already westernized to a considerable extent, for example, with the introduction

of Western sexology in the beginning of the last century, the so-called gay boom of the 1990s, and the LGBT boom of the 2010s, among others.

In this sense, it is not westernization of the country's sexuality and gender diversity per se, but what Japan's conservative majority is trying to save is Japan's "traditional" family that they see as an essence of Japanese culture, despite the fact that it was first introduced in the late 19th century as an imperial government slogan, "A family nation" (*kazoku kokka*), as an integral part of the country's westernization program, enforced by the constitution that defined a patriarchal family, *ie*, as the family of Japan as well as the civil code that extends its effect through the *koseki* family registry, treating a heteronormative family as the basic unit of Japanese society and recording members of each household in patriarchal order, continually enforced through various means, including the country's educational curriculum, as well as the spousal tax exemption, which prevents women from taking a full-time position. In this sense, I will call this the cult of the heteronormative family. It is a belief system. There is practically no basis for maintaining it unless to benefit from the unjust system.

In addition, if there is anything that is reactionary about Japan's conservative majority's resistance to the introduction of LGBTQ+ rights, including same-sex marriage, it is caused by their unawareness that neither would have an impact on their lives. Considering many similar debates around the world in the last few decades, the way the information is not being shared by the country's majority party is unsettling. The situation is totally different, but, as I discussed earlier, Kitamura also recalled a personal episode upon his brief visit to Japan about hearing the word "*okama*" uttered by a Japanese actor in front of an audience, who laughed hysterically as a response. They are so uninformed to the extent that makes the Japanese journalist wonder what the cause of this information disconnect is.

8.7.2.2 Systemic Passive Homophobia

Needless to say, this problem is not unique to Japanese families. In fact, a few studies I reviewed earlier explain the hardship LGBTQ+ children underwent "being stuck" with their parents during the pandemic. However, I believe, there are at least two unique conditions that add to the already difficult living with their parents: Japanese authorities' insistence on the family as the basic unit of Japanese society and lack of understanding about human rights. The rhetoric the authorities employed during the pandemic was made on the assumption that the family, of course, a heteronormative one, is above everything. While totally dismissing the extra burden LGBTQ+ individuals were undertaking, Japanese authorities' family-centered measures implicitly conveyed homophobic messages. Homosexuality does not belong in the family-centered country, and a Japanese family is always a heteronormative one.

It is systemic, not a reflection of individual stereotypes and prejudice against gays. More precisely, it is a passive homophobic system derived from the country's

relentless heteronormativity that are understood as a common sense shared by the great majority of the people. Instead of directly attacking gays, this heteronormative system ignores that gays exist. It is an exclusionist system and, by not reporting the lives of LGBTQ+ people, it only helps maintain and reinforce the deviant *hentai* stereotypes of sexual and gender minorities and further marginalize them.

8.7.3 Double-Edged Homophobia of Japan's Media

Through a close examination of various layers of Japan's media, the present study demonstrated that, like the heteronormative family, the country's mainstream media treat gays as if they do not exist. The same can be said about racial/ethnic minorities. Yet, Japan's social media, particularly 2channel, is full of homophobic, transphobic, and racist comments, albeit manifested differently and to various extent. Each platform, and each thread, has its own logic and protocol, including stereotypes and prejudices, and their distinctive mode of hate speech. Instead of consuming news as it is, in adding extra value to it through comments social media users reinterpret the news in a way that is suitable to them.

For example, news concerning the Itaewon incident reported by Japan's mainstream media is discussed on 2channel in reference to South Korea's conscription as a system that transforms their men into gays. The social media "rumor" that the APA Hotel has been turned into a *hattenba* may be a good example of this. In fact, as soon as the Itaewon incident in South Korea was reported, various social media sites started warning that Ni–chōme was in danger, as a similar gay cluster might occur in Japan. Furthermore, as a response to the "rumor" that the APA Hotel Shinjuku Kabukichō had turned into a *hattenba*, many seemed to have commented on the assumption that anal sex was emotionally unacceptable. The reference to gay sexuality is relevant, but the rest is not. It shows that the content of news disseminated by mainstream media is not necessarily relevant to social media users. Rather, social media users consume news provided by mainstream new media by creating their own stories.

At the same time, similar to the disregard of gays and racial/ethnic minorities, Japan's mainstream media overlooks "culturally sensitive" topics, including sexuality and racial/ethnic minorities on social media or pretends to do so, as I demonstrated in Chapter 7. Digital media or the information highway, in this sense, did not contribute to the development of a global village. Rather, it produced numerous information enclaves where information is interpreted and consumed their own way. Additionally, this information highway is one-way only.

8.7.4 Invisible Subjectivity and Invisibility of Problems

These are not uniquely Japanese problems, but I found Japan's lack of efforts to contain these problems a problem, while at the same time, the country's representative at the UN tries to lead LGBTQ+-friendly initiatives worldwide. Japan

is being hypocritical. At the same time, as much as LGBTQ+ individuals as well as couples are invisible in Japanese society, so are their issues. As Sunagawa (2021) pointed out, LGBTQ+ people themselves have a difficulty recognizing the relevance of being an LGBTQ+ person to the issues that arise for them. He also talks about the general repression in Japan for people who identify as LGBTQ+ to raise their voices as such. These problems are shared by some other minorities in Japan, but there is a critical difference. LGBTQ+ people are often invisible to their families and, when they are made visible, their families become oppressive.

As I reviewed in Chapter 1, there are some explanations. Due to the fact that LGBT persons are more likely than straight people to often receive negative messages, they internalize unfavorable attitudes about the LGBTQ+ community. The ongoing stigmatization of the LGBT community may lead to internalized homophobia. Internalized homophobia has major side effects, including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. When these views are internalized, defensive mechanisms like hiding one's gender identity or sexual orientation are used. Because of how often the LGBTQ+ community is the target of Internet hate speech, victims are compelled to practice self-censorship and fight for societal acceptance of their gender identity or sexual orientation. The prevalence of hate speech online may result in desensitization, which lowers the number of cruelties that are reported and outlawed while also having detrimental psychological effects on the victims. At the same time, those who have been subjected to hate speech may start to accept it as normal and resort to avoidance as a coping mechanism.

8.7.5 On Tolerance

LGBTQ+ people do not deserve such treatment, but they secretly endure them as not serious enough or just a minor incident due partly to desensitization, because then Japanese society will give them a place where they can enjoy their lives, albeit on the fringe of the society. In other words, by doing so, they feel tolerated. However, tolerance is ideological as it is a perspective of the majority. LGBTQ+ people are allowed to exist because of the mercy of the majority. Before the enactment of same-sex marriage in the US, Walters (2014) argued that the call for tolerance was a watered-down ideal that has hampered the integration of LGBTQ+ individuals into American society, including full civil rights. As early as 1971, Altman advocated queer activism, although his book did not appear in translation until decades later, due possibly to the prevalence of homophobic views among Japan's academia. The formation of activism distinguishes between the politics of tolerance and acceptance. It is believed that mainstreaming queer selves, identities, and lifestyles is necessary for tolerance to be fulfilled (Vaid, 1995). It also requires a politics that operates inside contemporary neoliberalism, using the language of identity and subject fixity, accepting the hetero/homo dichotomy as the foundation of "sexual knowledge" or "truth," and solely advocating for safeguards from the first two oppressions of persecution

and discrimination, under the false assumption that, if these are eliminated, society itself will change in some way to create an atmosphere where stigmatization, humiliation, or the unbearability of living are eliminated. According to Altman (1971, p. 129), it is a politics that models itself solely on existing forms and requires only that queer people assemble, proving themselves according to accepted community standards in order to obtain their portion of the cake.

The path to acceptance, although still defined by the progressive unfolding of history, calls for radicalism, in which community organization is understood as a challenge to the fixity of subjecthood rather than a validation of ideas of fixed queer identities. Radicalism questions all aspects of sociality that produce norms, from childrearing practices to contemporary norms of coupling and relationships, from capital to perceptions, of bodies and pleasures. Radicalism also questions the conditions of acceptance for non-heterosexuals as well as the processes by which sexual identities are constructed (Altman, 1971, pp. 80–116).

8.7.6 Moving Forward: Dismantling the Cult of the Heteronormative Family

8.7.6.1 Recommendations and Suggestions for Lawmakers and LGBTQ+ Activists

Based on some international comparative analysis, the present study found that the situation surrounding the Japanese LGBTQ+ community seems rather bleak. Japan's progress has been less prominent than the US counterpart, and Japanese LGBTQ+ people predict it will continue to be so in the near foreseeable future. In fact, 15% of Japanese LGBTQ+ believe that there will be no difference in Japanese social acceptance of LGBTQ+ people 10 years from now. As for now, the perception of social acceptance of LGBTQ+ in Japan is significantly lower than the US counterparts in 2013 – almost a decade ago. Similar to the EU study in 2012, the present study also found that discrimination against transgender people is widespread. Unlike the same EU study, the present study found that discrimination against gays is comparable to that against transgender people, suggesting that although gays may have become more visible than before, they continue to be subject to discrimination, which is widespread. Japanese LGBTQ+ people are not feeling comfortable at all in Japan. Compared to the results from the 2018 UK study, a significantly lower percentage of Japanese LGBTQ+ feel comfortable as LGBTQ+ people in Japan. At the same time, unlike UK counterparts, Japanese LGBTQ+ people's comfortableness in Japan does not improve with age, suggesting a lack of societal support at various levels of their lives.

How to improve the lives of Japanese LGBTQ+ people? Participants of the present study suggested that people knowing someone is an LGBTQ+ person, LGBTQ+ families raising families, and open support for LGBTQ+ issues from public figures who are not LGBTQ+. Their choices suggest visibility of LGBTQ+ people and issues in various ways, including more openly LGBTQ+

people in Japanese society, who have a choice to form a marital relationship raising their families together, like opposite-sex couples, and non–LGBTQ+ public figures supporting LGBTQ+ individuals and couples. I believe this is a viable trajectory; however, at this moment, it would be a little naïve to encourage the majority of Japanese LGBTQ+ people who are in the closet to come out. I strongly believe that, in order for LGBTQ+ people to come out, some basic conditions must be met.

As participants of the present study suggested, these conditions include implementation of anti-discrimination policies and measures in various spheres of life including school; education of public servants, such as police and teachers; and educational programs aimed at teaching sexual and gender diversities. These results are comparable to the US study and the EU study, which were conducted almost a decade ago. What is surprising is that, at this moment, Japan does not have any of them at the national level. A lack of any measures to improve the lives of LGBTQ+ people in Japan is well reflected in their perception of discrimination, social acceptance, and prospects for the future.

8.7.6.2 Semantics of Human Rights and Promotion of Understanding of Human Rights

As pointed out previously, *jinken no hogo*, a translation of the term the "protection of human rights," is subject to misunderstanding due to its transculturation. Under the prevalence of the cult of heteronormative family, I believe, the semantics of "protection" and "human rights" went through a significant transformation. As one of the participants mentions, there is a problem with the meaning of *hogo* as a translation of "protection," as it can be taken as a welfare program aimed at specific people in need. As for *jinken* as a translation of the term "human rights," it is subject to misunderstanding, too, as "*ken*" is written with a kanji character that connotes "power," as in *kenryoku* [authority] (Tamagawa, 2009). I believe that the right to be treated equally under the law, which is one of the essential parts of the term, is missing in the Japanese context. Incidentally, on June 22, 2022, the Osaka court ruled that because same-sex unions are not included in the 1947 constitution's definition of "freedom of marriage," prohibiting same-sex marriage is not unconstitutional. Judge Doi stated that same-sex partnerships are still a topic of public discussion and that marriage for heterosexual couples is a system created by society to safeguard a bond between men and women who conceive and raise children. This view is closely similar to the controversial statement made by an LDP lawmaker as a reactionary response to the rise of same-sex marriage movement in Japan. Furthermore, this ruling is nothing short of an oversight of the rights of same-sex couples. Perhaps, it can be said that this decision is indicative of the degree to which the cult of the heterosexual family is prevalent in Japan. The judge was blinded by the belief system.

Besides the semantics of the term, Japan needs to implement human rights education programs across the country through various educational systems from

elementary schools to adult education programs. If needed, introduce a new term, for example, *hyūman raitsu*, a transliteration of the English original word, written in katakana to mark its different from *jinken*, which is the current translation of "rights" in Japanese. "Protection" may need a new translation as well, as the ambiguity surrounding the meaning of *hogo* [protection] in Japanese is inevitable.

In order to promote understanding of the meaning of the term, it will be desirable if human rights is approached from an intersectional approach, not just about the rights of LGBTQ+ people. For example, the rights of a lesbian can be infringed on the base of at least two different accounts: one as a homosexual person and the other as a woman. The former attribute is shared by gays; for example, the lack of marriage equality, and the latter with women who are subject to sexism, such as at work. They are just two obvious examples, and each person has multiple attributes that are shared with a variety of people in society. Also, if it's needed, human rights education may need to start with what discrimination is, what kinds of discrimination there are, and how important diversity, fairness, and inclusion are.

8.7.6.3 Sex Education

Needless to say, as a few participants voiced, Japan needs a proper sex education curriculum. As I demonstrated earlier, the silence by the mainstream media will not solve the problem but will only make it worse. As of now, the Internet has become the main source of sex "education" due mostly to the central government's aversion to implement a proper sex education curriculum, and social media, in particular, is full of stereotypes and prejudices. A prompt response by the central government is desired.

Sex education should also emphasize sexual as well as gender diversity. One of the participants, who is asexual, was deeply worried about the implementation of sex education. I did not have a chance to follow up with him, but it can be inferred that the current use of the term "LGBT" to refer to sexual minorities in Japanese society results in the further exclusion of asexual people, as well as sexual and gender "queer" others. In order to introduce an inclusive sex education to Japan's school curriculum, it is imperative that LGBTQ+ activists, scholars, and educators gather diverse voices among Japanese LGBTQ+ people. It could be a difficult endeavor, as many Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals tend not to perceive the effect of being an LGBTQ+ person. Their consciousness being an LGBTQ+ person may first need to be raised.

8.7.6.4 Countermeasures for Hate Speech on Social Media

New research initiatives should focus on how LGBTQ+ persons react to and cope with hate speech online, as well as countermeasures. Desensitization to hate speech and a tendency to normalize abuse appear to be perpetuating the violence

on social media, so future interventions should include raising awareness and stressing new, healthier coping skills. The training of social media algorithms could be used to better find, classify, and restrict online homophobic content. The issue of user comments and satire should also be addressed by machine learning. At the same time, Japan needs more social media influencers, like Matsuoka. Throughout this research, I went through a great variety of online content, and he was the only one who spoke out as an LGBTQ+ person. In the context of COVID-19 recovery efforts, Abidin et al. (2021) reports the impact of influencers across cultures, through a cross–cultural examination of online news articles. At the same time, Ali (2020) warns that myths and rumors conveyed through old and new media platforms contributed to xenophobia, violations of LGBTQ+ rights, and psychological problems among the general public. Additionally, the situation surrounding transgender people is outstandingly difficult, as demonstrated through the present study and as testified by various sources. It is sensible to suggest that transgender persons are more likely to encounter online hate speech, and the consequences are more severe in their situation. This group should be a top priority.

Incidentally, as I completed the present book, I stumbled across an intriguing Japanese online news article titled "The 'opposition to marriage' continues to this day, and there are new forms of Buraku discrimination on YouTube and social networking sites. . . . 'If the mass media don't deal with the Dōwa issue, we will lose'" (Abema Times, June 30, 2022). The Buraku people, who are often called Japan's invisible minority, are discoverable through the *koseki* family registry system. This is not a problem that will disappear spontaneously without mass media coverage or without the central government taking action. According to the news report, "In this age of the Internet, new forms of discrimination are also emerging."

How can Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals achieve societal acceptance? It will require a challenge to the fixity of subjecthood rather than a validation of ideas of fixed LGBTQ+ identities, questioning all aspects of sociality that produce norms, from childrearing practices to contemporary norms of coupling and relationships, as maintained through the *koseki* family registry system. The dismantling of this system can be achieved through a collaboration with scholars and activists of various causes, including feminists, racial/ethnic minorities, and non-Japanese residents, among others who are subject to various forms of inequality because of it. The dismantling of the *koseki* family registry per se may not solve the problem, but it would an important step forward toward societal acceptance. It seems a long way, however, as the EU LGBTI II study concluded in 2019, "A Long Way to Go for LGBTI Equality," despite the fact that the situation surrounding LGBTQ+ people in the EU is clearly improving, although comparatively. In the meantime, it is imperative that Japan enact measures to protect the basic human rights of LGBTQ+ individuals, including anti-discrimination law, equal employment opportunities law, and marriage equality, or comprehensive and inclusive anti-discrimination law based on Article 14 of the Constitution, at

the national level. Although they may not be the ultimate goals, they are necessary steps.

8.8 Limitations and Future Research

While intended, this study resulted in a far more expansive one than I originally imagined, including not only quantitative data from the survey but also qualitative data, such as participants' voices and case studies, as well as various textual data for the media analysis. The results are remarkable, shedding light on some of the major issues facing the Japanese LGBTQ+ community from a unique perspective, which, I believe, can be accomplished through an interdisciplinary lens, as well as an intersectional one.

Nevertheless, while unintended, the quantitative part for this study focused on only a limited sample of people overall and even smaller for subsamples of people other than Japanese nationals living in Japan, namely, non-Japanese nationals living in Japan, Japanese nationals or immigrants overseas, and non-Japanese nationals overseas who spent some time in Japan during the pandemic. Given the situation surrounding us due to the pandemic, this is understandable, and I thank those who participated in the survey, but I wish more people had participated than actually did. I hope that a systematic study with a larger sample would follow to supplement. It may or may not substantiate the findings from the present study. Additionally, I believe that, while the findings concerning the COVID-19 pandemic may be temporary, the end of the pandemic will not necessarily mean better lives for the Japanese LGBTQ+ community. I hope that the findings from this study better assist Japanese lawmakers and LGBTQ+ activists to implement measures to improve the lives of LGBTQ+ people in Japan as their lives return to normal.

I think that the online survey's anonymity contributed to the recruitment of a wider range of participants in the four categories and to the collection of many insightful comments, which many participants diligently wrote while completing the survey. Additionally, follow-up interviews with a small number of participants via email and some via Zoom were very beneficial for elaborating on and enhancing the analyses of the experiences within the Japanese LGBTQ+ community, in living experiences as an LGBTQ+ person in Japan and abroad, as well as whether or not they were Japanese nationals. In addition, I believe that a comparative analysis of the media concerning the South Korean outbreak, including various news media outlets in Japan, South Korea, and the West, as well as diverse social media outlets, demonstrated a possibility for a future research project concerning a diversity of discourse on some pertinent topics, such as the legalization of same-sex marriage in Japan, which may in turn offer insight into Japan's slow progress toward sexual equality.

There are some pertinent questions yet to be asked. The development of the Internet seems to have connected the world, but in fact, the transmission of information is not always optimal and uneven. While language barriers may be

a factor, which information is selected and which knowledge is not is also arti-ficial and subject to human judgment. For many Japanese, a Japanese translation is indispensable. Moreover, even when a language reaches Japan, its meaning necessarily changes as it moves from one culture to another. This is especially true for words that are closely related to the "traditional family," which is con-sidered a central value among Japan's conservatives. In this book, I use the term "passive systemic homophobia," but it would be necessary to review the defini-tions of "hate speech" and "homophobia," operationalize them accordingly, and investigate the actual situation of homophobia and transphobia, or hate speech in general, in Japan. By doing so, we can further question the "tolerant" view.

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