SINGING IN LIFE'S TWILIGHT:

SERIOUS KARAOKE AS EVERYDAY AGING PRACTICE

IN URBAN JAPAN

KOON FUNG (BENNY) TONG

(*B.A.* (*Hons.*), *M.A., National University of Singapore*)

A THESIS SUBMITTED

FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

OF THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

JUNE 2018

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and has been written by me in its entirety. I have duly acknowledged all the sources of information which have been used in the thesis.

This thesis has also not been submitted for any degree in any university previously.

Koon Fung (Benny) Tong
4 June 2018

Acknowledgments

From conceptualizing the PhD research project to distilling the immense knowledge that the academics, karaoke enthusiasts, friends and family have generously given me, I have received gracious help from many people in making this thesis come into form. In these acknowledgments, I wish to thank everyone who has contributed to my undertaking. I also ask for forgiveness in advance for any inadvertent omissions and imperfections, both in these acknowledgments and in the book as a whole.

Firstly, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Roald Maliangkay, my primary supervisor at the Australian National University (ANU). Roald has been an amazing source of support not only intellectually, but also personally. Even before my admission into the PhD program at the School of Culture, History and Language (CHL) at ANU, he patiently guided me through my application process. I believe that his substantial help here was crucial in my securing of the ANU University Research Scholarship (International) stipend, and the ANU HDR Fee Remission Merit Scholarship tuition fee waiver, which provided important financial support for my PhD candidature. Roald also checked in on my personal well-being frequently throughout my candidature, and was always ready to lend a helping hand for any problems that arose in my private life. Academically, he was the best supervisor I could have hoped for. With his expertise as an ethnomusicologist, he provided highly insightful and detailed feedback on my proposals and drafts, which was instrumental in the development of the theoretical framework and narrative style of the thesis. He did so very quickly despite his heavy workload, which sped up the writing process tremendously. I cannot thank Roald enough for his enormous contribution to my research and thesis.

The other members of my PhD supervisory panel at ANU also provided important ideas and critique that were crucial in developing the research project and thesis. The creative energy and stimulating discussions during our panel meetings are still some of the most memorable moments of my candidature. They also provided much needed support individually. Drawing upon her expertise in Japanese literature and popular culture, Carol Hayes was always on hand to remind me of the many interesting ideas and processes she saw from my fieldnotes and data, in addition to patiently supporting me emotionally during some of the most trying times of the writing process. Kirin Narayan gave me much needed insights into how I could locate my research with respect to key anthropological ideas, and taking her seminar course on ethnographic writing skills immensely helped in the crafting of the narrative style of this thesis. Indeed, I consider her works to be a major influence on how I think and write, and I can only hope that I am somewhat approaching the lively and humane approach with which she researches and writes. Simon Avenell, whom I first met and befriended as an undergraduate back in Singapore, always provided greatly stimulating insights about incorporating of Japanese socio-cultural concepts to inform my analysis of the fieldwork data. Finally, Tsai Tsan-Huang also gave much important critique and feedback on the structure and theoretical framework of the research project.

For the ethnographic fieldwork that was the foundation of my research project, I want to profusely thank the karaoke regulars at Chou, Ami and Sachi (whom I will not name individually for privacy reasons). Although they always thought humbly about themselves and wondered how my interest in their lives and stories would ever benefit anybody else, their activities and anecdotes have been thoroughly enlightening in expanding my understanding of the role of music and leisure in creating senses of well-being and *ikigai* in old age. They frequently expressed their admiration of my intellect as I was a PhD candidate, but in my eyes it was they who possessed the life wisdom that

I learned so much from. Going to these karaoke *kissas* and classrooms without recommendations or invitations was a highly daunting task, and I am eternally grateful for their warm and patience acceptance of this young male foreigner, and his weird and sometimes intrusive questions. In fact, they did more than accept me; I was always generously given food, warmth and shelter whenever needed, and it was their constant kindness that made the ethnographic fieldwork such a joyful and memorable experience. I can only hope that my accounts of them in the thesis have done them justice, and that they will enjoy reading about my records of them if this thesis gets published as a Japanese book. To everyone who took me under their wing, and patiently gave their time to talk, sing, eat and drink with me, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

The financial basis of the ethnographic fieldwork was largely provided by the Japan Foundation, through the Japanese Studies Fellowship (Doctoral Candidates). I wish to thank them for their generous support. Fujita Shion, in particular, kindly oversaw the necessary administrative details of my fellowship stint, and without her help the fieldwork would not have been conducted so smoothly. For this fellowship period, I was affiliated with the Musicology Department at Osaka University, thanks to the sponsorship of the ever-welcoming Wajima Yūsuke. Since our first meeting in 2013, Wajima-sensei has constantly been a generous source of intellectual guidance and friendship: it was his ideas that first started my interest in researching karaoke classrooms and *kissas* ethnographically, and over the course of numerous invitations and visits he has made me feel thoroughly at home at the Musicology Department. Thanks to him, I have come to know many other colleagues working on popular music studies in Japan, and been invited to present my work to these peers at conference meetings and symposiums in both the Kansai and Kanto regions. Wajima-sensei, as well as Yasuko Hassall Kobayashi (a fellow ANU PhD graduate), also gave me chances

to introduce my research and ideas to their classes at Osaka University. These two kinds of venues provided me with much interesting feedback that helped in my thesis writing.

Besides ANU and Japan, the ideas that formed the basis of this thesis were also discussed at various other conferences and seminars around the world: the 18th Biennial IASPM Conference, the 2015 Australian Anthropological Society Annual Conference, and an invited seminar presentation hosted by the Department of Japanese Studies, National University of Singapore (NUS). Comments and suggestions about situating my fieldwork data more clearly within the socio-cultural environment of aging in contemporary Japan was a common thread throughout these venues, and I wish to thank the audience at these events, particularly Timothy Amos and Thang Leng Leng at NUS, for hammering home this important point.

Coming back to ANU, I also want to acknowledge the incredible support that I received from the administrative staff of CHL during my candidature. In particular, I thank Jo Bushby and her successor Etsuko Mason for always being on top of all my administrative issues and queries. Their quick and accurate responses were crucial in the smooth progress of my candidature, particularly during a period of flux for CHL. My office mate, Ku Jeong Yoon, has also been a friendly source of companionship and support throughout this period, and I want to thank her for making our shared office a wonderful space for me to work so productively. Also, I was given the chance to teach in various undergraduate courses in CHL during my PhD candidature. I want to thank, in no particular order, the following colleagues for giving me these opportunities, and being such a joy to work with: Lee Duck-Young, Ikeda Shun, Yoshida Emi, Wang Juan, Yonezawa Yōko, Kinoshita Yūko, Matsumoto Nami, Ryu Hyunseok, Jack Fenner, Bethwyn Evans, and Ben Langley.

I also feel truly blessed to have been part of the amazing HDR (Higher Degree by Research) community at ANU, perhaps the most intellectual, yet also most personal,

collection of people I have met in my life. Warmly receiving me when I first arrived in Canberra, my HDR peers quickly invited me to their various seminar series. Presenting at the Friday Anthropology Seminar Series, the School of Music Research Seminar Series, the Gender Institute Workshop, and other campus events allowed me to develop my research in a highly interdisciplinary fashion, as I discussed my ideas with peers specializing in anthropology, Asian studies, musicology, and other research fields. I also learned much from listening to their ideas and research. In the writing phase of my candidature, our self-organized writing retreats (humorously named Shut Up and Write) provided great settings where I was able to focus and write productively. More so than these academic activities was the camaraderie and friendship, built over drinks, outings and camps, that smoothed over the many rough parts in the PhD journey. I will attempt to list some names below in no particular order, but my thanks goes out to all HDR peers who have graciously given your time and generosity to me: Yoshida Mariko, Shakuto Shiori, Takahashi Shinnosuke, Maria Ibari Ortega, Jodie-Lee Trembath, Teena Saulo, Poonnatree (Golf) Jiaviriyaboonya, Alison Darby, Catherine Hallett, Kikuchi Rina, Paik Yon Jae, Huang Yishan, Mark Jones, Miranda Tahalele, Xie Shengjin, Wen Meizhen, Karen Hansen, Erlin Erlina, Muhammad Kavesh, Justine Chambers, Jo Thurman, Simon Theobald, Hoang Anh Thu Le, Benjamin Hegarty, Sherman Tan, Xeem Noor, Anthea Snowsill, Lina Koleilat, Lee Joohwee, Lee Minseon, Gita Nasution, Saidalavi P.C., Elvin Xing, Suliljaw Lusausatj, Liou Yan Fang, Victor Fong, Myra Mentari Abubakar, Evi Eliyanah, Judith Pabian, Ruhan Shahrir, Zoe Hatten, Bianca Hennessy, Helen Abbott, Markus Bell, Dario Di Rosa, Andrew De Lisle, Mark Jones, Charlotte van Tongeren, and Kirsty Wissing.

On a final note, I want to thank all friends and family in Japan, Singapore and Australia. Without their support and generous understanding, I would have been unable to embark on my PhD adventure. I also wish to thank God for granting me the clarity of

mind and perseverance so crucial throughout these years. And to my beloved fiancée, I am deeply humbled and grateful for your loving patience; you have had to bear so much during this PhD journey, as we fought hard to be there for each other despite our physical distance. I hope this research and thesis can lead us into a bright future, and provide us with inspiration for growing old healthily and happily together.

Abstract

Being an avid karaoke singer, I was intrigued to come across what are known in Japan as karaoke classrooms and *kissas* (a bar/café hybrid), during my periods of fieldwork in Tokyo and Osaka in 2013 and 2016. In my visits to these places, I watched (and participated in) how regulars at these karaoke venues, mostly working-class men and women between 60 to 80 years old, sang over the microphone, and chatted and laughed with each other over drinks. Their vivacity and enthusiasm were far removed from the doom and gloom that characterized many media and academic accounts of elderly life in Japan (Coulmas 2007). To these elderly karaoke participants, music and leisure serve as important cultural resources that allow them to build and maintain identities and lifestyles as they age (Bennett 2012; Koizumi 2013). In this thesis, I explore how and why regular participation in the spaces and activities of the karaoke classroom and *kissa* enable the elderly participants to attain sense of well-being and *ikigai*, the commitment and direction which makes life worth living (Mathews 1996). To capture the unique modes of engagement that influence the individual and social aspects of these participants' karaoke participation, I mobilize the conceptual lenses of "musicking" as constructed by Small (1998) and "serious leisure" as elaborated by Stebbins (2015), in analyzing the data I obtained from the intensive ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in 2013 and 2016. By detailing the karaoke regulars' attainment of senses of well-being and *ikigai* through "serious" musical engagement, I paint a livelier picture of elderly life in urban Japan, by not treating old age simply as a crisis to be solved, but rather a period of life that can be negotiated proactively.

(283 words)

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Note on Translations, Names and Photos

All translations (and mistakes) from Japanese-language material in this thesis are the author's, unless otherwise specified. I employ the modified Hepburn system to transcribe Japanese words and names into *romaji*.

Japanese personal names are rendered in their original order, with family name first and given name second, except in citations from English-language sources, or in cases where the persons use professional names in the English order. Unless otherwise specified, the names of the karaoke establishments in which I conducted fieldwork, as well as that of the participants who regularly visited, have been changed to protect their anonymity.

All photos used in this thesis are property of the author, unless otherwise specified.

Introduction

As I pushed open the doors, the warmth and excitement inside belied the cold and silence outside. On this winter afternoon in 2016, I had come to Chou, located in Sumiyoshi Ward in Osaka. Chou operated as a karaoke classroom and a karaoke *kissa*, two kinds of establishments that form part of the enormous karaoke entertainment industry in Japan.

Karaoke classes are places where amateur students enroll in classes led by a singing teacher to improve their karaoke singing skills. Karaoke *kissas*, on the other hand, are a hybrid between bars and cafes, where customers sing, chat, and drink both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. These establishments proliferate in many working-class areas in Japan's urban centers, and attract an exclusively elderly and lower-middle-class clientele; almost everybody I met during my visits was above the age of 60. Despite the clientele demographic, somewhat sequestered locations slightly away from main shopping areas of residential neighborhoods, and foreboding exteriors that lacked windows allowing views of what went on inside, karaoke classrooms and *kissas* were places that teemed with laughter and liveliness, resounding with a cacophony of karaoke music and loud chatter constantly providing an upbeat atmosphere. In these places, I discovered how elderly karaoke enthusiasts engaged deeply in the pursuit of leisure to enrich their later years, inserting dignity and pride into a stage of life and demographic group which the wider Japanese public often regard as a crisis in dire need of a solution.

Chou's 64-year-old female proprietress, who was referred to only by her role as "Sensei" (teacher), had invited me to join this year-end party that she had organized for her class students and regular *kissa* customers. About twenty of us had squeezed into the venue, and there were no empty seats left after Sensei ushered me to the last remaining one reserved for me at the back. Saka (63) and Ogi (70), two female students at the

karaoke class who were also regular customers of the *kissa* operation, were seated in front of me, and they turned around to greet me.[1] "We've already started singing, but here, write down the titles of the songs you want to sing on this piece of paper. We can sing four songs today," Saka explained as she handed me a small slip of paper with my name written on it. Saka and Ogi saw that I took my time to choose songs, and laughed. "Yes, we also had problems thinking which songs to sing!" they said.

Meanwhile, Mitsuru, a male student in his early seventies, was to perform next on the mini stage at the front of the venue. He smiled while the intro melody of his song, the 1967 hit "*Koyubi no Omoide*" (Pinky Finger Memories) by the female *kayōkyoku* singer Itō Yukari, played over the karaoke sound system.

Anata ga kanda koyubi ga itai	My pinky finger you bit, hurts
Kinō no yoru no koyubi ga itai	My pinky finger from last night, hurts

"*Koyubi no Omoide*", a *kayōkyoku* song by female singer Itō Yukari. Released by King Records, 1967.

As he sang the first phrases of the song, Mitsuru changed the word *koyubi* (pinky finger) to *asoko* (a Japanese euphemism for male and female private parts). The male and female participants all immediately caught onto Mitsuru's lewd joke, and laughed hysterically at him and to each other. "Did he just sing about our vaginas?" "Where exactly is this *asoko*?" The other participants teased, as he continued to sing with a mischievous smile, enjoying the fun he had injected into the atmosphere with his

---

[1] The ages of key participants will be shown in brackets throughout this thesis.

cheeky rendition. We applauded loudly and let out a few catcalls, as Mitsuru finished singing and went back to his seat still smiling.

Figure 1: A female participant prepares to sing at Chou's year-end party, amid applause from other attendees.

Although their interiors are always hidden from public view, due to stringent soundproofing regulations in Japanese cities, these karaoke classes and *kissas* teem with lively activity inside. The kind of laughter and liveliness that marked my visit to Chou that winter afternoon was a constant during my other visits to these establishments in the Japanese urban areas of Tokyo and Osaka.

I came to Japan to conduct fieldwork in 2013 and 2016. The focus of my research was initially on the Japanese popular music genres of *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, which comprise mostly nostalgic ballads of loss and longing considered out-of-vogue today. They are strongly associated with the image of a national tradition, particularly in the case of *enka*, which is often trumpeted by conservative music critics, such as Aikawa Yumi (2002), and media outlets, such as the state broadcaster NHK, as "the

heart and soul of Japan" (*nihon no kokoro*).[2] I had started visiting karaoke classes and

kissas partly to study how these notions of musical tradition were circulated and

maintained by its elderly fan demographic through consumption practices such as

karaoke.[3] However, through my participation in their karaoke activities and

conversations with them, I found that the nostalgic retrospection they expressed often

touched on individual lives and social groups, instead of ideas of national tradition.

Moreover, during my visits I found myself increasingly impressed instead by the energy

and cheerfulness of these elderly karaoke enthusiasts, and their dedication to regularly

coming to karaoke and becoming better singers. I often reflected upon how their

karaoke participation went against popular images of old age as a time of loneliness and

dependence, which are heavily supported by Japanese mass media and policy-makers

today. It seemed to me that through their regular visits, the elderly customers at karaoke

establishments like Chou seemed to have achieved some sense of well-being and *ikigai,*

loosely translatable from Japanese as "purpose in life".[4]

     But how did karaoke, and the genres of *enka* and *kayōkyoku,* provide this sense

of well-being and *ikigai*, and form the musical basis of their enjoyment? What kinds of

well-being and *ikigai* in old age did they achieve through their karaoke engagements?

Why did they come here frequently as regular customers and students to pursue well-

being and *ikigai*? Over the course of my fieldwork, I became most interested in these

three questions. This thesis seeks to answer them by investigating how these urban

elderly Japanese understood and experienced their regular singing of *enka* and

---

[2] Christine R. Yano, <u>Tears of Longing: Nostalgia and the Nation in Japanese Popular Song</u> (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 4; Wajima Yūsuke, *Tsukurareta "Nihon no Kokoro" Shinwa: "Enka" wo Meguru Sengo Taishū Ongakushi* (The Created Mythos of "The Heart of Japan": A History of Postwar Popular Music Focusing on "*Enka"*) (Tokyo: Kōbunsha Shinsho, 2010), 8-9; and Aikawa Yumi, <u>*Enka no Susume* (On *Enka*)</u> (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 2002), 185.

[3] A fondness for karaoke and Japanese popular music I had developed during my teenage years was another reason for embarking on this research.

[4] Gordon Mathews, <u>What Makes Life Worth Living?: How Japanese and Americans Make Sense of Their Worlds</u> (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 5.

kayōkyoku music at karaoke classes and *kissas*. Taking into account both aesthetic and social elements of such karaoke participation, I argue that music can be a crucially enabling force for attaining well-being and *ikigai* in old age, particularly through the "serious leisure" mode of engagement that best characterizes the commitment and effort that elderly enthusiasts put into karaoke.[5] Such a study, I suggest, allows us a better understanding of how elderly popular music engagement can enrich life in old age, not only for this group of karaoke regulars, but also for younger generations, fans of different genres, and people growing old in other cultures. In other words, this study contributes to research about the general pursuit of well-being, of a "good life" as we grow old.[6]

In the rest of this introduction, I first describe the current understanding of old age in Japan, in both public and academic discussions, and highlight an emerging interest in issues of well-being and *ikigai* in this stage of life. I then explain how we can understand musical activities as both aesthetic and social, and argue that both aspects of musical engagement should be explored in understanding how karaoke provides opportunities for the elderly regulars of the venues I focused on to achieve well-being and *ikigai*. Next, I explain my framing of such karaoke participation as a kind of "serious leisure" activity, which is an important mode of experience in attaining well-being and *ikigai*. I then discuss how I conducted my field research to address my questions regarding elderly musical engagement, and describe how I tried to work around crucial differences in age and culture in trying to understand the elderly

---

[5] Robert A. Stebbins, <u>Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time</u> (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2015, first edition 2007), xx.

[6] My concern with well-being can be understood as part of the "happiness turn" that has emerged in recent academic research. However, I draw an important distinction between happiness and well-being, and explain why I am concerned with the latter for this thesis, in a later section in this introduction. Some of the research on the pursuit of well-being in old age in Japan include Mathews (1996); Iza Kavedžija, "The Good Life in Balance: Insights from Aging Japan", <u>HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory</u> 5(3) (2015), 135-56; and Barbara Holthus and Wolfram Manzenreiter (eds.), <u>Life Course, Happiness and Well-being in Japan</u> (New York and Oxford: Routledge, 2017). For a wider discussion of the "happiness turn", see Sara Ahmed, <u>The Promise of Happiness</u> (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

enthusiasts' karaoke participation. Finally, I provide an outline of the chapter structure for the rest of this thesis.

Contesting negative views of aging and elderly life in Japan

Most of today's older Japanese, especially the regular visitors to the karaoke classes and *kissas* I visited, were born in the first postwar baby boom in the late 1940s to early 1950s. They are popularly referred to as the *dankai sedai* generation in Japanese discourse. *Dankai sedai* roughly translates into "apartment complex generation" and refers to the large number of people of this age group who moved into the newly newly-built apartment complexes in the 1970s. Florian Coulmas (2007) notes that their numbers (6.8 million babies were born between 1947 and 1949, 30 to 50 percent more than during the three-year periods before and after) have had important implications on their education, contributions to the workforce, and now their demands on Japan's pension system.[7] Coulmas also describes how this demographic group shared certain social experiences, such as the anti-Vietnam War student movement and mass urban migration in the 1960s, and reaching retirement age en masse today.[8] Due to sharp advancements in medical technology, this demographic group is the first to experience old age in such large numbers, and it is poised to enjoy retirement life for up to 30 years, much longer than their predecessors.[9] Coulmas notes that these recent developments mean that this baby-boomer cohort is "charting out new territory", in terms of aging lifestyles in Japan.[10]

Recognizing this situation, over the past few decades both scholars and Japanese policy-makers have been increasingly concerned about population aging and elderly

---

[7] Florian Coulmas, <u>Population Decline and Ageing in Japan: The Social Consequences</u> (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 19-20.

[8] Ibid., 20.

[9] Ibid., 21.

[10] Ibid., 19.

6

quality of life. Their discussions can roughly be split between those concerned with care and social support for an increasing number of older Japanese, and those that investigate older people's work, leisure and culture. Interestingly, in his overview of the literature on the sociology of aging in Japan, Sepp Linhart (2008) finds that much of the Western study of Japanese aging has focused on the former approach.[11] As a representative example, the introduction to John Traphagan and John Knight's (2003) edited volume discusses aging in Japan largely as a problem of social welfare and care, describing the decline in the number of multi-generational stem families, and the increased need for health care in old age.[12] Coulmas (2007) also notes the prevalent media discourse about younger Japanese citizens' displeasure at the "pension burden problem".[13]

Much of the Japanese media representation of life in old age follows this approach. For example, between September and December 2016, the major television companies carried at least ten special programs and news/opinion segments on free-to-air channels about various elderly problems: the *kodokushi* phenomenon of elderly men and women being found dead alone and far away from their children, the increasing number of road accidents caused by elderly drivers with declining physical and mental capabilities, the *kaigo jigoku* ("nursing hell") of those providing home-based care for often disabled elderly parents, and so on. Being old in Japan is thus widely considered a time of passivity and dependency, and a burden on Japanese society and the economy; to allow older Japanese to live a fulfilling life thus requires much dedicated care, often in institutions such as hospitals and senior care facilities. This understanding of elderly life can also be seen as part of a discourse of *jiko sekinin* (self-responsibility) that has

---

[11] Sepp Linhart, "Social Ageing and the Sociology of Ageing", Florian Coulmas et al. (eds.), The Demographic Challenge: A Handbook about Japan (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 138.

[12] John W. Traphagan and John Knight, "The Study of the Family in Japan: Integrating Anthropological and Demographic Approaches", Traphagan and Knight (eds.), Demographic Change and the Family in Japan's Ageing Society (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 13-18.

[13] Coulmas, Population Decline and Ageing in Japan, p.13.

become increasingly dominant in the neoliberal political economy of Japan, following Koizumi Junichirō's term as Prime Minister from 2001.[14]

In recent years, however, there has also been increasing discussions in both academic and popular literature about *healthy* life expectancy, and a deeper questioning of how quality of life may be understood in an elderly context. For example, Harada et al. (2011) note that the 2010 Leisure White Paper's (*rejā hakusho*) description of an increase in the number of elderly Japanese taking part in leisure activities also highlighted a developing interest in not only living longer, but making good use of the extended lifespan.[15] These leisure activities are popularly referred to as the pursuit of a "second life" (*daini no jinsei*) after retirement, either from work or family labor.[16] Such later discussions, academically led by Japanese researchers from the 1990s onward, have sought to overcome a "medical gaze" that sees elderly Japanese only as objects of care, and incorporate an increasing variety of perspectives of different aspects of life in old age.[17] Yoshiko Matsumoto's (2011) edited volume, "Faces of Aging", is of particular interest, as it raises important questions about defining and understanding quality of life in old age. In her introduction, Matsumoto notes that age is not necessarily defined chronologically, but may be felt "in terms of one's physical

---

[14] Akihiro Ogawa, Lifelong Learning in Neoliberal Japan: Risk, Community, and Knowledge (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015), 64-69.

[15] Harada Takashi, Katō Keiko, Oda Yoshiko, Uchida Hatsuyo and Ōno Tomoko, "*Kōreisha no Seikatsu Shūkan ni Kan Suru Chōsa* (*II*): *Yoka Katsudō to Ikigaikan ni Tsuite*" (Daily Habits of the Elderly (II): Recreational Activities and Feeling of Life), Nagoya Bunri Daigaku Kiyō (Nagoya Bunri University Memoirs) 11, (2011), 27-33; Japan Productivity Center, Rejā Hakusho 2010 (Leisure White Paper 2010) (Tokyo: Japan Productivity Center, 2010).

[16] See for example Itō Tatsuya, "'*Daini no Jinsei*' *50 Dai de Yume ni Chōsen Shita 3 Nin*: '*Nenshū Kawarazu*' *5 Ji Mae Kitaku no Seikatsu*" (Three People who Pursued their Dreams in Their Fifties as "Second Lives": Lifestyles of Getting Home Before Five "With the Same Annual Salary"), Purejidento Online (President Online) (1 July 2018), https://president.jp/articles/-/25439. Accessed on 30 October 2018; Nagai Takako, "'*Teinen no Katachi*' *wa Danjo de Chigau! Onnatachi no Daini no Jinsei to wa?*" ("Retired Lifestyles" Differ between Men and Women! What are Women's Second Lives Like?), Aera Dot (22 February 2018), https://dot.asahi.com/wa/2018022100032.html?page=1. Accessed on 30 October 2018.

[17] Monika Wilińska & Els-Marie Anbäcken, "In Search of the Everyday Life of Older People in Japan: Reflections Based on Scholarly Literature", Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology 28(4) (2013), 439-45.

facilities ('functional age') and the rites of passage that one takes ('social age')".[18]

Growing old also takes place under diverse economic, regional, health, and gender conditions.[19] "The elderly" are thus a heterogeneous group. Furthermore, Matsumoto notes the various sources of identification from the self and others.[20] As such, she is wary of accounts that tend to portray older people as a homogeneous opposite of the younger mainstream society, and is instead interested in a grounded understanding of "the experience of aging with close attention to the point of view of the persons who undergo the process".[21] Matsumoto's arguments about old age recall Karl Mannheim's (1952) ideas on a "sociology of generations", which suggest that while entire generations may share biological similarities at a certain time and age, other forces, including social position, political processes and geography, may also influence their ability to concentrate into concrete social groups.[22]

Such concern over the multifaceted and heterogeneous nature of old age drives Matsumoto's multidisciplinary approach towards the collection of chapters in her edited volume, incorporating among others perspectives from sociology, psychology, and gender studies.[23] The end product provides a complex image of lifestyles and agency in old age, and questions how, in its preference towards certain "objective" indices of physical health, the mainstream use of concepts like "quality of life", "well-being" and "successful aging" may be lacking in sociocultural understandings of elderly life.

---

[18] Yoshiko Matsumoto, "Introduction", Yoshiko Matsumoto (ed.), Faces of Aging: The Lived Experiences of the Elderly in Japan (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 2. Brackets in original. See also Deirdre Boden and Denise D. Bielby, "The Way It Was: Topical Organisation in Elderly Conversation", Language and Communication 6 (1986), 73-89; Nikolas Coupland, Justine Coupland and Howard Giles, "Telling Age in Later Life: Identity and Face Implications", Text 9 (1985), 129-51; Dorothy A. Counts and David R. Counts, Ageing and Its Transformations: Moving Towards Death in Pacific Societies (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985); Heidi E. Hamilton (ed.), Language and Communication in Old Age: Multidisciplinary Perspectives (New York: Garland, 1999).

[19] Matsumoto, "Introduction", 2.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., 3.

[22] Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations", Paul Kecskemeti (ed.), Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge: Collected Works, Volume 5 (London: Routledge, 1952 [republished 1972]), 276-322.

[23] Matsumoto, "Introduction", 3.

Ikigai as a measure of well-being in old age

At this point, it is important to clarify key terms regarding the main focus of my research that have appeared so far, such as "happiness", "quality of life", and "well-being". Although all three terms are rooted in what Sara Ahmed describes as a recent "happiness turn" toward a greater interest in concepts of positive affect, especially in affluent societies such as Japan, there are some important differences that reveal divergent approaches towards the study of human affect.[24] Since they help me understand the meanings that karaoke participation took on for many karaoke regulars, these differences guide my choice of the term "well-being" in much of the analytical discussion in this thesis, although I recognize that many karaoke regulars may also use the terms "happiness" (*shiawase*) and "quality of life" (*seikatsu reberu*) interchangeably in their communication with me.

I start with "happiness". It is highly suggestive that although Ahmed recognizes it as a desire, she does not actually provide a concrete definition in her work, explaining her skepticism toward such a definition by drawing upon critiques by philosophers such as Simone de Beauvoir (1949), who noted that "it is not too clear just what the word *happy* really means and still less what true values it may mask".[25] Gordon Mathews and Carolina Izquierdo (2010) argue that ideas of happiness remain vague, because they refer to a state that is ultimately subjective, and can mean different things in different sociocultural contexts.[26] Meanwhile, the term "quality of life" also poses problems, as Mathews and Izquierdo note that in existing research it has mainly implied "external observation and evaluation alone", without considering inner states of mind and

---

[24] Ahmed, The Promise of Happiness, 3-7.

[25] Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (H.M. Parshley trans.) (London: Vintage, 1949 [republished 1997]), 28. Cited in Ahmed, The Promise of Happiness, 2. Emphasis in original.

[26] Gordon Mathews and Carolina Izquierdo, "Introduction: Anthropology, Happiness, and Well-Being", Mathews and Izquierdo (eds.), Pursuits of Happiness: Well-Being in Anthropological Perspective (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2010), 1-2.

individual conceptualizations of a "good life".[27] In other words, existing research tends to overestimate the importance of certain (usually Euro-American) established markers of a "good life" to people who may live in other societies and cultures that do not fully conform to such ways and meanings of living.

"Well-being", on the other hand, combines the subjective perspective of "happiness" with the objective aims of "quality of life". According to Mathews and Izquierdo,

> Well-being is an optimal state for an individual, community, society, and the world as a whole. It is conceived of, expressed, and experienced in different ways by different individuals and within the cultural contexts of different societies: different societies may have distinctly different culturally shaped visions of well-being. Nonetheless, well-being bears a degree of commonality due to our common humanity and interrelatedness over space and time. Well-being is experienced by individuals—its essential locus lies within individual subjectivity—but it may be considered and compared interpersonally and interculturally, since all individuals live within particular worlds of others, and all societies live in a common world at large.[28]

Well-being thus considers both individual and social aspects of experience, situating individual ideas of well-being within sociocultural contexts. Mathews and Izquierdo note that because anthropology emphasizes "thick" ethnographic descriptions that explain how sociocultural ideas and forces play out in people's daily lives, it is well-suited to tackle these twin concerns of well-being, although anthropologists have

---

[27] Ibid., 4.
[28] Ibid., 5.

tended to avoid the term due to their aversion to the universalistic cross-cultural comparative approaches dominant in economic and policy studies.[29] Because my research on elderly karaoke regulars is equally concerned with both individual and social aspects of how regular karaoke participation provides opportunities to attain well-being in old age, I conducted my research activities from a predominantly ethnographic approach, and this thesis foregrounds ethnographic explanations of activities and anecdotes surrounding karaoke participation. In addition to understanding how sociocultural concepts affect karaoke participation, however, I also examine how regularly singing karaoke at classrooms and *kissas* can question and resist these sociocultural concepts, and allow participants to construct alternative elderly lifestyles in attaining fulfillment.

In tracing these negotiations between subjective experiences of elderly karaoke and sociocultural norms of old age in Japan, I engage in particular with an associated concept, "*ikigai*", which Gordon Mathews (1996) discusses in great detail. Mathews defines *ikigai* as a "sense of commitment" to people's worlds "which most makes one's life seem worth living".[30] *Ikigai* features as a key idea in many qualitative studies on elderly well-being in Japan based on analyses of the life course, such as by Iva Kavedzija (2015), and Barbara Holthus and Wolfram Manzenreiter (2017).[31] By providing a sense of purpose and significance of one's life, it is a crucial component of well-being.[32]

Mathews describes two ways in which *ikigai* is conceptualized and felt by people. The first is *jiko jitsugen*, which refers to a sense of self-actualization; feelings of

---

[29] Ibid., 9-10. For a detailed discussion of thick description in ethnography, see also Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture", Geertz (ed.), The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3-30.

[30] Mathews, What Makes Life Worth Living?, 5.

[31] Kavedžija, "The Good Life in Balance", 135-56; and Holthus and Manzenreiter (eds.), Life Course.

[32] Gordon Mathews, "Finding and Keeping a Purpose in Life: Well-Being and *Ikigai* in Japan and Elsewhere", Mathews and Izquierdo (eds.), Pursuits of Happiness, 167-9.

fulfillment and happiness here are concentrated on the development of the self.[33] The

second is *ittaikan*, which refers to a sense of oneness, belonging and commitment to a

group, and one's role within that group.[34] Far from being neatly compartmentalized into

different groups of Japanese people, Mathews notes that in his own fieldwork

experience, most of his research participants held a sense of *ikigai* that was

"ambiguously balanced in between".[35] Many times, these were not harmonious balances,

but instead presented existential conflicts that were not easily resolved.

  The tensions between *jiko jitsugen* and *ittaikan*, Mathews suggests, can be

understood by considering the dynamic shifts in Japanese understandings of the relation

of the self to society. He describes the entrenchment of ideals of *ittaikan* as being based

on the predominance of group-orientedness in Japanese conceptualizations of the self,

through the emphasis on group living, or *shūdan seikatsu*, throughout the life course, in

school education, work, and family life during Japan's postwar economic growth.[36]

Mathews conceptually categorizes those who view such group living as natural as

tending to express ideas of *ikigai* in terms of *ittaikan*, while others who feel

disenfranchised and view such group living as coerced conformity would instead

develop ideas of *ikigai* more in terms of *jiko jitsugen*.[37] In reality, however, he describes

many of his research participants as agreeing with some parts of these sociocultural

norms and disagreeing with others, according to events throughout their lives.

Furthermore, he also notes the increasing identification of *ikigai* along the lines of *jiko

jitsugen* today, for both young and old. Mathews suggests that this trend has developed

in the midst of the dislocations stemming from Japan's extended economic malaise

---

[33] Mathews, <u>What Makes Life Worth Living?</u>, 17.
[34] Ibid., 18.
[35] Ibid., 22.
[36] Ibid., 22-24.
[37] Ibid.

from the 1990s, which has eroded much credibility from *ittaikan* ideals such as "living for the company" and "raising a family".[38]

For many of today's elderly Japanese, these *ittaikan* ideals now pose a contradiction to their current lives, in which they no longer find themselves in the roles of worker and caregiver.[39] Many of the karaoke regulars I spent time with talked about their excitement at being able to pursue their self-interests now that they were freed from work and family duties, though they lamented being separated from the family and colleagues they wished to spend more time with. The shift in social roles equally prompted a re-evaluation of their ideas of time. In discussing issues of *ikigai* with me, many regulars wondered how they could construct meaning in their everyday lives, not only in the face of impending mortality, but also without the long-term direction that *ittaikan* with the workplace and family provided. Yet, participants, such as Ogi at Chou, said, "just waking up every day, and meeting each other here to see that we're all still alive and going strong, that makes me very happy."[40]

In his research into Japanese elderly lifestyles, John Traphagan (2004) provides a different interpretation of the relationship between *jiko jitsugen* and *ittaikan* (or what he calls self and community respectively) in the conceptualization of *ikigai*. Traphagan notes that elderly health and well-being in Japanese society is thought of as both individually- and socially-derived, and that pursuing *ikigai* is the basic theme around which activities that promote good health and well-being are organized.[41] He also notes how many such *ikigai*-pursuing activities are organized into groups of people with

---

[38] Mathews, "Finding and Keeping a Purpose in Life", 171-2.

[39] Ibid., 172.

[40] The regulars did not use the terms *jiko jitsugen* and *ittaikan* themselves, when talking about their experiences at the karaoke venues. However, over the course of my ethnographic research I realized that their activities and anecdotes, which I analyze in detail in the following chapters, could be seen as attempts to attain a sense of well-being and *ikigai* broadly categorized into the two categories.

[41] John W. Traphagan, <u>The Practice of Concern: Ritual, Well-Being, and Aging in Rural Japan</u> (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2004), 68.

similar interests, such as classes and sports clubs.[42] As such, having an *ikigai* is both an individual pursuit of personal growth and well-being, and also a commitment to these groups; indeed, "personal growth is often conceptualized as being the root of community development and improvement".[43] This potential is not lost on the Japanese state, which invokes the concept of *ikigai* as the responsibility of older Japanese to both themselves and their families, communities and society at large to promote greater elderly activity and social involvement.[44] However, Traphagan argues that this way of conceptualizing elderly *ikigai*, and the biology and sociality of health and well-being in general, stems from socially-derived ideas about the ideal older Japanese person (*rōjin*) as one who makes the greatest effort, and is still able to maintain his or her social connections and utility.[45] In essence, *ikigai* can be understood as encapsulating both individual and social elements and objectives that are aligned with each other; the pursuit of *ikigai* enables the attainment of both *jiko jitsugen* and *ittaikan* ideals because individual well-being is seen as being situated within a socially-situated understanding of the self.[46]

It is clear that the activity and content of what these elderly karaoke enthusiasts envisioned as elderly *ikigai* had differed considerably from when they were younger. However, the issues of what kinds of notions of the self and society they now held, and what roles *jiko jitsugen* and *ittaikan* held in their ideas of a healthy and fulfilling life, remain more opaque: while Mathews argues that there is still great tension today between the expectations of *ittaikan* for many Japanese institutions and private desires for *jiko jitsugen*, Traphagan considers both components to be aligned with each other

---

42 Ibid., 69.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., 67-68, 70-71, 76.
45 Ibid., 66,
46 Ibid., 72.

within the socially situated conceptualization of the elderly Japanese self.[47] In this thesis, with a critical eye on both Mathews and Traphagan's theoretical perspectives and keeping in mind the life histories of the elderly karaoke regulars I spent time with, I examine how the karaoke enthusiasts addressed on a day-to-day level their conceptualizations of the ideals of *jiko jitsugen* and *ittaikan*, as they used communal musical participation to construct and maintain *ikigai* and well-being in old age.

Ikigai and well-being through music

But why did the elderly regulars choose karaoke as an activity through which to attain a sense of *ikigai* and well-being? I argue that for them karaoke was not merely an act of aesthetic appreciation, but that it also provided opportunities for participants to maintain and even create new individual and social identities for themselves. Crucial to understanding karaoke participation in this manner is the perspective on music championed by Christopher Small (1998) known as "musicking". He defines musicking as:

> To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by…composing, or by dancing. We might at times even extend its meaning to what the person is doing who takes the tickets at the door or the hefty men who shift the piano and the drums or the roadies who set up the instruments and carry out the sound checks or the cleaners who clean up after everyone else has gone. They, too, are all contributing to the nature of the event that is a musical performance.[48]

---

[47] Mathews, "Finding and Keeping a Purpose in Life", 171.

[48] Christopher Small, Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 9.

By looking at the myriad activities that contribute to musical practice, even the work of cleaners and movers often seen as too peripheral for consideration in orthodox musicology, Small's conceptualization of music as a verb, through the term "musicking", brings to the fore the processes and actions that make up the work of musical engagement. Through processes and actions, musical meanings and relationships are constructed:

> The act of musicking establishes in the place where it is happening a set of relationships, and it is in those relationships that the meaning of the act lies. They are to be found not only between those organized sounds which are conventionally thought of as being the stuff of musical meaning but also between the people who are taking part, in whatever capacity, in the performance; and they model, or stand as metaphor for, ideal relationships as the participants in the performance imagine them to be: relationships between person and person, between individual and society, between humanity and the natural world and even perhaps the supernatural world.[49]

In other words, musical meaning carries both aesthetic and social elements, which are intertwined in complex ways to express values and ideals, which bring people together or distance them from each other. Small's view is reflected in other studies dealing with issues of meaning-making in engaging with popular music, which question "how to relate cultural judgments to material conditions (by reference to specific experiences, discourses, skills and knowledge)."[50] These studies have attempted to answer this question through ethnographic research. Some scholars, such as Pierre

---

[49] Ibid., 13.

[50] Simon Frith, Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 19. Brackets in original.

Bourdieu (1984) and Keith Negus (1996), provide functional explanations of how various social factors rationally affect how people produce and consume music.[51] In the case of karaoke, I particularly focus on three factors: age, class and gender. As I explain later in Chapter 1, Japanese karaoke establishments can be separated into different categories with clear demographic boundaries in terms of these three attributes. Karaoke classes and *kissas* are visited almost exclusively by elderly Japanese with a working-class background, with classes being dominated by females especially. Meanwhile, there are other karaoke establishments such as *snack* bars, which are dominated by males, while the clientele at karaoke *boxes* is much younger, consisting of mostly teenagers and young adults in their twenties to forties. Scholars referring to Bourdieu's and Negus' ideas thus understand such choices of karaoke venues as functional expressions of social status, leading to the formation of "taste communities" based on shared cultural tastes.[52] They may also view these shared musical tastes as generating a kind of "virtual consociate" group. While David Plath (1980) defines "consociates" as the people we "relate with across time" and "in some degree of intimacy" over the life course, I add the term "virtual" to note how these consolidations based on musical tastes may not involve people who have lived, studied, grown up or worked together that more orthodox understandings of the "consociate" concept have described.[53] Nevertheless, these consolidations still engender considerable common identification and solidarity that form the foundations for lasting social bonds.

Other scholars, however, are wary of over-rationalizing musical judgments, and emphasizing only the social meanings of music as a result. For example, Simon Frith

---

[51] Pierre Bourdieu, <u>Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste</u> (Richard Nice trans.) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984); Keith Negus, <u>Popular Music in Theory: An Introduction</u> (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 65.

[52] Jose van Dijck, "Users Like You? Theorizing Agency in User-Generated Content", <u>Media Culture Society</u> 31(1) (2009), 41-58.

[53] David W. Plath, <u>Long Engagements: Maturity in Modern Japan</u> (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), 8.

(1996) argues that our understandings and feelings about music often also operate on an emotional level, outside of purely rational-functional understandings of musical engagement.[54] Picking up on Frith's ideas, Tia DeNora (2000) describes how music can act in both rational and non-rational manners, at an everyday level, to "influence how people compose their bodies, how they conduct themselves, how they experience the passage of time, how they feel – in terms of energy and emotion – about themselves, about others, and about situations."[55] Through descriptions provided by her research participants, DeNora narrates how music brings forth certain associated moods, feelings and narratives of the self, both rationally and at a "semi-conscious, non-rational level", because of its "temporal dimension", "non-verbal" and "non-depictive" nature, and "physical presence whose vibrations can be felt".[56]

Thomas Turino (2008) elaborates on the complex rational and non-rational processes that Frith and DeNora discuss vaguely. Turino draws upon Charles Peirce's (1955) ideas on semiotics as a theory of signs, which are things "perceived by an observer which stand for or call to mind something else and by doing so creates an effect in the observer."[57] Following Peirce's theory of semiotics, Turino locates musical meaning in three kinds of signs:[58]

> **1. Icon**: Musical signs are connected to meanings through resemblance. That is, the music "sounds like" what listeners feel at particular times or moods.[59] This resemblance is built upon the contextual knowledge of sounds and music based

---

54 Frith, Performing Rites, 72-73, 251-77.
55 Tia DeNora, Music in Everyday Life (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 17.
56 Ibid., 158-9.
57 Thomas Turino, Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 5.
58 Charles Sanders Peirce, Philosophical Writings of Peirce, Justus Buchler (ed.) (New York: Dover, 1955).
59 Turino, Music as Social Life, 7.

on listeners' personal history and experiences, allowing them to recognize musical pieces as resembling non-musical things and ideas.[60]

2. Index: Music is connected to meanings in terms of co-occurrence. "People connect musical signs with what it stands for by experiencing the sign and object together."[61] Again, indexical connections are dependent on listeners' past experiences.[62]

3. Symbol: Musical signs are connected to meanings by linguistic definition. These symbolic recognitions need to be socially agreed, if they are to operate as a basis for communication.[63]

For Turino, attributing meaning to music occurs at the level of "primary process", which brings together "images and ideas that 'rationally' we might not think belong together", and links the subconscious to the conscious.[64] Musical meaning is vivid and dynamic because of "semiotic chaining", the linking of different signs together in musical experience and understanding, which works as a primary process that does not differentiate between rationality and irrationality, or thought and emotion.[65] In this sense, although Turino bases his framework largely on a theoretical model premised on logical reasoning, as Peirce clearly espouses, he also suggests the presence of more non-rational affective processes at work.[66] To further this exploration

---

[60] Ibid., 7.
[61] Ibid., 8.
[62] Ibid., 9.
[63] Ibid., 10.
[64] Ibid., 3. See also Gregory Bateson, "Style, Grace, and Information in Primitive Art", Bateson (ed.), Steps to an Ecology of Mind (New York, NY: Ballantine, 1972), 128-52.
[65] Ibid., 11-12.
[66] Peirce Edition Project, "What is a Sign?", Peirce Edition Project (eds.), The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Volume 2 (1893-1913) (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 4-10.

of affective perspectives, I also engage with research that theorizes musical experience from such an approach, such as those conducted by Ian Biddle and Marie Thompson (2013).[67]

Turino argues that processes of understanding music help bring together different parts of the self and develop a sense of wholeness, creating optimal experiences, or what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) terms "flow".[68] Csikszentmihalyi defines flow as "the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it".[69] He lists seven components of flow experience:[70]

1. Sense of competence in activity

2. Merging of action and awareness in concentration

3. Clear goals and feedback

4. Deep, focused involvement in activity

5. Sense of exercising control, even if situation is not fully under control

6. Loss of self-consciousness, interpersonal connection

7. Transformation of sense of time

The definition and components of flow speak closely to the discourse of *ikigai* and well-being, through their focus on experience and a sense of fulfillment. This is no coincidence, as Csikszentmihalyi positions his research within calls for deeper research

---

[67] Ian Biddle & Marie Thompson, "Introduction: Somewhere Between the Signifying and the Sublime", Biddle & Thompson (eds.), <u>Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience</u> (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 1-24.

[68] Turino, <u>Music as Social Life</u>, 4-5.

[69] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, <u>Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience; Steps Toward Enhancing the Quality of Life</u> (New York: HarperPerennial, 1990), 3-4.

[70] Ibid., 49-67.

into the attainment of positive states of being, i.e. the "happiness turn".[71] Within the

framework of flow, "a good life is one characterized by complete absorption in what

one does", and levels of apathy and anxiety are low.[72] Related to the seven components

listed above, Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi note that there are two conditions that

underlie the flow experience. Firstly, participants must feel that they are engaging in

challenges appropriate to their capacities, and providing opportunities to stretch their

abilities. Secondly, they must have access to immediate feedback about their progress,

and clear information about their proximal goals.[73] Through the flow experience,

participants also expand their abilities and competency, which in turn informs a desire

for more complex challenges that provide suitable motivation and interest.[74] In this way,

participants are able to sustain their interests and flow experiences over a longer

duration, and maintain the kind of "good life" conceptualized by Csikszentmihalyi.

Although portrayed as a highly desirable state of being by scholars working in

the field of positive psychology, such as Csikszentmihalyi, flow is not easily attainable.

Mark Banks (2014) describes how the attainment of the state of flow (or being "in the

zone") and the outcomes of being in this state are rarely predictable, making it elusive

or contingent.[75] Indeed, in his study of workers in the cultural industries, he notes that

just as many people achieve feelings of being "in the zone" through their work, many

others do not.[76] Banks also critically points out that the ethical and political foundations

for encouraging the pursuit of flow may also be sometimes problematic, especially in

terms of being used as a discursive and practical tool to gear workers toward more

---

[71] Ibid., 15-16.

[72] Jeanne Nakamura and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "The Concept of Flow", Shane J. Lopez and C.R. Snyder (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 89.

[73] Ibid., 90.

[74] Ibid., 92.

[75] Mark Banks, "'Being in the Zone' of Cultural Work", Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research 6, (2014), 244.

[76] Ibid., 247-8.

extreme forms of work practices that endanger their personal and social well-being in the name of capitalist production.[77] In other words, understandings of the pursuit of flow should be situated within social, cultural and political contexts.

For Csikszentmihalyi, music is one important activity through which people can experience flow, in both individual and socially-situated environments, to facilitate their well-being.[78] In her study of children's music learning activities, Lori Custodero (2012) argues that music is attractive "because of its direct correspondences with body motion and vocal expression; its dynamism replicated in our experience of being moved *by* sound and being moved *to* create musical sounds ourselves".[79] The musical flow experience is one in such connections are made between the person and the music; "sound becomes embodied by the individual who interprets, and the body becomes the site for a new and intimate context for knowing".[80] Musical flow is also further intensified when the experience is shared with others.[81] However, as with Banks and Csikszentmihalyi, Custodero notes that musical flow is not automatically attained, but requires the conditions listed earlier in this section to be met. She also similarly agrees that the outcomes of such flow experiences are not predictable, as an essentially creative undertaking.[82]

In my research, I look at activities in karaoke classrooms and *kissas* as cases of musicking, involving both individual and social experiences, and both rational and non-rational understandings of music. In analyzing these activities, I examine how musical meaning is generated through the semiotic processes described by Turino and Peirce, or more affective processes as suggested by Thompson and Biddle. I also ask how karaoke

---

[77] Ibid., 247-51.

[78] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, <u>Flow</u>, 108-13.

[79] Lori A. Custodero, "The Call to Create: Flow Experience in Music Learning and Teaching", David Hargreaves, Dorothy Miell and Raymond MacDonald (eds.), <u>Musical Imaginations: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Creativity, Performance and Perception</u> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 382.

[80] Ibid., 371.

[81] Ibid., 372.

[82] Ibid., 372-3.

regulars seek to attain musical flow experienᑏes, involving musicking and meaning-generation processes, that engender a sense of *ikigai* and well-being. Although such studies of the role of popular music engagement in old age have been scarce, the two book-length publications on this topic, Andy Bennett's "Music, Style and Aging" (2012), and Koizumi Kyōko's "Memoryscape" (2013), have highlighted how elderly music participants incorporate musicking and meaning-generation activities, particularly around commonly preferred music genres and scenes, into the construction of individual and social identities and lifestyles.[83] I adopt a similar approach, and ask how regular karaoke participation at karaoke classes and *kissas*, centered on the pursuit of musical flow experiences through singing the genres of *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, contribute to the construction of identities and lifestyles in old age, through both rational and non-rational understandings of music and singing. I conduct this investigation while situating the regulars' activities within the social, cultural and political contexts of participation at karaoke classes and *kissas*, as per Banks' argument. I am also interested in testing the validity of the hypothesis about the relationship between people and music made by Csikszentmihalyi, Turino, Biddle & Thompson and Custodero, in the case of older music enthusiasts.

Serious leisure as a path to *ikigai* and well-being

To understand the place that regular karaoke participation occupies in Japanese elderly lifestyles and identities, it is important to categorize karaoke activities socially as a form of leisure. I locate karaoke participation in such a social frame, because regular visitors frequently used the words "fun", "satisfying" and "fulfilling" when explaining why they sang karaoke regularly. They also talked about "wanting" to come to the karaoke

---

[83]   Andy Bennett, <u>Music, Style, and Aging: Growing Old Disgracefully?</u> (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2012); Koizumi Kyōko, <u>*Memoriisukēpu: "Ano Koro" wo Yobiokosu Ongaku*</u> <u>(Memoryscape: Music that Calls Forth "Those Days")</u> (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobo, 2013).

establishments, mostly by their own accord, to "fill up the time". These explanations

reflect the theoretical framework of leisure proposed by Robert Stebbins (2007). He

defines leisure in the following manner:

> Uncoerced, contextually-framed activity engaged in during free time, which
>
> people want to do and, in either a satisfying or fulfilling way (or both), use their
>
> abilities and resources to succeed at this. 'Free time' is time away from
>
> unpleasant obligation, with pleasant obligation being treated here as essentially
>
> leisure since *homo otiosus*, leisure man, feels no significant coercion to enact the
>
> activity in question.[84]

As an important component of his framework of leisure, Stebbins introduces the

concept of serious leisure as follows:

> [the] systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity
>
> sufficiently substantial, interesting and fulfilling in nature for the participant to
>
> find a career there acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills,
>
> knowledge, and experience.[85]

Stebbins separates "serious" from "casual" leisure, which lacks the sense of

perseverance, effort and continued engagement (career) described above, and does not

provide a long-term sense of fulfillment and direction in its focus on immediate

gratification.[86] Serious leisure is a highly relevant concept here, as by the time of my

fieldwork, participants in these classes and *kissas* had generally engaged in karaoke

---

[84] Stebbins, Serious Leisure, 4. Brackets in original.
[85] Ibid., xx. Brackets and final stop mine.
[86] Ibid., 5.

regularly for many years, to varying levels of formal organization, and developed

lifestyles that incorporated the unique social networks and personal identities on which

such activities were based. Many of them describe their engagement with karaoke over

time as a course through which they progressively increased their involvement, or what

Stebbins terms a "leisure career" that is characteristic of serious leisure engagement.[87]

Serious leisure has also been previously used by Leng Leng Thang (2006) to investigate

elderly karaoke singing in Singapore, and is thus appropriate as a conceptual tool to

understand my research participants' karaoke engagements and motivations.[88]

In Stebbins' approach to researching leisure, particularly in its serious form, he

is interested in detailing the actual actions and steps that make up leisurely engagements,

primarily through ethnographic research.[89] Here, he situates his framework of leisure as

a response to the gaping lack of research that takes leisure as a serious object of inquiry,

even by British sociologists who are more interested in explaining leisure activities

generically as reproductions of socioeconomic inequalities, and American psychologists

who miss out on sociocultural conditions of leisure activities in their empiricist

assumptions.[90] However, Stebbins' framework of understanding leisure does not stop at

the mere description of the leisure experience. Through ethnography and its "thick

description", Stebbins also seeks to look at "the social, cultural, and historical context of

that experience", and how leisure activities "serve individuals, categories of individuals

(e.g. sex, age, social class…), and their larger communities and societies".[91] I find

Stebbins' framework to be highly useful in explaining both individual and social aspects

---

[87] Ibid., 19.

[88] Leng Leng Thang, "Singing to More Good Years: Karaoke as Serious Leisure for Older Persons in Singapore", Indian Journal of Gerontology 20(1&2) (2006), 67-80.

[89] Stebbins, Serious Leisure, 25-36.

[90] Ibid., xx-xxi. For a summarized discussion of this gap in leisure studies, see Fred Coalter (1997), "Leisure Sciences and Leisure Studies: Different Concepts, Same Crisis?", Leisure Sciences 19 (1997), 255-68.

[91] Stebbins, Serious Leisure, 2. Brackets in original.

of leisure experience, and for understanding elderly karaoke participation holistically, as part of the regulars' lifestyles.

The karaoke activities at these venues can be described as the amateur performance of songs within Stebbins' typology of different kinds of serious leisure in his definition.[92] Situating karaoke participation as amateur serious leisure in such a way highlights two important aspects of such performance that Miyairi Kyōhei (2015) has also observed in Japanese amateur music participation: one, that performers are not paid unlike their professional counterparts; and two, that they nevertheless possess degrees of skill, knowledge and/or experience above those of novices.[93] Within such amateur participation, however, there are still some differences in terms of how these regular participants engage in karaoke singing seriously. One major difference deals with the tension between the desires to be entertained and to learn, in achieving a fulfilling karaoke experience. Some regulars paid more attention to the former, and emphasized the sensations of having fun during their karaoke sessions. In my research, these regulars were mostly found at the karaoke *kissas*, and in many cases, their enjoyment also involved the consumption of alcohol to "lighten their spirits". On the other hand, other regulars approached karaoke seriously more as a learning journey, and sought enjoyment through the process of becoming a better singer. Many of these regular singers, although not all, eventually joined a karaoke class to receive structured guidance. These two approaches towards serious karaoke leisure were not mutually exclusive: karaoke *kissa* regulars often talked about trying to "improve" their rendition of a song, while karaoke class students also expressed how their wish to have fun during classes. However, by conceptually classifying the different approaches towards amateur

---

[92] Ibid., 5-8. The other kinds of serious leisure activities he discusses are hobbies and career volunteering.

[93] Ibid., 6-7; Miyairi Kyōhei, "*Hajimeni*" (Introduction), Miyairi Kyōhei (ed.), <u>*Happyōkai Bunkaron (The Cultural Theory of Recitals)*</u> (Tokyo: Seikyusha, 2015), 9-15.

karaoke leisure, we can start to identify different kinds of actions that different regulars took towards achieving fulfilling experiences.

Looking deeper into the "interrelated actions or steps that must be followed in order to achieve an outcome or product that the participant finds attractive" in leisure pursuits such as amateur karaoke singing, Stebbins identifies "core activities", which are those actions and steps taken to accomplish what is considered to be the main outcome of the leisure activity; in karaoke, for example, singing is the core activity.[94] In his framework, Stebbins generally focuses on the pursuits of core activities to explain serious leisure engagement. However, in my research I also pay attention to the ways in which associated (as opposed to core) activities in karaoke, such as drinking and chatting, contribute to creating desirable outcomes and experiences at the classes and *kissas.* During many of my visits to these places, these associated activities often overshadowed the core activity; regulars would talk and drink for long periods of time without actually singing. These associated activities, part of Small's (1998) musicking described in the previous section, often revealed more about the individual and social aspects of karaoke experience, and participants' motivations for regularly coming, than the actual singing. In this way, the musicking perspective promises to widen understandings of leisure experience produced through Stebbins' framework.

Through the pursuit of serious leisure, Stebbins describes the attainment of fulfillment, which is "a set of chronological experiences leading to development to the fullest of a person's gifts.., character, ...[and] full potential".[95] I prefer this term over "satisfaction" or "enjoyment", in denoting a continued long-term endeavor that offers more than temporary gratification.[96] Again, these ideas of fulfillment are in conversation with the discourse of well-being and *ikigai*. While Stebbins' description

---

[94]   Stebbins, <u>Serious Leisure</u>, 1-2.
[95]   Stebbins, <u>Serious Leisure</u>, 23. Brackets mine.
[96]   Ibid., 40.

28

seems to be more concerned with the self-actualization of *jiko jitsugen*, I also look at how fulfillment may be attained in terms of the sociality of *ittaikan*, particularly since Stebbins investigates social aspects of leisure experience in his own research as well. Furthermore, Stebbins, is interested in how serious leisure can generate flow experiences, similarly to Turino's interest in musical flow. For example, he highlights the importance of the kind of perseverance, effort and commitment in attaining certain aspects of flow in serious leisure activities, such as a sense of competence, heightened awareness and experience, and interpersonal connections.[97] Often, participants develop a more serious commitment to particular leisure activities in order to achieve these enjoyable and fulfilling flow experiences. Thus, Stebbins' framework of leisure is also an attempt at "positive sociology", to study "what people do to organize their lives such that those lives become, in combination, substantially rewarding, satisfying, and fulfilling".[98] The positioning of leisure research in such language harks back to Turino's, Csikszentmihalyi's, and Mathews' works described in earlier sections, revealing a common interest in the "happiness turn" and its calls for research on the attainment of "positive" states of being across different disciplines. In my research, I thus approach regular karaoke participation as a kind of serious leisure that provides opportunities for attaining fulfillment, well-being, and *ikigai* in old age, and draw on some of Stebbins' concepts to inform my analysis of regular karaoke participation at classes and *kissas*.

Research methodology and selection of karaoke venues

Although incorporating perspectives from wide-ranging disciplines such as positive psychology and leisure studies, I situate this thesis as primarily an ethnomusicological study, in the broad sense that it is ultimately concerned with the question of how

---

[97] Ibid., 16-17.
[98] Ibid., xv.

musical engagement figures as a part of human experience.[99] Ruth Stone (2016) notes

that ethnography, typically involving immersed fieldwork consisting of face-to-face

observation and participation in musical activities, forms a crucial research method in

ethnomusicological research.[100] This approach of prioritizing in-depth ethnographic

field research to gather research data is also shared by many of the scholars working on

issues of aging, popular music and leisure introduced so far in the previous sections,

who have emphasized the importance of building knowledge through close observations

and understandings of actual lived experiences. Additionally, participant-observation

has also been regularly employed in ethnomusicological studies of Japan published in

both English and Japanese, such as by Christine Yano (2002), Ian Condry (2006),

Jennifer Matsue (2008), Koizumi Kyōko (2013), and Noriko Manabe (2016), to name

but a few examples.[101]

Accordingly, I have also chosen to primarily employ ethnographic research

methods for this study, and I conducted my field research at karaoke classes and *kissas*.

These karaoke establishments provided the easiest way to study music engagements

involving *enka* and *kayōkyoku* within social settings, firstly because karaoke

participation is a major form of consumption for these genres, with many songs being

released with karaoke versions and marketed as "easy to sing" (*utaiyasui*), as well as the

frequent urging of listeners in promotional material to "try singing the songs" (*chōsen*

shitemitekudasai) at karaoke. Furthermore, as a predominantly social activity (despite

the recent phenomenon of *hitori-karaoke*, or "karaoke alone"), karaoke allows music

fans to partake in musical consumption and amateur performance within a communal

---

[99]   Ruth M. Stone, Theory for Ethnomusicology (Oxford & New York: Routledge, 2016), ix.
[100]   Ibid., 4-6, 12-13.
[101]   See Yano (2002); Koizumi (2013); Ian Condry, Hip-Hop Japan: Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalization (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Jennifer Milioto Matsue, Making Music in Japan's Underground: The Tokyo Hardcore Scene (Oxford & New York: Routledge, 2008); Noriko Manabe, The Revolution Will Not be Televised: Protest Music after Fukushima (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016).

setting. In fact, entire books on rules of karaoke conduct list taboos, such as monopolizing the microphone, and selecting the "wrong" songs. These books highlight the communal nature of karaoke participation by discussing socialization processes, including the regulation of behavior, that occur during karaoke.[102] One visible effect of the social nature of karaoke participation is the delineation of different kinds of karaoke venues along demographic lines, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. In choosing karaoke classes and *kissas*, I thus also made a conscious decision to study a lower middle-class group of urban elderly Japanese, instead of groups who visit other kinds of karaoke venues or participate in other leisure activities.

My main research activities included observing and participating in karaoke singing with elderly regular visitors, as a paying customer and student. I carried out these participant-observations over two main periods. Firstly, from April to July 2013, I visited the karaoke *kissa* Sachi, located in Asaka City, Saitama Prefecture once or twice a week. My second period of participant-observation was from February 2016 to January 2017. During this time, I was based for the most part in Osaka City, and frequented up to three times a week the karaoke *kissa* Ami, and the karaoke classroom cum *kissa* Chou. Both these karaoke venues are located in Sumiyoshi Ward, in the southern extremes of Osaka. I also made periodic trips back to Sachi during this period to follow up on my earlier observations. The length of each visit varied, but typically I spent anywhere from two to five hours at the venues, during both afternoon and evening operating hours.

---

[102] Maruyama Keizaburo, *Hito wa Naze Utau noka* (Why Do Humans Sing?) (Tokyo: Asuka-shinsha, 1991); Miyake Mitsuei, *Karaoke Kokoroe Chō: Karaoke Enka Bunkaron* (Lessons from Karaoke: Karaoke and Enka Culturalism) (Tokyo: Hakushoin, 2004); Ueno Naoki, *Karaoke wo Motto-motto Umaku Miseru Hon* (Book for Singing Karaoke Much Better) (Tokyo: KK Longsellers, 1993).
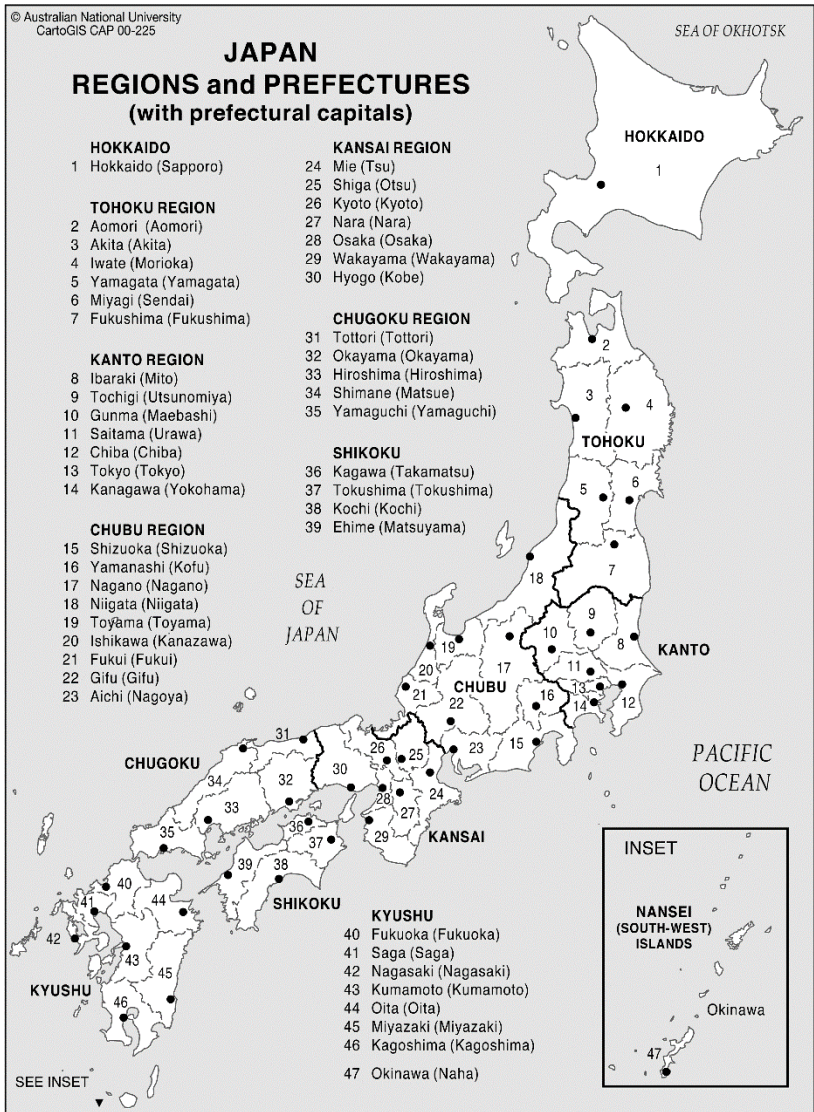
Figure 2: Map of Japan's regions and prefectures.[103]
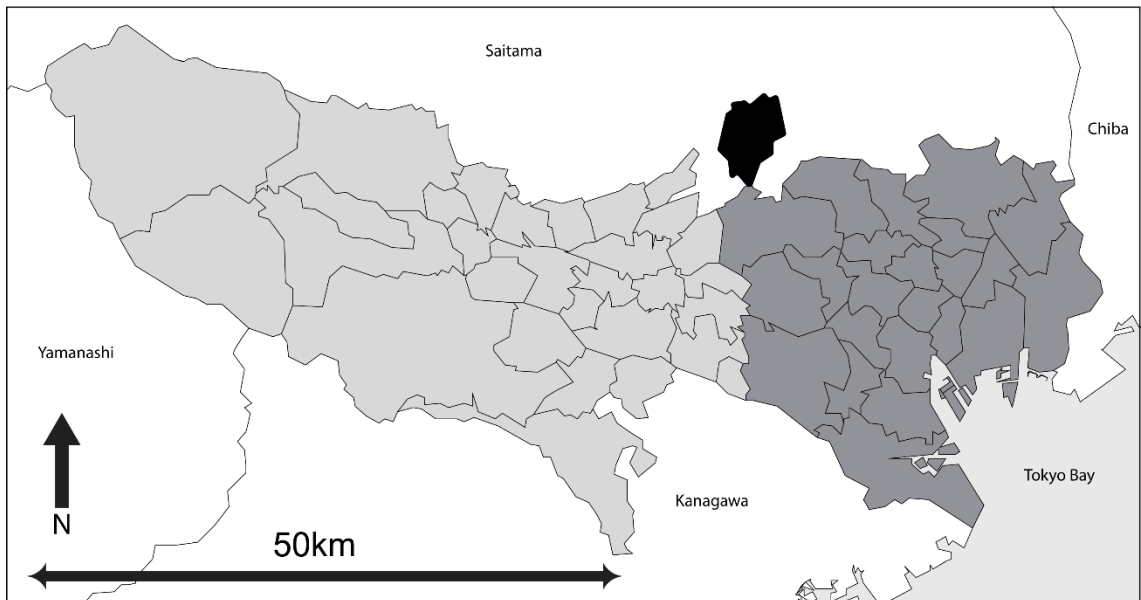
Figure 3: Map of Greater Tokyo region. Outlying municipalities in Tokyo Prefecture in light gray, the 23 central wards of Tokyo in dark gray, and Asaka City (Saitama Prefecture) in black.
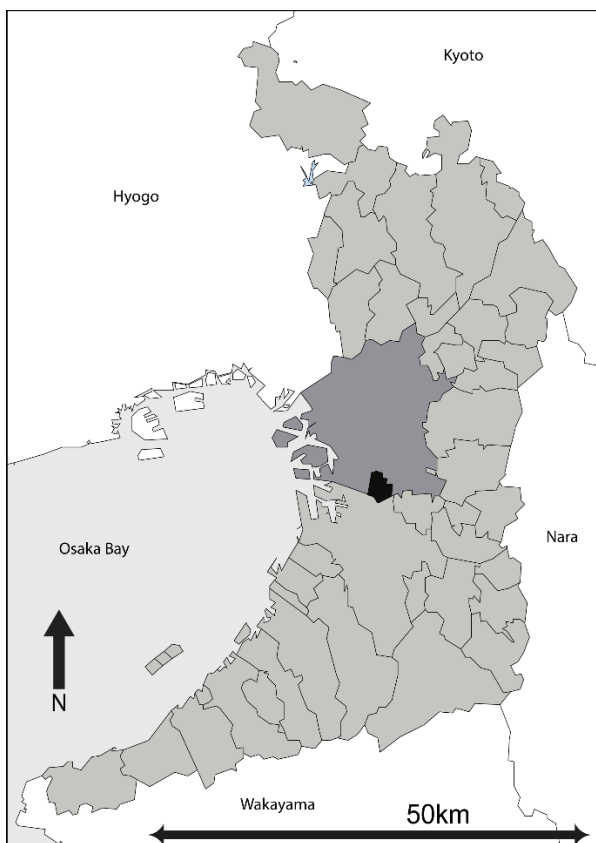
Figure 4: Map of Osaka region. Other municipalities of Osaka Prefecture in light gray, Osaka City in dark gray, and Sumiyoshi Ward in black.

As I will explain in Chapter 1, these karaoke venues draw the vast majority of their customers and students from surrounding neighborhoods. I selected these venues with an eye to comparing elderly karaoke experiences between the Kanto and Kansai regions, the two main cultural spheres within Japan. I was particularly interested in comparing venues from both the Kanto and Kansai regions, as I wanted to see if ideas of regionalism also factored heavily in how participants enjoyed regular karaoke sessions. For example, because many *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs refer to Japanese place names in their topic matter (such as for the female singer Mizumori Kaori), I wanted to find out if karaoke participants had a special preference for songs that dealt with their own locale. However, during my fieldwork I found that the song choices and conversations were rarely, if at all, dependent on such regional preferences, even if some songs did eventually evoke nostalgic memories of places in which participants grew up, or had visited before. Later in Chapter 1, I explain in further detail the abstract manner in which the idea of hometown, or *furusato*, was expressed in the *enka* and *kayōkyoku* sung at karaoke classrooms and *kissas*.

In fact, the areas where I conducted my fieldwork also share many similarities at the neighborhood level, which was another important consideration in my selection of field sites as I wanted to consider other social variables besides region. Firstly, the areas are considered largely working-class "bedtowns" (a Japanized English term for satellite cities), with lower prices for housing and other goods and services compared to more central areas in Tokyo and Osaka. These areas were mainly developed in the 1950s and 1960s to meet the influx of new migrants who took up jobs in a rapidly growing industrial sector; some karaoke participants recalled seeing more farmland when they

first moved into the area at the time. The areas now have around 30 to 40 percent of

residents above 65, which is above the national average of 27.8 percent.[104] Within this

age demographic of these neighborhoods, females outnumber males by roughly 25 to 30

percent.[105] Perhaps as a result of these demographic and social class conditions, the two

neighborhoods abound with karaoke classes and *kissas* providing musical entertainment

and drinks at prices affordable to residents.[106]

---
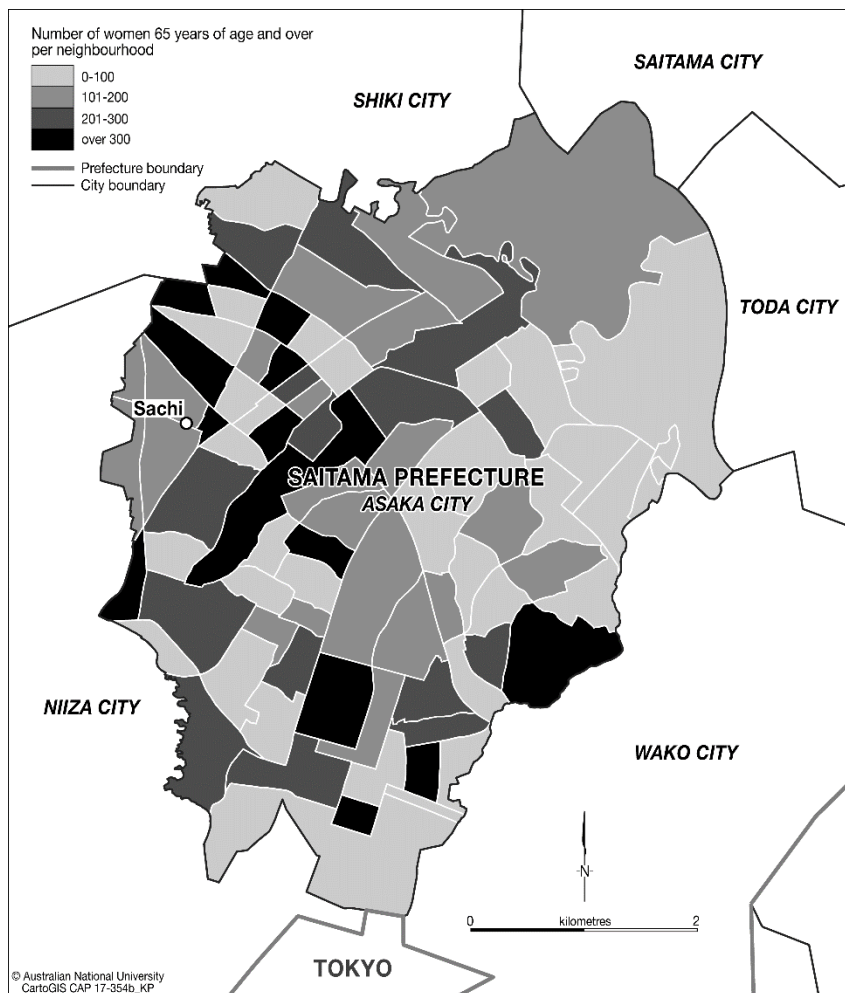
104   Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2015 Japan Census. GIS data at http://e-stat.go.jp/SG2/eStatFlex/. Accessed on 15 March 2017.
105   Ibid.
106   I discuss the costs of participating at karaoke classes and *kissas* in Chapter 1.

Figure 5: Population distribution of women above 65 years old in Asaka's

neighborhoods. Figures are population numbers drawn from the 2015 Japan Census.[107]
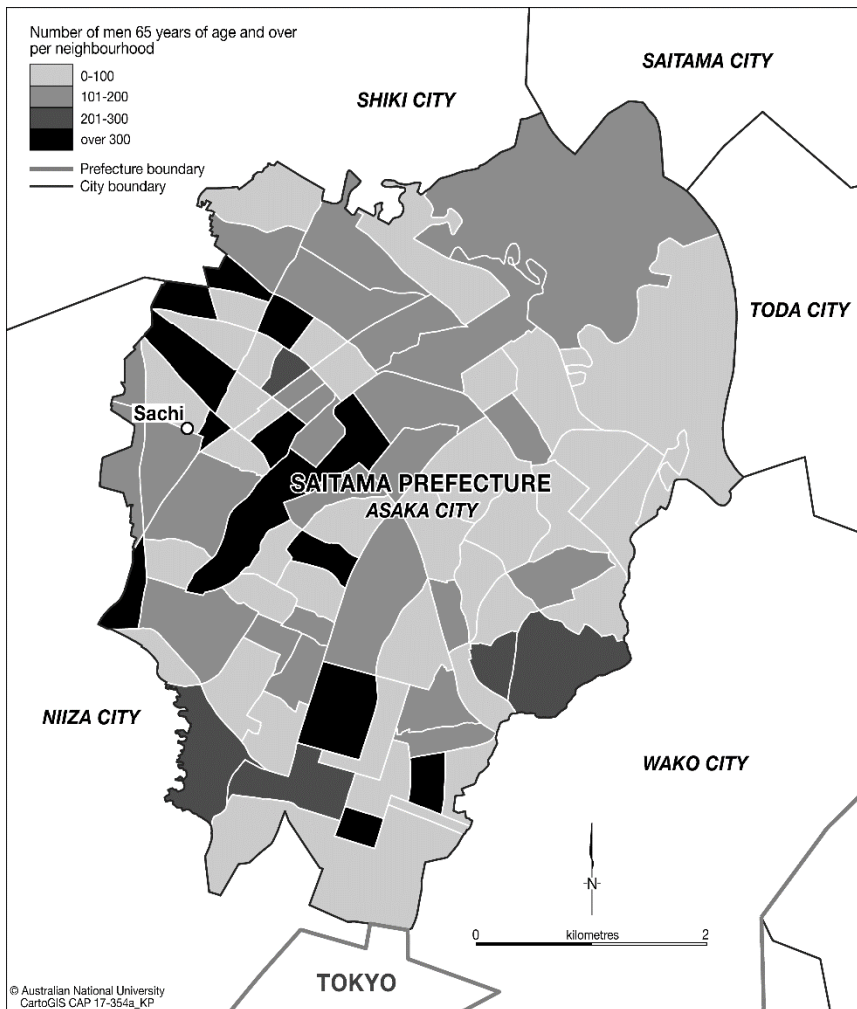
Figure 6: Population distribution of men above 65 years old in Asaka's neighborhoods.

Figures are population numbers drawn from the 2015 Japan Census.[108]

---

[107]   Map produced by CartoGIS Services, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National
University.
[108]   Ibid.

Figure 7: Population distribution of women above 65 years old in Sumiyoshi Ward's

neighborhoods. Figures are population numbers drawn from the 2015 Japan Census.[109]

---

[109] Ibid.
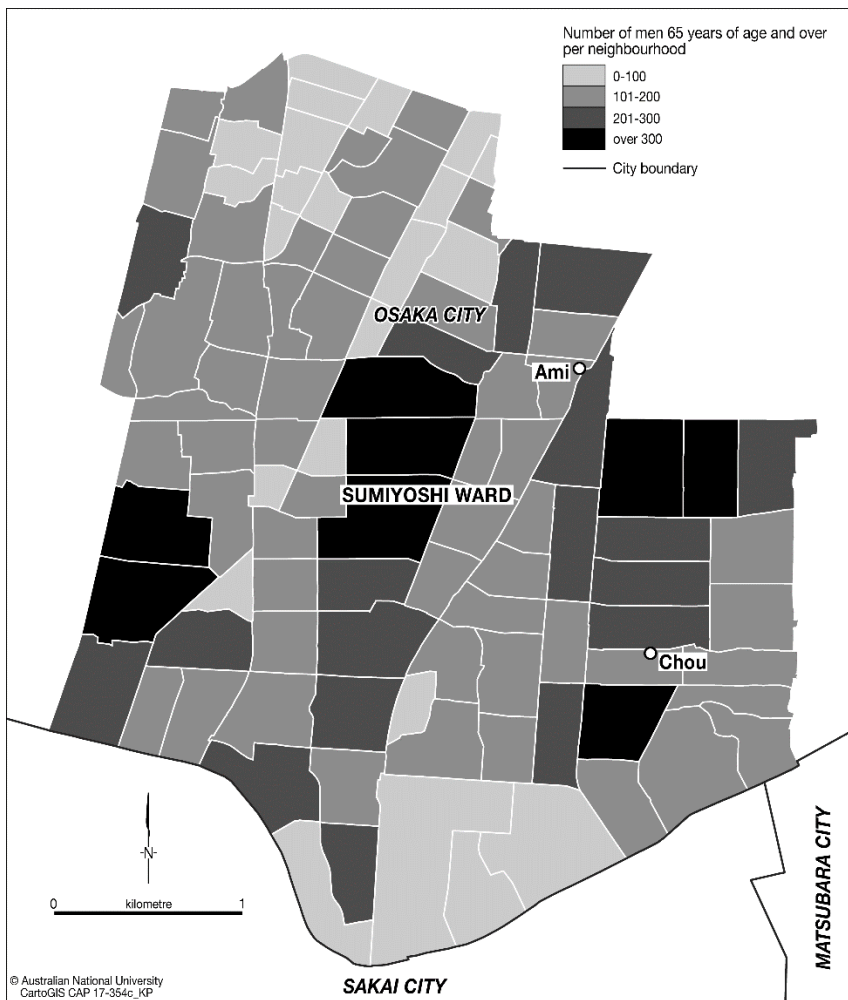
Figure 8: Population distribution of men above 65 years old in Sumiyoshi Ward's neighborhoods. Figures are population numbers drawn from the 2015 Japan Census.[110]

During my participant-observation of karaoke activities, conducted in standard Japanese at Sachi, and Kansai dialect at Ami and Chou, I noted song choices to identify which songs were most popular in each setting, and referred to the lyrical and compositional elements of these songs to identify possible aesthetic influences on karaoke activities. I observed actual performances of songs during karaoke sessions, and understood these physical acts of singing (the core activity of karaoke) as a crucial form of ethnographic data that needed to be considered in analyzing regular karaoke participation. I also paid attention to the conversations and behavior that we engaged in

---

[110]   Ibid.

between songs (the associated activities of karaoke), which often provided a wealth of information about motivations and attitudes towards both individual and social aspects of regularly visiting the karaoke venues. During this stage of my field research I spent time with approximately 50 participants, but the number of key participants across the three karaoke venues was closer to 20. To supplement my observations at the karaoke venues, I conducted individual and small-group interviews with these key participants, again in standard Japanese for regulars at Sachi, and Kansai dialect for regulars at Ami and Chou. These were loosely structured around the topics of song selections and preferences, behavior surrounding regular karaoke participation, and their life histories. These interviews lasted anywhere from two to four hours each, and were held either at the venues outside of operating hours, or at the homes of willing participants. My methods of collecting ethnographic data, which proved very fruitful in generating in-depth knowledge about participants' regular karaoke activities, would not have been possible without their kind permission to make audio and video recordings of our time together, so I would like to deeply thank them for their graciousness here.

Since almost everybody at Sachi, Ami and Chou were above 60, the age gap between the karaoke participants and myself was an important frame in which the fieldwork developed. Because I initially visited the karaoke classrooms and *kissas* without any prior introduction, the presence of a young male researcher took them by surprise at first. I had also never spent any extended period of time with older Japanese prior to my fieldwork, having grown up in Singapore and made friends with younger Japanese university students. Furthermore, my attraction to Japanese popular music and karaoke singing was through the genre of contemporary pop (or J-pop as it is widely known both inside and outside Japan), rather than the *enka* and *kayōkyoku* that the regulars at the three venues sang. I therefore characterize my early experiences within the karaoke venues as a series of cultural and generational transgressions, as my

biographical, cultural and academic background always stood in contrast to those of the other regular visitors in some way. These transgressions turned out to be a valuable methodological tool through which I was able to tease out the social, cultural and historical contexts of behavioral norms at the karaoke venues.[111]

Over time, I gradually established a rapport with the regular visitors, and many of them began to take me under their wing, offering numerous interesting anecdotes and comments. They all regarded me as a young apprentice, who was to be taught the social and cultural details of singing karaoke at classes and *kissas*. I happily settled into this new role, recognizing the centrality of learning experiences in generating anthropological knowledge through ethnographic accounts.[112] My ignorance of many of the sociocultural norms of karaoke classes and *kissas* was somewhat balanced by an ability to competently sing the *enka* and *kayōkyoku* genres that these participants shared such a preference for. This helped me endear myself to them as an earnest scholar of karaoke classes and *kissas*, and towards the end of the fieldwork periods they often insisted on paying for my share of drinks and songs.

Although I observed and participated in karaoke activities at the venues, in the ensuing analysis, I focus more on the description of their shared activities and mutual interactions, rather than inserting my own experiences and feelings into interpreting the elderly regulars' behavior and conversations. I believe that this is prudent, given the age, cultural and often gender differences between the karaoke participants and myself. While recognizing that my presence directly contributed to the situations that influenced how I interacted with other regulars, to analyze the karaoke activities, I rely more on

---

[111]   For a detailed discussion on such use of transgression as a research method, see Chris Jenks, Transgression (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 2.

[112]   For a theoretical discussion, see Mark P. Whitaker, "Ethnography as Learning: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Writing Ethnographic Accounts", Anthropological Quarterly 69(1) (1996), 1-13. Another example of approaching ethnographic/ethnomusicological research through the position of learner can be found in Kirin Narayan, Everyday Creativity: Singing Goddesses in the Himalayan Foothills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 5-12, 105-9.

comparing the activities at the classes and *kissas* with narratives and anecdotes about current and past lives provided in interviews, and with established sociocultural and aesthetic norms regarding the various issues relevant to their actions and words.

Structure of this thesis

In this introduction, I have pointed out the problematic understandings of Japanese elderly life based on a "medical gaze" that dominates popular discourse in Japan. I then proposed an alternative way of looking at elderly life more holistically, by building a theoretical and methodological model to understand how elderly Japanese, through serious leisure pursuits such as karaoke, attempt to attain well-being and *ikigai*. The upcoming chapters will analyze these karaoke engagements in the following manner.

In Chapter 1, I describe the socio-historical and musical context for the unique karaoke practices and demographic at karaoke classes and *kissas*. As these are essentially sites of consumption, I first explain how consumption, as an integral behavior in contemporary Japanese life, is a crucial conceptual tool to understand everyday Japanese society with more nuance. In particular, I highlight how aesthetics and desire are emphasized in Japanese consumption, and drive consumer choices to express identities of age, class and gender. I then use this understanding of Japanese consumption practices to describe the structural contexts of regular karaoke participation at Sachi, Ami and Chou. Firstly, I introduce the corpus of musical aesthetics in *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, the genres that regular visitors shared a preference for and sang almost exclusively. I then describe how these aesthetics were established in the shared longing and nostalgia for a "rural traditional past" developed during many enthusiasts' experiences of urban migration in the 1960s to early 1970s, Japan's period of industrial growth. The split in the music and karaoke consumer markets from this period, with various demographic groups separated by age and music taste, continues

today, making the study of karaoke consumption practices a fertile site to investigate

issues of age, class and gender. I conclude this chapter by pointing out the socio-

geographical characteristics of Sachi, Ami and Chou within such a structural context,

and briefly introducing the multi-faceted experiences of karaoke at these venues that

presented issues of age, class and gender from individual viewpoints.

I present the bulk of my ethnographic data and analysis in Chapters 2 to 4, and

organize these according to three different themes. Chapter 2 discusses the issue of

romantic feelings in old age, which the karaoke *kissas* in particular facilitated. During

my visits to Ami and Sachi, I saw on more than a few occasions how common

participation in karaoke singing at the *kissa* allowed opportunities for the elderly men

and women to flirt with each other, and even develop actual romantic relationships with

emotional and physical intimacy. Yet, many times the song choices were also nostalgic

for participants, as they provided opportunities to reminisce about loved ones who had

passed away. What do flirting and leading each other on reveal about the desire among

these karaoke participants, at this stage of life, for romantic affection, or for reaffirming

one's virility? What do they tell us about their family and social lives? How did karaoke

singing enable participants to remember late spouses and past romances, and fill in

times of loneliness? How did these different kinds of romantic experiences at karaoke

kissas lead to flow experiences, and a sense of well-being and *ikigai*?

Chapter 3 examines how many elderly karaoke participants approached their

singing as a lifelong learning activity, particularly in the case of the karaoke class.

Focusing on my participant-observation and interviews at Chou, I examine the teaching

curriculum and students' learning practices and motivations, particularly within the

wider context of the *narai-goto* "cultural classrooms" industry in Japan's urban areas,

which cater mostly to mature female students. Tracing their learning journey from

initially joining to performing on stage at the yearly class recital, I ask the following

questions: How did the bodily and sensory exercises during karaoke lessons provide opportunities for these elderly karaoke students to negotiate bodily, mental and sensorial images of life in old age? How did the karaoke classes provide sites for social connection with other students? How did these activities provide opportunities to build communal and individual identities, particularly outside of the family? How did learning and performing in the karaoke class help to achieve a sense of well-being and *ikigai*?

Chapter 4 takes a step back to address participants' preoccupation with **the organization of time** in singing karaoke regularly, which underpins the two themes of romance and learning. Sachi, Ami and Chou are places that were embedded in the mundane everyday routines in participants' elderly lives, but they also provided many experiences that were out of the ordinary. For example, many participants came to the *kissas* and classes at regular days and times of the week, and met each other according to these schedules. Recognizing that they did not have too long left to live, and wanting to "make good use of time", were crucial motivations in their regular karaoke participation as well. However, these karaoke venues also held special events from time to time. As a most spectacular example besides the class recital, sometimes professional *enka* and *kayōkyoku* singers were invited to promote their latest releases at *kissas* and classes, by performing intimate and participative mini-concerts known as "campaign events".[113] The intersection of the everyday and the extraordinary raises some interesting questions about elderly karaoke participation: How did the participants think about their physical and mental health conditions through their activities and chatter at these karaoke venues? How did these karaoke participants construct a sense of time in elderly life through going to the karaoke classes and *kissas*, discussing songs, and

---

[113] The karaoke participants and professional singers referred to these as "*kyanpein ibento*" ("campaign event" pronounced in Japanese phonetics) in their everyday speech.

gossiping about everyday lives outside of karaoke venues? How did these mundane and extraordinary experiences provide opportunities for the building of social connections between participants? How did they help regular participants attain a temporal sense of *ikigai* and well-being?

I conclude this thesis by using the points gathered from Chapters 2 to 4 to address the three central research questions about musical choice, motivations for participating, and living practices toward achieving well-being and *ikigai*. In doing so, I offer an alternative framework, based on an empirical understanding of actual musicking practices, to understand the musical meanings generated through karaoke singing of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs. I also provoke a greater rethinking of old age and growing old in urban Japan. Instead of understanding this stage of life as a crisis to be resolved, I hope that my grounded account can highlight the liveliness that these elderly karaoke participants exhibited in making the best out of their everyday lives, and provide a different model of aging not just for their elderly Japanese peers, but also for younger generations and older people in other cultures.

Chapter 1: We Sing *Enka* and *Kayōkyoku* Here

Before embarking on fieldwork in March 2013, I was under the impression that karaoke classrooms and *kissas* were two of the very few spaces where *enka* could still be heard in a public setting. I immediately searched for these establishments upon arriving in Asaka City, a suburban city in Saitama Prefecture that serves as a bedtown for central Tokyo. Walking around a few neighborhoods, I eventually settled on the *kissa* Sachi as my regular haunt. With its bright green canopy, and opening hours prominently written beside its entrance, Sachi seemed the most inviting of the numerous karaoke *kissas* and classrooms in the area. Nevertheless, standing on the street outside, the silence and inability to look inside unnerved me (see Figure 2). Having previously only frequented what are known as karaoke *box* establishments, I had always imagined karaoke venues to welcome potential customers outside with bright lights and a cacophony of the latest Japanese pop (J-pop) songs. I was clearly out of my comfort zone. I spent a few minutes pacing around the entrance to gather courage, before finally pushing open a set of double-layered doors to enter.[114]

---

[114] Double-layered doors are a common soundproofing feature of karaoke classrooms and *kissas*. I discuss the typical layout of a karaoke *kissa* later in this chapter.

Figure 9: Facade of Sachi. The actual name of the establishment has been blocked out for privacy reasons.

To the great surprise of the other customers, who all seemed to be in their later years, I greeted the petite lady overseeing operations from behind the bar counter. She welcomed me with a call of "*irasshai*" ("welcome"), and ushered me to a counter seat with a friendly smile. She was the proprietress, often referred to as the *mamasan* in Japanese drinking culture. To the other customers here, however, she was simply Mama; the dropping of the honorific -*san* showed the great familiarity that customers had with her and Sachi.

As I settled into my seat, Mama slid the remote control for the karaoke machine across to me. I felt the other patrons' gaze zoom in on me. "What will he sing for us? This will be interesting!" a lady called Tomo said with a smile. They wondered how a young man like me would participate in their decidedly mature activity and community. Would I try to fit in? Or would I play by my own rules? Visiting Sachi for the first time, my karaoke performance served as a crucial introduction, one that could earn me an important degree of social acceptance within the *kissa*.

46

Browsing through the karaoke machine's song request history on the remote control, I noticed the elderly patrons' preference for *enka* songs. I decided to try to endear myself by first performing the classic *enka* hits of the 1960s to 1980s, choosing songs such as Koyanagi Rumiko's "*Watashi no Jōkamachi*" (My Castle Town) (1971), Atsumi Jiro's "*Yumeoizake*" (Dream-chaser Wine) (1978) and Sen Masao's "*Kitaguni no Haru*" (Spring in the North) (1977). The other customers' enthusiastic applause after every verse was very reassuring, and suggested they particularly enjoyed witnessing this outsider singing "their" songs.

"You really know how to sing these oldies, even though you're young!" Miya, a portly old man who was sitting next to me, said.

"It's great that you come here to sing these songs with us. Our kids would never be able to do so!" Akiko (55) and Mura (67) exclaimed with joy.

The patrons seemed genuinely and pleasantly surprised that a young person could pull off these "oldies" with a reasonable amount of conviction. For them, the karaoke *kissa* was very much a musical venue where only older people sang these songs.

Armed with this prior fieldwork experience, I returned to Japan in February 2016 for another round of fieldwork, this time in Sumiyoshi Ward in Osaka City. I had selected this area because of its similar status to Asaka as a working-class bedtown for the city center, and wanted to see if there were any regional differences in the *enka* karaoke experiences at classrooms and *kissas* between the Tokyo/Kanto and Osaka/Kansai regions. Scouting the area as I had done in Asaka, I decided on the *kissa* Ami and the classroom cum *kissa* Chou as my fieldsites. Entering Ami and Chou for the first time was still unnerving, but my previous fieldwork stint had provided me some assurance that I might be able to get along well with the regular customers there.

Inside Ami and Chou, my confidence quickly grew, when I again introduced myself to other customers by singing the above-mentioned *enka* classics, and my performances were well received. Having briefly mentioned that I was a graduate student, Sensei (64), the proprietress of Chou, inquired about my "musical research."

"Well, I've been researching about how people like you and everybody here enjoy *enka* through karaoke, and I want to understand how that relates to the image of national tradition that the genre has. That's one reason I came in, to get to know a karaoke place where *enka* was sung," I replied, referencing the research proposal I had recently presented to colleagues back in Australia.

"We don't just sing *enka,* you know. We also sing a lot of other songs, like *kayōkyoku* and *mood kayō*," Sensei replied in a matter-of-fact tone.

Sensei's reply startled me. My central interest in the research had been about issues of musical ideology, and driven by how consumption practices absorbed and reinforced notions of national tradition in *enka*. However, I had glaringly misunderstood how the participants categorized and labeled the "oldies" they sang, and what their motivations were in singing karaoke regularly. This was a crucial problem for my research project, because if I wanted to continue investigating these karaoke practices, I had to switch my focus from issues of tradition to explaining the aspects of their engagement with karaoke that these participants experienced more immediately. Indeed, subsequent interviews with the karaoke participants at Sachi, Ami and Chou confirmed my thoughts, as many of them struggled to answer questions about understanding *enka* as national tradition, or even see the point of such questions. Eventually, I decided to investigate the kinds of individual and social concerns about karaoke participation that these regulars held instead.

To be sure, while Sensei and other participants at the three karaoke venues maintained that they did not only sing *enka,* the genres of popular music that they sang was still greatly limited:

"Why don't young people come here? Because we sing *enka* and *enka pops* (*kayōkyoku*) only. Sometimes when young people come in and sing their 'young' songs, I tell them that this is the wrong place to do so." (Sensei)

"When nobody else is here, I sing Western classics like 'My Way' and 'I Left My Heart in San Francisco' in English. But when other customers are here, I always make sure to fit into their song choices…and sing the (orthodox) *do-enka* songs. I don't want to cause any discomfort to others while I'm here." (Shima, 76)[115]

My introductions at the karaoke venues, and Sensei's and Shima's comments, suggest that karaoke participation in Japan highlights markers of social and musical difference. Why did karaoke classrooms and *kissas* attract customers of a certain social group, who preferred only *enka* and *kayōkyoku*? How did these demographic and musical characteristics contribute to the socio-musical environment of the classroom and *kissa*, and in turn to the kinds of well-being and *ikigai* that regulars attained out of frequent participation at classrooms and *kissas*?

This chapter addresses the above questions, by introducing the socio-cultural conditions that heavily influence the consumption and experience of music at karaoke classrooms and *kissas* like Sachi, Ami and Chou. I first explain the integral role of

---

[115] Shima was a regular customer at Ami who was quite well off compared to other regulars. In Chapter 4, I discuss her life history and social class status in greater detail, to explain the effects of social differentiation that serious leisure activities can engender.

consumption practices, such as karaoke, as a way to express social identity and difference in everyday life in urban Japan. I then introduce the aesthetics of the "oldie" genres of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* to discuss the images of individuals and social relationships that are presented, and identify these genres' popularity within a working-class elderly demographic who came of age in the late 1960s to 1970s. I explain this popularity in parallel to the development of different types of karaoke venues in Japan catering to various demographic groups from the 1970s, and highlight the common fracturing of these music and karaoke consumption markets to show why karaoke is a good case study to examine elderly lives. Finally, I describe the socio-geographical characteristics of Sachi, Ami and Chou within such a structural context, as well as the kinds of multi-faceted experiences that karaoke participants enjoyed, which illuminated specific issues of age, class and gender based on their individual perspectives.

Expressing social difference through everyday consumption in Japan

Karaoke at classrooms and *kissas* is, in essence, a commercial activity. At Chou, Sensei provides karaoke lessons for a monthly fee, in addition to other costs for curriculum material and preparations for recital and competition appearances, and the karaoke *kissas* typically have a cover charge for snacks, songs and a drink, with subsequent alcoholic drinks costing extra (I explain these costs in greater detail later in this chapter, and in Chapter 3). As such, an analysis of karaoke participation at these venues needs to be framed within the activity of consumption in Japan, and consider how it affects individual and social experiences of singing. Indeed, noting that much of leisure is commercialized in today's consumer society, Robert Stebbins emphasizes the

importance of understanding leisure practices that are based upon the act of consumption.[116]

One of the major proponents of studying Japanese society and culture through consumption is the sociologist John Clammer. In "Contemporary Urban Japan" (1997), Clammer justifies this approach by first noting the urban dominance of contemporary Japanese culture, particularly that centered in the megalopolises of Tokyo and Osaka.[117] He also notes that in this cultural system,

> Everyday life…is in practice very much taken up with economics —the micro-economics of consumption decisions, shopping patterns, thinking about food not only in terms of nutrition but also in terms of affordability, its effect on one's figure and as an expression of lifestyle. Many of the patterns of everyday life are to be understood as dominated by consumption. Saving…participation in…part-time work, spatial movement and the use of time…are all aspects of this. So too of course are leisure activities and in many cases networks of friendships…[118]

Clammer thus argues that everyday mass consumption has an integral role in daily routines, social relationships, bodily images and constructing meaning.[119] He notes that this kind of consumption developed from the 1960s amid increasing overall wealth, representing "the origin of a culture based increasingly on desire rather than need, one in which signs rather than just economic/materialist forces are dominant".[120] For

---

[116] Robert A. Stebbins, <u>Leisure and Consumption: Common Ground/Separate Worlds</u> (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 7. See also Chas Critcher, "A Touch of Class", Chris Rojek, Susan M. Shaw and A.J. Veal (eds.), <u>A Handbook of Leisure Studies</u> (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 281.

[117] John Clammer, <u>Contemporary Urban Japan</u> (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 7.

[118] Ibid., 3-4.

[119] Ibid., 24.

[120] Ibid., 9.

Clammer, understanding mass consumption in Japan thus necessitates a focus on two issues largely unexplored in sociological research in the 1990s: aesthetics and desire. Clammer argues that Japanese everyday life is highly aestheticized, and strongly concerned with appearances and the presentation of the self in a highly self-conscious culture, as seen in the concept of *honne/tatemae* (inner thoughts/outward expressions).[121] This culminates in the many Japanese consumer trends marketed as representing a certain lifestyle by the media.[122] These trends, largely created by marketing agencies and media adept at using the languages of emotions and sensations to create desirable images, have the effect of segregating Japanese society into a large number of *zoku,* or tribes. These *zoku* coalesce into "imagined communities" of common cultural tastes and lifestyles, which Clammer argues reveal much about class, gender, and age cohorts.[123]

Firstly, Clammer notes that consumption is the most visible way to locate and distinguish oneself in contemporary Japanese society.[124] Modifying slightly Pierre Bourdieu's theory on class distinctions as expressed through cultural practices, Clammer argues that Japanese consumers express their difference from others through symbolic details in their consumption choices, as strategies through which they can identify or separate themselves from others.[125] However, because economic class is not a taken-for-granted marker of social stratum in Japan (unlike in Bourdieu's case of France), emphasized in the belief of *ichioku sō chūryū* ("one hundred million-strong middle class", meaning the entire Japanese population) forged during the postwar economic growth period ending in the 1970s, it is not recognized through pre-

---

[121] Ibid., 70-71.

[122] Ibid., 49, 110-34.

[123] Ibid., 48, 109. For a theoretical discussion on the formation of contemporary tribes, see also Michel Maffesoli, <u>The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society</u> (London: Sage, 1996). For a discussion on the concept of "imagined communities", see Benedict O.G. Anderson, <u>Imagined Communities</u> (London: Verso, 1991).

[124] Clammer, <u>Contemporary Urban Japan</u>, 102

[125] Ibid., 103-4. For Bourdieu's theory on cultural class distinctions, see Bourdieu, <u>Distinction</u>.

52

determined economic classification or lifestyle categories.[126] Instead, class

differentiation is an ongoing practice situated in Japanese everyday life, as people make

their consumption choices regarding food, fashion and music, which mark a certain

exclusivity, while maintaining the appearance of "middle-class" equality in incomes.[127]

In other words, Japanese consumers express class identifications by acting on their

desires to achieve certain aesthetic ideals, in a form of constant "symbolic

competition".[128]

Musical taste and participation can be understood as one such nuanced

expression of class identification. Slightly later in this chapter, I will discuss this

phenomenon in the 1960s and 1979s, when explaining the political economy of *enka*

and *kayōkyoku* appreciation as compared to their contemporaries during the period, such

as jazz, electric rock, and political folk music. These differences persist today in the

variety of elderly musical activities, as seen in Shinobu Oku's (1998) and my own

observations of the class differences in participation in karaoke classrooms focusing on

enka and *kayōkyoku*, other karaoke gatherings of more well-off elderly urban Japanese

that revolve around the singing of electric rock, political folk and idol pop songs, senior

choirs that engage with Western-derived choral music, and so on.[129]

Secondly, consumption provides a more nuanced understanding of the gender

ideals and relations that remain strong in Japanese everyday life. Clammer notes how

Japanese mass media is saturated with idealized images of femininity that are minutely

segmented into labels of age, class and lifestyle, while other researchers have argued the

---

[126] Clammer, Contemporary Urban Japan, 103.
[127] Ibid., 104.
[128] Ibid., 105.
[129] Shinobu Oku, "Karaoke and Middle-aged and Older Women", Tōru Mitsui and Shūhei Hosokawa (eds.), Karaoke Around the World: Global Technology, Local Singing (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 58-61.

same for masculine images.[130] These images deal with the presentation of the body,

identifying and defining the characteristics of desirable Japanese male and/or female

bodies in terms of "fashion, diet, beauty, shape, size, posture, gaze and 'appropriate'

activities".[131] For Japanese television viewers, music listeners and magazine readers, the

body becomes a canvas upon which identities can be molded through consumption, and

presented to the gaze of others. Clammer notes that this kind of "commodity aesthetics"

is practiced to a much greater extent by women than men: with their disposable income,

control of the family budget and their attentiveness to the latest information in the mass

media, they shop, display consumption choices, judge consumption trends and tastes,

and exchange information and products at a greater intensity than their male

counterparts.[132]

These differences are based on the strict delineation of gendered social roles that

has dominated postwar Japanese social life, especially within the household unit.

Although ideal images of men as breadwinners and women as housewives had already

been espoused in the prewar period, most notably through the term *ryōsai kenbo* ("good

wife, wise mother"), it was during the postwar rush towards industrialization and high

economic growth that such a manner of structuring the family became firmly

established.[133] The "New Life Movement", which had its roots in prewar national

mobilization campaigns and came to the fore in the 1950s and 1960s, was promulgated

by Japanese corporations, the state, and women's and housewives' associations. It

successfully inculcated a family structure that emphasized husbands' roles as workers

and wives' roles as caretakers; housewives needed to be just as "professional" in their

---

[130] Ibid., 114-20. For discussions on the presentations of Japanese masculine ideals, see for example
Patrick W. Galbraith and Jason G. Karlin (eds.), Idols and Celebrity in Japanese Media Culture (New
York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
[131] Clammer, Contemporary Urban Japan, 113.
[132] Ibid., 112.
[133] Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni, Housewives of Japan: An Ethnography of Real Lives and Consumerized
Domesticity (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 41-43.

role as their husbands at work.[134] Particularly for women, the wider critical discussion

of their societal roles that occurred concurrently, in what Japanese sociologist Ueno

Chizuko (1982) terms the *shufu ronsō* ("housewife debate"), also emphasized the

contribution of housewives to society through their professional domestic labor.[135]

Despite some contemporary criticism, such as by Ishihara Risa (1998, 2000), on judging

women solely through their value as domestic housewives, this role has remained a

central point from which ideas of femininity are conceived, even as female lifestyles

become increasingly varied.[136]

Through the leisurely purchase of goods, consumption figures centrally in the

everyday lives of the many Japanese women, not only in buying daily necessities in the

maintenance of family life, but also to indulge in personal desires to express tastes,

lifestyles, and identities.[137] While some men do engage in public displays of

consumption, such as cars and golf memberships, male consumption pales in visibility

to the sheer variety and volume for women, who take part in consumption activities on

behalf of their husbands and children too, and are overwhelmingly more represented in

reports on consumption trends by the mass media.[138] Clammer notes that "social

identities are thus formed largely around consumption for women and around

production for men".[139] Hence, it is largely women who "hold the keys to understanding

---

[134] Andrew Gordon, "Managing the Japanese Household: The New Life Movement in Postwar Japan", Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society 4(2) (1997), 245-83. See also Goldstein-Gidoni, Housewives of Japan, 43-44; Sheldon Garon, Molding Japanese Minds: The State in Everday Life (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 115-46.

[135] Ueno Chizuko (ed.), *Shufu Ronsō o Yomu: Zen Kiroku* (Reading the Housewife Debate: All Records) (Tokyo: Keisei Shobo, 1982). Cited in Goldstein-Gidoni, Housewives of Japan, 44-47.

[136] Goldstein-Gidoni, Housewives of Japan, 47-52. See also Ishihara Risa, *Fuzakeruna Sengyō Shufu* (Stop Messing Around, Professional Housewives) (Tokyo: Bunkasha, 1998); Ishihara Risa, *Kutabare Sengyō Shufu* (Go to Hell, Professional Housewives) (Tokyo: Bunkasha, 1999); Ishihara Risa, *Sayonara Sengyō Shufu* (Good-bye, Professional Housewives) (Tokyo: Bunkasha, 2000).

[137] Clammer, Contemporary Urban Japan, 70, 86-93.

[138] Ibid., 70.

[139] Ibid., 106.

everyday life…in its consumption element".[140] The greater female participation in such consumption is also probably why my ethnographic data tended to be dominated by women, even though I did not consciously set out to explore a female experience of karaoke.

Thirdly, Clammer mentions how the "silver industry" is an increasingly important part of the Japanese consumer market today, as the elderly make up an increasing proportion of consumers.[141] Products and services are developed to cater to the demands and needs of these older consumers: for example, the *okeikogoto* or *naraigoto* industry that provides "cultural classes" has developed greatly in the past few decades, by capitalizing on the increasing number of older women who have the time, money and desire to learn new things.[142] Consumption provides an illuminating avenue through which we can understand the imagined trajectory of the Japanese life course, since idealized images of the consumer shift as the body matures and ages.[143] Clammer provides highly visible examples as he examines female images across women's magazines aimed at different age demographics that have sparked numerous fashion trends.[144] Meanwhile, older men may also be increasingly drawn into consumption as a way to construct elderly lifestyles, considering Kimio Itō's (2005) observations of their worries about creating meaning in life after retiring from corporate work.[145] In other words, through the consumption perspective, we can clearly trace how the body is imagined over the life course, particularly how old age is perceived in comparison to youth.

---

[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid., 42.
[142] Ibid., 44. I discuss this development further in Chapter 3, when introducing karaoke classrooms.
[143] Ibid., 63.
[144] Ibid., 110-34.
[145] Kimio Itō, "An Introduction to Men's Studies", Mark McLelland and Romit Dasgupta (eds.), <u>Genders, Transgenders and Sexualities in Japan</u> (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 151-2.

Consumption, as a way of constructing and expressing lifestyles and social identities, has effectively rendered the project of meaning making "a question of life politics rather than national ones, of a concern with cultivating the individual body and self rather than with the construction of the nation, and even less the state".[146] The search for meaning in life is carried out through the purchase and playful usage of aesthetic signs to project one's desired image of himself or herself. What, then, is the aesthetic corpus in play at karaoke classrooms and *kissas*? I argue that this corpus can be found in the aesthetics of the *enka* and *kayōkyoku* genres that karaoke enthusiasts invariably sing during their visits.

Musical aesthetics of *enka* and *kayōkyoku*

Enka and *kayōkyoku* can be most succinctly described as genres of melancholic Japanese ballads that espouse sentiments of longing and outdated, or even traditional, values.[147] Today, the marginal status of these genres within the Japanese popular music soundscape is clear: according to Oricon chart statistics, only one *enka/kayōkyoku* release made it into the top 50 best-selling singles in 2016, while it was joined by only four others in the top 100.[148]

The outdated image of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* is not simply down to the fact that many of its most famous performers have entered or are approaching their elderly years. In fact, many new *enka* and *kayōkyoku* singers in their twenties and thirties (and much younger than their main audience demographic) debut each year, but the vast majority fail to create a lasting music career. Rather, *enka* and *kayōkyoku* are considered passé mainly because of the musical motifs and sounds they express. Describing the musical

---

[146] Clammer, Contemporary Urban Japan, 65-66.

[147] I use *kayōkyoku* as an umbrella term to cover also songs that are labelled as *mood kayō* and *enka pops,* as these genres are frequently associated with each other, such as in the influential Oricon charts. See Yano, Tears of Longing, 42-43.

[148] Oricon, *Nenkan CD Shinguru Rankingu* (Yearly CD Single Ranking), http://www.oricon.co.jp/rank/js/y/2016/. Accessed on 30 July 2017.

characteristics generally found in *enka* songs and performances in her book "Tears of Longing", Christine Yano utilizes the concept of *kata,* also found in other Japanese cultural practices such as flower arrangement and *kabuki*, to denote "a recognizable code of the performance action".[149] She defines *kata* as "stylized formulas" and "patterned forms" that reflect the culturally structured approach to production, performance and consumption practices in the genre.[150] Through the semiotic operation of such *kata,* which are allegedly derived from or inspired by traditional Japanese cultural values, *enka* represents Japanese traditional rural values. Others, such as Maki Okada (1991), Koizumi Fumio (1996) and Aikawa Yumi (2002), also make similar claims regarding the "Japaneseness" of *enka* and *kayōkyoku,* operating on the assumption that the authenticity of these songs as traditional rest on their faithfulness to *kata.*[151]

Yano describes three kinds of musical *kata* that aestheticize traditional Japanese cultural values: lyrical, compositional, and performative. Via **lyrical *kata*,** "traditional rural Japan" is brought to life through nostalgia and longing in the setting of the *furusato,* which roughly translates as "hometown".[152] The rural hometown signified through *furusato* is an abstract and generic conceptualization rather than a reference to specific locales, brought about by the modern struggles and desires caused by the alienation and emotional trauma of unchecked urbanization.[153] As an opposition to modern urban lifestyles, *furusato* generates "warm, nostalgic feelings", and imbues

---

[149]   Yano, Tears of Longing, 25.
[150]   Ibid., 24-25.
[151]   Maki Okada, "Musical Characteristics of Enka", Gerald Groemer (trans.), Popular Music 10(3) (1991), 283-303; Koizumi Fumio, *Kayōkyoku no Kōzō (The Structure of Kayōkyoku)* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1996); Aikawa, *Enka no Susume*.
[152]   Yano, Tears of Longing, 148-79. See also Jennifer Robertson, "The Culture and Politics of Nostalgia: *Furusato* Japan", International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society 1(4) (1988), 494-518; Marilyn Ivy, Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 104.
[153]   Marilyn Ivy, Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 104-6.

"whatever it names or is prefixed to with traditionalness and cultural authenticity".[154] Lyrical *kata* present the mothers, stoic men and jilted lovers who inhabit the wholesome *furusato.* They also describe the intimate relationships of romance and family that bind the "traditional Japanese" together in the *furusato*, and the loss of these ties for song protagonists who have left; in many cases these people *are* the *furusato* itself. Even *enka*'s lyrical structure, which supposedly derives from the pre-modern Japanese poetic form of *waka*, provides a sense of tradition.[155] *Kayōkyoku* lyrics slightly deviate from *enka* by emphasizing less the rural goodness of the *furusato*, instead playing up the romantic longing brought about by conflicted and unfulfilled romances that are inadequate substitutes for the wholesome *furusato*. Otherwise, however, both genres have greatly similar orientations in their lyrical *kata.* The following songs, both sung regularly during my visits to karaoke classrooms and *kissas*, highlight the lyrical *kata* I have described so far:

Kisetsu ga tokai dewa	In the city, you probably can't understand
Wakaranai darou to	The changing of the seasons
Todoita ofukuro no chiisana tsutsumi	The little package sent by Mother has arrived
Ano furusato e kaerou kana	I think I'll return to that hometown
Kaerou kana	I think I'll return

"*Kitaguni no Haru*" (Spring in the North)*,* an *enka* song by male singer Sen Masao. Released by Tokuma Japan Communications, 1977.

---

[154]   Jennifer Robertson, "*Furusato* Japan: The Culture and Politics of Nostalgia", International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society 1(4) (1988), 495-6.

[155]   Yano, Tears of Longing, 92, 103.

Male: *Biru no tanima ni yume ga shizumu*   My dream sets in between these

buildings

Male: *Omae wa dō shiteiru daro ka*   I wonder how you are doing?

Female: *Misaki o somete koi ga moeru*   My love burns and colors

the cape

Female: *Watashi ima demo mattemasu*   Even now I continue to wait

Both: *Tasogare ni tegami wo kakitai hito ga iru*   Here in this sunset I want to

write you a letter

Male: *Furusato wa omae*   You are my hometown

Female: *Furusato wa anata*   You are my hometown

"*Furusato*" (Hometown), a *kayōkyoku* duet by male singer Yamakawa Yutaka and female singer Kye Unsook. Released by EMI Music Japan, 1990.

Compositional *kata* generate nostalgia by aurally signifying the traditional past through instrumentation. This is especially prominent in *enka*, where Western musical instruments, such as the guitar and oboe, imitate the sounds and timber of traditional instruments, such as the *shamisen* and *shakuhachi*, to create a faux traditional feel.[156] Meanwhile, in many *kayōkyoku* songs, especially those in the *mood kayō* sub-genre, the saxophone features prominently in creating an "aural sensuality" by bending pitches, undulating between notes, and rising and falling in volume.[157] In both *enka* and *kayōkyoku,* however, the prevalent use of pentatonic scales (scales with five degrees instead of the seven usually found in the Western classical corpus) heightens the

---

[156]   Ibid., 103.
[157]   Ibid., 106.

musical feel of Japanese tradition.[158] These pentatonic scales include the *yonanuki*, which omits the fourth and seventh degrees (the *yonanuki* minor scale is particularly prevalent in *enka* and *kayōkyoku*; see Figure 4), and the *nironuki* which omits the second and sixth degrees (see Figure 3). While sharing many characteristics with traditional Japanese scales such as those of *min'yō* folk songs, the *yonanuki* and *nironuki* scales were actually codified in the Meiji period (1868-1910), as music practitioners and educators sought to fit Japanese musical modes into their newly acquired knowledge of Western musical structures.[159] Also, slow rhythms are a major compositional *kata* of *enka* and *kayōkyoku*: while some *kayōkyoku* songs may have a slightly quicker and more upbeat tempo, even these are noticeably slower-paced than upbeat songs in contemporary J-pop. For example, the newly released *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs listed in the January 2017 edition of the karaoke magazine *Gekkan Karaoke Fan* have rhythms that are mostly around 70 to 90 beats per minute (BPM), compared to an average of around 125 for releases by the most popular J-pop act during this period, the female idol group AKB48.[160] In Chapter 4, I explain how these differences in tempo serve as a highly obvious marker of "old-fashioned" music.

---
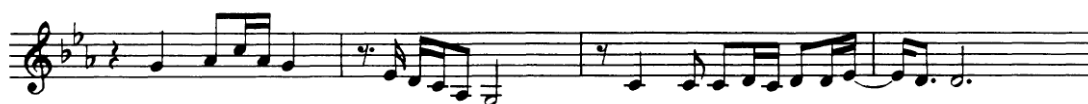
158 Okada, "Musical Characteristics of *Enka*", 284-6.
159 Ibid., 285-6.
160 "Hit Hit Melody", <u>*Gekkan Karaoke Fan* (Monthly Karaoke Fan)</u> 410 (Osaka: Muse, 2017), 131-66. A list of BPM and other song information for an extensive selection of AKB48's hit songs can be found at "*0 Yu 1 Zhi Jian (Guan Jun Jing Xuan Ji): AKB48*" (Between 0 and 1 (Best Hits): AKB48), <u>Spotontrack</u>, http://www.spotontrack.com/album/01-/580147. Accessed on 10 October 2017.

Figure 10: Score for "*Sazanka no Yado*" (Camellia Inn), an *enka* song by male singer

Ōkawa Eisaku. Released by Nippon Columbia, 1982. This song was written in the

yonanuki minor scale.[161]

Figure 11: Score for *"Yozora"* (Night Sky), a *kayōkyoku* song by male singer Itsuki

Hiroshi. Released by Tokuma Japan Communications. This song was written in the

nironuki scale.[162]

Performative *kata* also aestheticize "Japaneseness". Firstly, vocal techniques in

both *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, drawn from pre-modern Japanese forms such as *jōruri,*

min'yō and *naniwa-bushi,* signify traditional expressions of melancholy, stoicism, grief

or pain.[163] The most prominent techniques include the *kobushi,* a strong guttural

technique that Yoshikawa (1992) argues is the sensual "life-blood of *enka*", and *yuri*, a

decorative wide vibrato at the end of each musical phrase.[164] *Kata* pertaining to bodily

dispositions also provide visual indicators of traditional ideals of emotion and gender.

Yano lists some fashion styles, bodily postures and movements of performers during

performances to show how *enka* and *kayōkyoku* clearly express the traditional gender

ideals of *otoko-michi* and *onna-gokoro* ("the path of a man" and "the feelings of a

woman").[165] Interestingly, despite the more traditional image of *enka* compared to

kayōkyoku, this does not necessarily mean that *enka* performances involve the wearing

---

[161] Okada, "Musical Characteristics of *Enka*", 284.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Yano, <u>Tears of Longing</u>, 109-14; Koizumi, <u>*Kayōkyoku no Kōzō*</u>, 172-80.
[164] Okada, "Musical Characteristics of *Enka*", 288; Yoshikawa Seiichi, <u>*Kanashimi wa Nihonjin: Enka Minzokuron* (Grief is Japanese: *Enka* Ethnology)</u> (Tokyo, Ongaku no Tomo Sha: 1992), 35-37.
[165] Yano, <u>Tears of Longing,</u> pp.114-22.

of traditional *kimonos* and *hakamas* more than *kayōkyoku* ones, especially for female performers: the occurrences are somewhat random, even for repeat performances of the same song.

Besides these musical *kata,* Yano also describes how *enka*'s consumption practices can be understood as *kata* signifying traditional values.[166] Again, these are mainly shared with *kayōkyoku*, especially since listeners tend to consume songs from both genres, which share many singers, songwriters and music programs. Firstly, a large percentage of songs are still released on cassette tapes alongside compact disc (CD) versions, ostensibly to match *enka's* and *kayōkyoku's* older fan demographic and their reliance on older technology. These songs typically become hits through a gradual several-months-long rise through the charts, providing a stark contrast to the instant consumption and disposal typical of other Japanese popular music genres such as idol pop. Such a consumption pattern has been valorized as a typically Japanese expression of perseverance.[167] The pattern may be due to the heavy reliance on word-of-mouth to spread information about new releases. Most singers, especially those who are lesser-known, rely primarily on touring small venues, such as record shops and karaoke classrooms and *kissas,* to promote their songs, a practice that has precedents in pre-modern itinerant performances.[168] Because of this, fans (especially if they have joined official fan clubs) also enjoy regular opportunities for close personal interaction with their favorite singers, and create a sense of "patterned intimacy" considered traditionally Japanese.[169]

Approaches such as Yano's thus provide a clear typology of *enka*'s aesthetics, in describing it as a culturally structured representation of a traditional Japanese musical

---

[166] Ibid., pp.45-76.
[167] Ibid., 47-48.
[168] Ibid., 73-74.
[169] Ibid., 78-82. I also describe one such event in Chapter 4, to discuss how they affect perceptions of time in old age.

identity. This understanding is encapsulated in an excuse frequently used by *enka* fans to explain the genre's lack of popularity among younger audiences: "those Japanese who do not like *enka* are either insufficiently experienced, particularly in life's hardships and sorrow, or not true to their innate Japaneseness".[170] However, explanations regarding "Japaneseness" gloss over the particular intersection of socio-cultural environment and musical trends during which these fans developed their liking for *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, and indeed during which these genre labels began to be used widely in Japanese popular music discourse. In other words, we need to understand not only what the aesthetic characteristics of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* that fans draw upon are, but also how these fans have developed and continue to develop musical tastes for or against the aesthetics of these genres.

Political economy of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* nostalgia

More recent scholarship on *enka* and *kayōkyoku* has re-evaluated the culturally structured approaches utilized by scholars such as Yano. One strand has investigated the history of these genres and the biographies of their performers. For example, Wajima Yūsuke (2010) and Deborah Shamoon (2014) find that the musical practices of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* are strongly rooted in the organizational structures of the early Japanese recording and popular culture industry in the 1920s.[171] *Enka* and to a lesser extent *kayōkyoku* only gained its image of "Japaneseness" when pitted against the musical form and practices of Western-style rock and political folk (commonly categorized as *yōgaku*, "Western" music) in the mid-to-late 1960s. The turning point came in 1969, with the debut of female singer Fuji Keiko as "the girl destined to carry *enka*'s star"

---

[170] Christine R. Yano, "The Marketing of Tears: Consuming Emotions in Japanese Popular Song", Timothy J. Craig (ed.), Japan Pop! Inside the World of Japanese Popular Culture (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 61.
[171] Wajima, *Tsukurareta*, pp.24-26; Deborah Shamoon, "Recreating Traditional Music in Postwar Japan: a Prehistory of *Enka*", Japan Forum (2013), 10.

(*enka no hoshi wo seotta shukumei no onna*) establishing the term *enka* as a popular

music genre.[172] The recording industry personnel who did not favor the newer sounds of

rock and folk, which included those producing songs under the genre labels of both

enka and *kayōkyoku*, took to promoting their music within a nationalist rhetoric of

tradition that cultural critics like Yamaori Tetsuo also espoused.[173] Particularly,

Shamoon (2009), Michael Bourdaghs (2012) and Benny Tong (2015) note the

collaborative marketing and use of multi-media technology in creating the popularity of

enka's most famous songstress, Misora Hibari (1937-1989), as a beacon of

"Japaneseness".[174] As sales for these genres have fallen dramatically since the late

1980s, with the arrival of newer sounds such as J-pop, they have been drawn even

tighter within popular music discourse, under the umbrella term "*Showa Kayō*", which

highlights their common origins in the 1960s.[175]

This split in the popular music industry was part of a wider negotiation of the

increasing Westernization of Japanese cultural life in this period, during the concurrent

drives to modernize, industrialize and urbanize. Within these sociocultural changes,

music listeners also began to separate into two different groups. On one side of the

divide were the fans of genres identified with *yōgaku*, such as jazz, electric rock and

folk-influenced music. These genres were generally seen as part of the urban youth

culture of the postwar years. Their fan demographic was comprised mostly of the young

people who were born and raised in urban centers like Tokyo and Yokohama in the

1950s and 1960s, and had substantial exposure to the predominantly American popular

---

[172] Wajima, *Tsukurareta,* 252-70.
[173] Ibid., 29-33.
[174] Deborah Shamoon, "Misora Hibari and the Girl Star in Postwar Japanese Cinema", Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 35(1) (2009), 131-55; Michael K. Bourdaghs, Sayonara Amerika, Sayonara Nippon: A Geopolitical Prehistory of J-Pop (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 65; Benny Tong, "A Tale of Two Stars: Understanding the Establishment of Femininity in *Enka* through Misora Hibari and Fuji Keiko", Situations: Cultural Studies in the Asian Context 8(1) (2015), 23-44.
[175] Wajima, *Tsukurareta*, 317-36.

music styles that were played in nightclubs and bars that catered to the many American soldiers of the Allied Occupation forces.[176]

On the other side were the fans of *enka* and *kayōkyoku*. These genres appealed to a slightly more mature and working class demographic from the late 1940s *dankai sedai* baby-boomer generation, who had been born and raised in the rural countryside and had moved into the cities for work upon finishing middle or high school. Minamida Katsuya (2011) reveals the generation-specific nature of the *enka* and *kayōkyoku* fanbase by citing two nationwide surveys about popular music trends, one conducted by NHK in 1981, and a follow-up conducted by Yamaha Music Foundation in 2006. Taken together, the surveys reveal that roughly 20 to 30 percent of respondents born around the late 1940s to 1950s preferred *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, while those outside of this group expressed negligible support for these genres.[177] The surveys also show that their preference for these genres persisted as they grew older, something that my fieldwork experience confirmed.

Minamida and Tōru Mitsui (1998) note that this latter group's musical familiarity with songs of the early Japanese record industry, developed from their childhood and adolescence, largely explains their continued preference of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* over genres with greater *yōgaku* influence.[178] I argue that these musical tastes were further entrenched through their shared material and emotional struggles of

---

[176]   Bourdaghs, Sayonara, 11-48, 85-112, 113-57; Ōyama Masahiko, "*Wakamono Sabukaruchā to Popyurā Ongaku*" (Youth Subculture and Popular Music), Tōya Mamoru (ed.), *Popyurā Ongaku e no Manazashi: Uru, Yomu, Tanoshimu* (A Look at Popular Music: Selling, Reading, Enjoying) (Tokyo, Keisō Shobo: 2003), 293-303.

[177]   Minamida Katsuya, "*Ongaku to Sedai no Raifukōsu*" (Music and Generational Life-course), Fujimura Masayuki (ed.), *Inochi to Raifukōsu no Shakaigaku* (Sociology of Life and Life-course) (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 2012), 140-52. See also *NHK Hōsō Yoron Chōsasho* (NHK Broadcasting Survey Department) (ed.), *Gendaijin to Ongaku* (Modern People and Music) (Tokyo: NHK Shuppan, 1982), 70-71; *Zaibatsu Hōjin Yamaha Ongaku Fukkyōkai* (Yamaha Music Foundation) (ed.), *Ongaku Raifusutairu Web Ankēto Hōkokushō 2006 Shiryohen* (Music Lifestyle Web Survey 2006 Report: Data Section) (2006), http://www.yamaha-mf.or.jp/onken/, 9. Accessed on 1 June 2017.

[178]   Minamida, *Ongaku to Sedai*, 149; Tōru Mitsui, "The Genesis of Karaoke: How the Combination of Technology and Music Evolved", Tōru Mitsui and Shūhei Hosokawa (eds.), Karaoke Around the World: Global Technology, Local Singing (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 37.

urban migration, which produced nostalgic longings and desires for better times. Due to the Japanese government's industrial approach towards rebuilding the postwar economy, new employment opportunities were concentrated almost exclusively in major cities. From the mid-1950s to the early 1970s, school leavers in the countryside flocked en masse to urban areas such as Greater Tokyo and the Keihanshin (Osaka, Kobe and Kyoto) region. These areas received around a million a year, and within 20 years Japan's population turned from predominantly rural to urban.[179] The trains (*ressha*) that carried these young people to the cities would become a vivid motif depicting journey and separation in many *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs.

Life in the city was tough for these urban migrants, who mostly worked in low-paying jobs that demanded long hours of hard labor. In his account of the popularity of nostalgic *kayōkyoku* in the 1960s and 1970s, Fujii Hidetada (1997) describes how these migrants lived in cramped housing that often did not provide adequate infrastructure such as sewage and social facilities, while the urban environment during this period was heavily polluted.[180] But more intensely and intimately felt were the emotional struggles, as the vast majority had left for the cities on their own.[181] As Peter Duus (1998) notes, "individuals were much more isolated and anonymous than in the small-town atmosphere of villages and provincial towns. No longer were they embedded in a stable community where their families had lived for generations".[182] Many were also disappointed by the gritty, unglamorous, tightly-controlled and unfamiliar environments they found themselves working in, yet felt compelled to stay for the long haul in Tokyo,

---

[179] Peter Duus, Modern Japan (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 303; Pradyumna P. Karan, "The City in Japan", Pradyumna P. Karan and Kristin Stapleton (eds.), The Japanese City (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 21-22.

[180] Fujii Hidetada, *Bōkyō Kayōkyoku Kō: Kōdo Seichō no Tanima de* (Thoughts On Nostalgic *Kayōkyoku*: In the Cracks of High Economic Growth) (Tokyo: NTT Shuppan, 1997), 83, 155-69.

[181] Ibid., 83-86.

[182] Duus, Modern Japan, 305-6.

because of promises to their parents in the countryside.[183] These were fertile material and emotional conditions for developing the shared longing for the rural and the traditional in *enka* and *kayōkyoku*.

Such a common nostalgia would eventually coalesce around the notion of *furusato*, or hometown. But due to the economic, social and cultural blow dealt to rural areas due to the mass exodus of young people, the physical hometowns increasingly fell into a vicious cycle of depopulation and disrepair.[184] Considering such developments in the countryside, cultural critics and government policies emptied the concept of *furusato* of its material and geographical specificity, in employing it as a critique and/or solution to the problems and struggles of modernization and urbanization. Instead, *furusato* was turned into an abstract signifier for a utopian rural tradition.[185] In music, this abstraction was best encapsulated in the *enka* hit "*Watashi no Jōkamachi*" (My Castle Town), which sang the praises of the quaint countryside castle town without referring to any specific place names.

Kōshido wo kuguri nuke	Walking through the wooden lattice doors
Miageru yuyake no sora ni	Looking up into the sunset
Dare ga utau no ka komoriuta	Who is singing a lullaby?
Watashi no jōkamachi	My castle town

"*Watashi no Jōkamachi*", an *enka* song by female singer Koyanagi Rumiko. Released in 1971 by Warner Brother Pioneer.

---

183 Anonymous, "*Guriin no Kami Tēpu*" (Green Paper Tape), Shūkan Bunshun (ed.), <u>*Watashi no Shōwashi* (My Showa History)</u> (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1989); Anonymous, "*Hajimete no Dēto*" (First Date), Shūkan Bunshun (ed.), <u>*Watashi no Shōwashi*</u>. Cited in Fujii, <u>*Bōkyō Kayōkyoku Kō*</u>, 83-86.

184 Duus, <u>Modern Japan</u>, 307; Fujii, <u>*Bōkyō Kayōkyoku Kō*</u>, 139.

185 Fujii, <u>*Bōkyō Kayōkyoku Kō*</u>, 169-86.

The abstraction of *furusato* into a generic concept in early 1970s *enka* and *kayōkyoku* hits thus made the widespread appreciation of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* possible, and provided an important musical and lyrical template for future songs.[186] Even in songs containing place names, the understanding of *furusato* as an abstract notion still aids in conjuring a shared longing, regardless of the actual rural birthplaces of these urban migrants, as suggested by the current popularity among *enka* and *kayōkyoku* fans of the songstress Mizumori Kaori, known as the "queen of locality songs" (*gotōchi songu no joō*). *Enka* and *kayōkyoku* thus became established as what Koizumi (2013) terms a "common music" that was especially significant for this age-class cohort, by signifying a certain temporal experience they widely shared.[187]

Fragmentation of the karaoke consumer market

The division in musical taste between those who favored *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, and those who did not, would be mirrored in the development of karaoke consumption in Japan, which followed not long after in the early 1970s. Tōru Mitsui (1998) traces the origins of karaoke to the bar, noting that while customers were enthusiastic about spontaneous singing in the 1960s, the technology which allowed them to select songs conveniently and cheaply was lacking.[188] In 1972, however, Inoue Daisuke and five other musicians produced what is commonly recognized as the first karaoke system, by recording instrumental tracks of popular *kayōkyoku* songs on 8-track loop tapes modified to allow instantaneous song selection on tape-jukeboxes.[189]

Demand for this newly developed karaoke technology came overwhelmingly from bars, many of which re-dubbed themselves as karaoke *snacks*. They found karaoke

---

186   Ibid., 181-6.
187   Koizumi, *Memoriisukēpu*, 5-6.
188   Mitsui, "The Genesis of Karaoke", 31.
189   Ibid., 35-36.

a cheap replacement for costly live bands and radio playlists for piped-in music.[190]

Market research conducted by the All Japan Association of Karaoke Entrepreneurs

revealed that middle- and older-aged men made up 58% of the snacks' clientele, with an

additional 28% being young businessmen accompanying their superiors at work.[191]

These male office workers and businessmen also found karaoke an easy way to express

themselves musically.[192] Within a few years, many *snacks* extended their operating

times into the afternoon and offered tea and coffee to also attract middle-aged

housewives, dubbing themselves as *kissas* to indicate the café operating format they had

now incorporated.[193] Their clientele overwhelmingly favor *enka* and *kayōkyoku.* For

example, the December 1996 edition of the "*Gekkan Karaoke Fan*" magazine noted that

the 20 most performed songs in karaoke *kissas*, as well as 15 of the top 20 in karaoke

snacks, belonged to *enka* or *kayōkyoku*.[194]

Shinobu Oku (1998) provides a vivid prototypical description of these *kissas*

(she calls them "karaoke coffee shops") through her ethnographic fieldwork in 1992.

She describes how these *kissas* were cramped and tightly soundproofed spaces,

typically located in working-class residential areas developed after the 1960s to house

new urban migrants during the period of high economic growth. During Oku's

fieldwork the housewives who visited were mostly between 30 to 60 years old. They

were well acquainted with each other, as the afternoons they spent at the *kissa,* listening

to and applauding each other's singing and developing conversations, allowed them to

make friends easily. These women reported several benefits to regularly visiting, such

---

[190]   Hiroshi Ogawa, "The Effects of Karaoke on Music in Japan", Mitsui and Hosokawa (eds.), <u>Karaoke Around the World</u>, 43.

[191]   Shinobu Oku, "Karaoke and Middle-aged and Older Women", Mitsui and Hosokawa (eds.), <u>Karaoke Around the World</u>, 55.

[192]   Ibid., 44.

[193]   Oku, "Karaoke and Middle-aged and Older Women", 55-56.

[194]   *Zenkoku Karaoke Jigyosha Kyokai*, <u>Karaoke Hakusho</u> (Karaoke White Paper); "Hit Hit Melody", <u>Gekkan Karaokefan</u> (Monthly Karaoke Fan) (December 1996). Cited in Oku, "Karaoke and Middle-aged and Older Women", 64.

as keeping fit, maintaining a happy disposition, and being able to make new friends.[195] These women were later joined by retired men, who now had free time during the day, but the *kissa* clientele remained largely female.[196] Many of these *kissa* regulars enjoyed karaoke so much that they became eager to practice singing karaoke more. They signed up for classes at karaoke classrooms, where they were taught by a teacher either individually or in group lessons. Oku describes the content of these classes as mainly consisting of the imitation of the melodies and vocal expressions heard in the original CD or cassette tape tracks.[197] As such, with their similar clientele and musical environment, the karaoke class and *kissa* could be easily merged. However, Chou was the only place I came across that advertised itself as both, while Sachi and Ami stuck solely to their *kissa* operations.

By comparing these karaoke *kissa* regulars/class students with Japanese housewives' choirs (*mamasan kōrasu*), Oku illuminates two socio-musical characteristics of both choir and karaoke participants, based on a clear boundary between the two forms of singing. Firstly, most karaoke regulars reported that they did not enjoy or do well in music classes during their years in compulsory education, in contrast to the more proactive attitude towards education and higher scores in music classes that the choir members had.[198] This difference is understandable when considering that choir singing was, and continues to be, a major component of the music curriculum in Japanese education.[199] Referencing Norioka Yoshiko's (1995) research in the Kansai region, Oku suggests that such a difference was largely due to the karaoke group's inferior academic abilities and lesser economic resources to do well in school. This, in turn, promoted their musical taste for genres like *enka,* or activities like karaoke,

---

195   Ibid., 56-57.
196   Ibid., 57.
197   Ibid., 59. I describe these class activities in greater detail in Chapter 3.
198   Ibid., 58.
199   Ibid.

both of which provide instrumental accompaniment to the sung melody that makes songs easier to sing.[200] Norioka's and Oku's analyses, which recall Bourdieu's (1984) arguments, suggest that the karaoke classes and *kissas* are musical spaces clearly distinguished along lines of class expressed and reinforced through the activity of consumption.[201] With the friendships and attachments built up at the *kissas* and classes, karaoke participants have stuck to these venues as their preferred places to sing.[202]

Later advancements in karaoke technology, especially the miniaturization of hardware components and introduction of cable-linked karaoke databases, allowed karaoke machines to store more songs while occupying less space. For example, the widely used LiveDAM karaoke machine now has a database containing around 180,000 songs.[203] With these developments, entrepreneurs began to set up karaoke establishments housing a number of compact rooms termed *boxes* from the late 1980s, initially in converted container boxes but eventually within buildings in key entertainment areas, such as Shibuya in Tokyo.[204] These spaces, which were located in more trendy areas, offered more privacy and operated during the day, appealed greatly to younger non-*enka* fans who had thus far been neglected as a karaoke consumer demographic. As these younger people flocked to the boxes, they developed behavioral practices that departed from the *kissas* and classes, most notably by cutting down on conversation and attention to others' singing.[205] The popularity of karaoke *boxes* with these younger consumers also led to the diversification of karaoke song databases away

---

[200] Ibid., 58-61; Norioka Yoshiko, *Seijin no Amatsua Ongaku Katsudō to Gakkō Ongakuka Kyōiku to no Kanren ni Kan suru Kenkyū* (On the Relation Between Adults' Amateur Music Activity and Their School Music Education) (Otsu: Report for grant-in-aid by Japan Ministry of Education, 1995), 17.

[201] Again, see Bourdieu's "Distinction" for a detailed discussion of cultural taste differences.

[202] Oku, "Karaoke and Middle-aged and Older Women" 54-57, 61

[203] Ogawa, "The Effects of Karaoke on Music in Japan", 45; "*Daiichi Shōgyō DAM Tsūshin Karaoke*" (First Enterprise DAM Cable Karaoke), *Karaoke Sōgō Shōsha Kabushiki Gaisha Minijūku Kansai* (General Karaoke Trading Company Limited Company Mini-Juke Kansai), http://www.minijuke.co.jp/karaoke/index3_dam001.html. Accessed on 30 July 2017.

[204] Ogawa, "The Effects of Karaoke on Music in Japan", 45.

[205] Ibid.

from *enka*, with non-*enka* songs dominating the karaoke charts today.[206] With the growth of major *karaoke box* chains, karaoke has developed into an enormous industry, with numerous demographic sectors delineated most visibly by age and musical taste.[207]

The narratives of the fragmentation of the music and karaoke consumer market thus illustrate how places such as the karaoke class and *kissa,* as well as genres such as *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, have come to occupy a specific demographic segment. The regular visitor demographic for Sachi, Ami and Chou corresponded largely (although with a few interesting exceptions that I discuss in later chapters) with these patterns, despite being located in different regions of Japan, and centered upon the working-class baby-boomers who migrated to the cities during the period of high economic growth in the 1960s and 1970s, and have now entered a time of retirement. My research picks up on this specificity in consumption trends to investigate how music, and especially karaoke practices, provide fulfillment and meaning in life for today's elderly working-class Japanese.

Socio-spatial characteristics of karaoke classes and *kissas*

While general socio-historical and musical trends have shaped the phenomenon of elderly karaoke at classes and *kissas*, these trends have not operated homogeneously. Instead, urban growth was spread unequally throughout the city, both in terms of people and capital. Karaoke classes and *kissas*, with their distinctively working-class musical aesthetics, thus sprung up mainly in the less well-off parts of major urban areas.

In the Greater Tokyo region, the poor rural youth who poured in from the late 1950s to early 1970s mainly hailed from the northern and eastern regions, such as

---

[206] *"Karaoke Shūkan Rankin: Shūkei Kikan: 2017/07/23~2017/07/29"* (Karaoke Weekly Ranking: Data Collected for 2017/07/23 to 2017/07/29), Club DAM.com, http://www.clubdam.com/app/dam/dam/ranking/index.html. Accessed on 2 August 2017.

[207] Tōru Mitsui and Shūhei Hosokawa, "Introduction", Mitsui and Hosokawa (eds.), Karaoke Around the World, 11.

Tohoku and Hokkaido. However, the central areas of the city proper had become overcrowded and land prices rose sharply, effectively shutting these new migrants out.[208] Many of them instead settled in the satellite cities in Saitama Prefecture just across the prefectural borders, such as Asaka, where the karaoke *kissa* Sachi is located. Asaka City's population grew almost fivefold from 16,465 in 1955 to 81,755 in 1975.[209] These migrants (around 60 to 80 years old) and their children (around 40 to 55 years old) still form a substantial proportion of residents today, as seen in Figure 12.
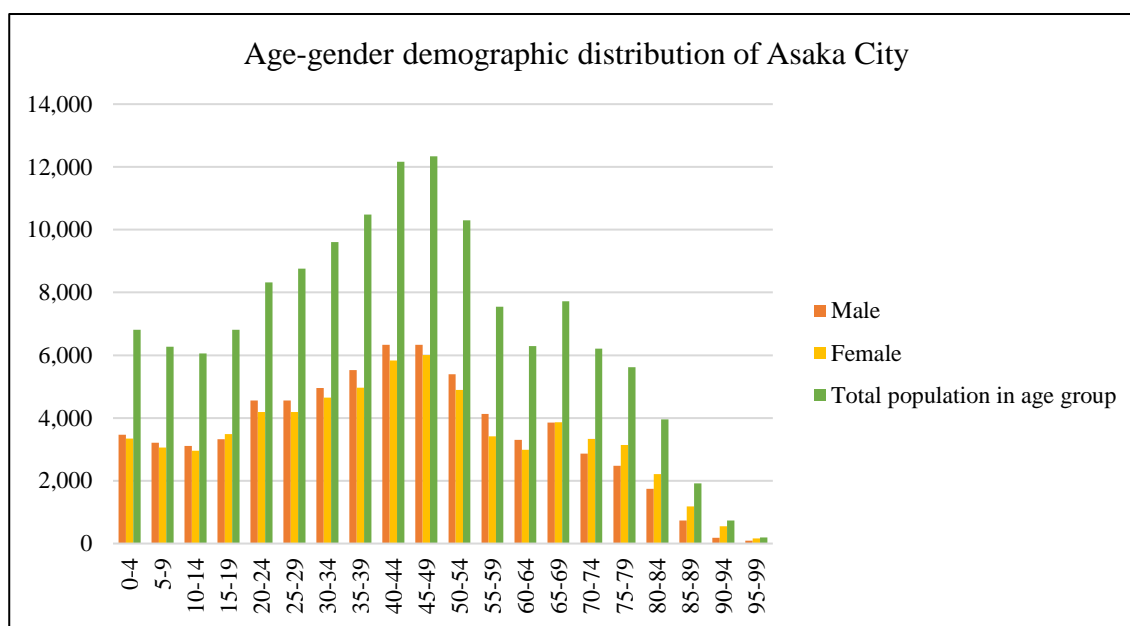
Figure 12: Age-gender demographic distribution graph of Asaka City, 2017.[210] The age range of Sachi's regulars is around 60 to 80 years old.

Although having much cheaper housing prices, satellite cities like Asaka were already well connected to the north-western hub of Tokyo, Ikebukuro, via train lines

---

[208] Population census data cited in Kohei Okamoto, "Suburbanization of Tokyo and the Daily Lives of Suburban People", Karan and Stapleton (eds.), The Japanese City, 80-81.

[209] *Kokusei Chōsa Jinkō no Suii* (Population Change in the National Census) (Asaka: City of Asaka Municipal Administration Information Systems Section, 2016), http://www.city.asaka.lg.jp/uploaded/attachment/37344.pdf. Accessed on 30 July 2017.

[210] *Asaka-shi Nenrei (Kakurei)-betsu Danjo-betsu Jinkō* (Age- and Sex-Differentiated Population of Asaka City) (Asaka: City of Asaka Municipal Administration Information Systems Section, 2017), http://www.city.asaka.lg.jp/uploaded/attachment/41541.pdf. Accessed on 30 July 2017.

built by the private operators Tobu and Seibu, and other parts of the city center, via those built by then-Japan National Railways (now JR). This enabled commuting lifestyles that balanced employment in the city center and relatively affordable housing in these bedtowns. However, the population explosion in these satellite cities also brought about greater demand for convenient retail and entertainment services. The service sector blossomed, especially around important railway junctions such as Asakadai Station in Asaka, where the Tobu Tojo and JR Musashino lines connect.

As another major center of business and industry, the Keihanshin or Greater Osaka region also experienced substantial population growth from the late 1950s to early 1970s. Befitting its status as the western economic center of Japan, the young rural migrants who came here were mostly born in the western and southern parts of Japan, such as Kyushu and Shikoku, in contrast to those who flocked to Tokyo. Contrary to Kuniko Fujita's and Richard Child Hill's (1997) claims of equal and homogeneous use of land space in Osaka, Kenichi Miyamoto (1993) has noted that the urban structure shows clear distinctions of class between different areas.[211] He contrasts the northern satellite cities of Ashiya, Nishinomiya and Toyonaka, which are well known in the Greater Osaka region for their pristine surroundings and rich inhabitants, with neighborhoods in Osaka city proper, home to a much lower income group.[212] Within the city limits, the same historical north-south divide persists, as the mercantilism and departmental stores of Umeda in the north give way to the working-class grit of Kamagasaki south of the downtown. Southern Osaka, and surrounding satellite cities such as Sakai, Matsubara and Yao, thus absorbed much of the population influx during the industrialization push, with their cheaper housing prices. For example, Sumiyoshi,

---

[211]   Kuniko Fujita and Richard Child Hill, "Together and Equal: Place Stratification in Osaka", Karan and Stapleton, The Japanese City, 106-33; Kenichi Miyamoto, "Japan's World Cities: Osaka and Tokyo Compared", Kuniko Fujita and Richard Child Hill (eds.), Japanese Cities in the World Economy (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1993), 53-82.
[212]   Miyamoto, "Japan's World Cities", 73-74.

the southernmost ward of Osaka City where the karaoke *kissa* Ami and the classroom

cum *kissa* Chou are located, experienced a 65% increase in its population, from 182,660

in 1955 to 301,378 in 1970.[213] The vast majority of these migrants have continued to

live in the area until now, resulting in a demographic distribution highly similar to that

of Asaka (Figure 13). The growth in population and commercial services were

supported again by the development of mass transit to the area: in 1960, the Midosuji

subway line that connected the important commercial hubs of Tennoji, Namba and

Umeda was extended to Nagai and Abiko Stations in Sumiyoshi Ward.
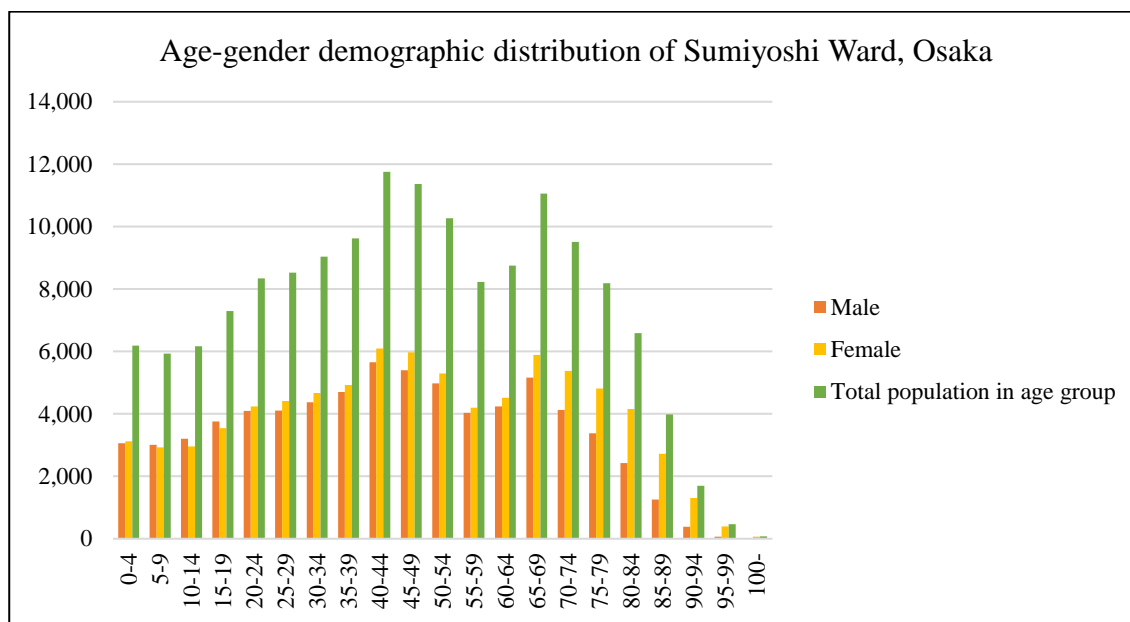
Figure 13: Age-gender demographic distribution graph for Sumiyoshi Ward, 2017.[214]

The age range of Ami's and Chou's regular visitors is around 60 to 80 years old.

It was amid these local developments that Sachi, Ami and Chou came to be

established near train stations Asaka and Sumiyoshi Ward.[215] From its opening in the

---

213   *Sumiyoshi-ku no Kihonteki na Tōkei* (Basic Statistics of Sumiyoshi Ward) (Osaka: City of Osaka, 2016), http://www.city.osaka.lg.jp/sumiyoshi/page/0000161694.html. Accessed on 30 July 2017.
214   Ibid.

early 1980s to August 2013, Sachi was located about a 15-minute walk from the southern side of Asakadai Station, down a quiet side street away from the main thoroughfare. It then moved to a location with similar characteristics at roughly the same distance north of the station. Meanwhile, Ami started off as a regular cafe a five-minute walk down the shopping arcade next to Nagai Station in the 1960s. Master, the current operator, was roped in to help run the place in 2007, and not long after, he installed a karaoke machine to convert the cafe into a karaoke *kissa*. Finally, Chou started off as a karaoke classroom in 2007 in a cramped shop space about a 15-minute walk from Abiko Station. In 2013, the proprietress Sensei moved Chou into a *snack* bar which her retiring friend had run for the past 40 years, and used the opportunity to add a *kissa* operation to her classroom business.

Despite differences in region, Sachi, Ami and Chou seemed very similar in the way they felt highly unassuming and exclusive. At the three venues, the inability to see inside contributed greatly to this unapproachability, with only a nondescript and unappealing wooden door presented to the outside world. This door opened onto a space known by Japanese as a *genkan,* a literal and metaphorical buffer zone between the outside world and the sanctuary of the home. While this may have augmented the sense of homeliness that regular visitors felt, its foreboding dimness and anonymity also turned away would-be casual visitors, as I felt on my first visits to the three venues. I later learned from Sensei and Master that this kind of design was necessary, in order to meet the stringent soundproofing requirements, set by the municipal authorities to ensure acceptable noise levels for all residents in the neighborhood. However, such a design, coupled with a lack of presence on mass media such as the Internet that karaoke

---

[215] For a related discussion on the development of zones of entertainment around train stations, see Sepp Linhart, "*Sakariba*: Zone of "Evaporation" between Work and Home?", Joy Hendry (ed.) <u>Interpreting Japanese Society: Anthropological Approaches</u> (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 231-42.

box chains capitalized upon, meant that these classrooms and *kissas* rarely invited passers-by, especially those who were younger, to enter.

Opening another door from the *genkan,* visitors entered a claustrophobic space no more than fifteen square meters. Sachi, Ami and Chou appeared dull and faded, as none of them had been renovated for decades. Despite the cramped space, a large bar counter, complete with high stools, dominated the floor. Besides seating, the bar counter also provided a boundary behind which the operators and helpers could stock ingredients and utensils, and prepare drinks and snacks for customers. Long sofas or cushioned chairs and tables were set up along the walls, which were adorned with posters autographed by professional *enka* and *kayōkyoku* singers. A single karaoke machine, usually placed at the front or the back of the floor space, played the backing tracks for our singing. The machine was connected to three to four LCD screens, and a similar number of high-quality speakers, situated facing different sides of the *kissa.* There was also a mini-stage near the karaoke machine, where many regulars stood during their performances to add a sense of spectacle. The venues each claimed to seat a maximum of 20 people, but the bulky furniture meant that hardly anybody could move into and out of their seats without shuffling awkwardly, usually to take to the stage or visit the toilet.
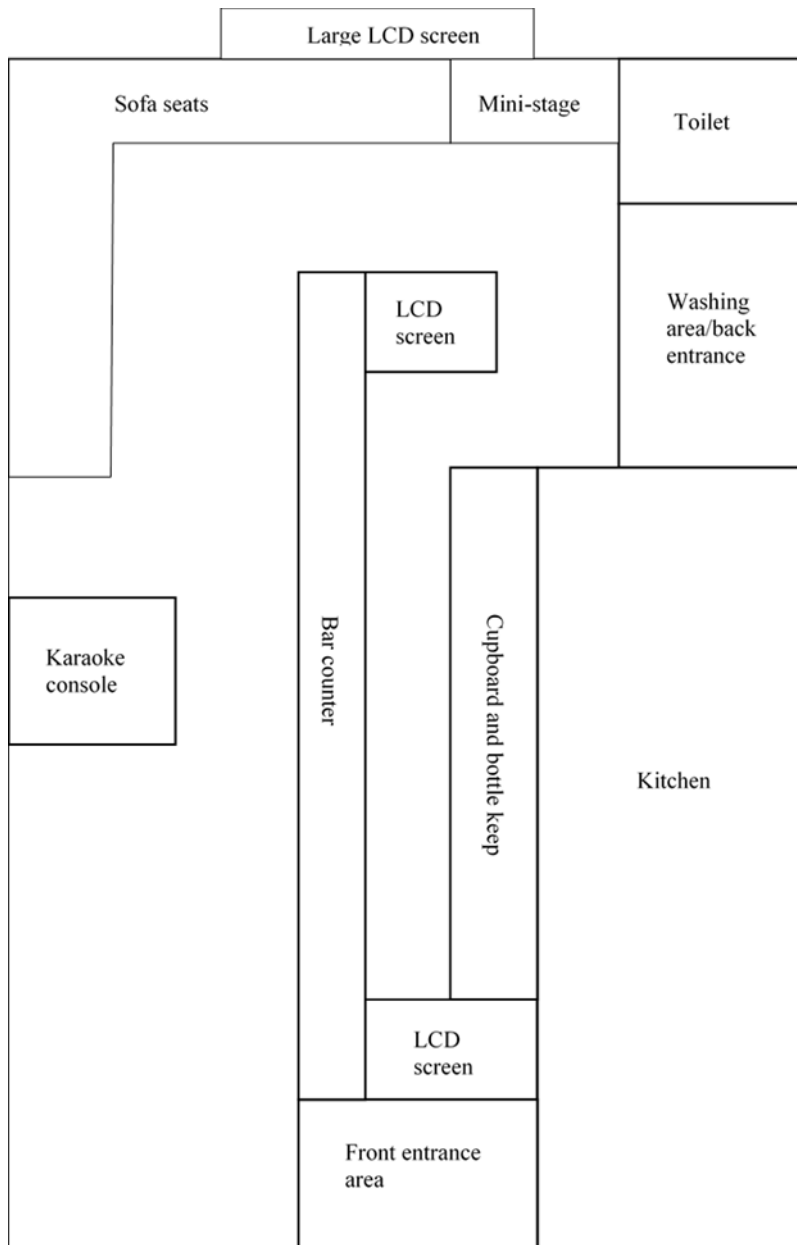
Figure 14: Floor plan of Sachi, which was highly typical of other karaoke *kissas* I visited during fieldwork.

Figure 15: Interior of Ami, with a male regular singing.

The multi-faceted experience of karaoke at classes and *kissas*

Sachi, Ami and Chou drew their customers (and students in Chou's case) overwhelmingly from their neighborhoods and surrounding areas, and many regulars talked about walking or cycling to visit the establishments. As mentioned, these were ultimately commercial enterprises. In the case of Chou's classes, students paid Sensei a monthly fee of 1,500 yen (about 17 Australian dollars at the time of the fieldwork in 2016) to attend the lessons, along with other fees, such as six-month 3,000 yen subscription for a magazine which provided music scores for many *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs, and costume rentals and makeup services for recital and competition appearances. For the *kissa* operations at Sachi, Ami and Chou, customers paid a cover charge, 1,000 yen (about 11 Australian dollars) at Sachi and Chou, and 500 yen (about 5.50 Australian dollars) at Ami, for song, snacks and non-alcoholic drinks. Regular visitors to the classes and *kissas* saw these venues as places where they could find entertainment on a regular basis for entire afternoons or evenings, at a price that was affordable for their pension incomes.

Many visitors often came alone to the classes and *kissas*, and it was extremely rare to see a large group of more than three people enter at once. However, these regulars knew each other to some extent, addressing each other by name and often showing shared recognition of happenings in and around the venues. The gender ratio was different between *kissas* and the classes: while the number of male and female customers fluctuated over the course of my visits to the *kissas*, classes were overwhelmingly dominated by female students (17 to 3). Interestingly, while some male regulars also visited other *kissas* and *snack* bars frequently (and the operators knew about this), almost all the female regulars visited their preferred venue exclusively. Ogi (70), who frequented Chou as both a student of the class and a regular customer of the *kissa* operation, explained, "For women, it's just so much more difficult to go into a new karaoke place, especially alone. That's why most of us only stick to Chou, especially since we came in as Sensei's students originally." The gender ratio and propensity for males to visit multiple places suggested an interesting contradiction about how sociable elderly men and women were.

The core activity in the classes and *kissas* was, of course, singing karaoke. As *kissa* operators, Mama (Sachi), Master (Ami) and Sensei (Chou) enthusiastically beckoned their customers to sing by handing them the remote control for the karaoke machine, not long after they had settled down into their seats. They also helped suggest songs to customers who had trouble deciding what to sing, and even kept song booklets for a few regular customers to aid in these suggestions. Singing was a good way to know other customers, especially for first-time visitors like myself as I described at the start of this chapter, as song choices and praising each other's singing techniques provided easy opportunities to generate conversation. For the classes, singing became a mandatory activity under Sensei's supervision. Here, Sensei's authority over her students was obvious, as they listened to her instructions and guidance and rarely acted

with disobedience. This authority was rooted not only in the traditional *iemoto* hierarchy of "cultural learning" that Chou's classroom followed, but also in Sensei's forceful and charismatic personality, allowing her to hold great sway over students' behavior in the classroom's matters.[216]

Besides singing, however, other activities occurred that were just as important in forming the overall experience of visits of Sachi, Ami and Chou. As others took to the microphone, *kissa* customers would often chat among themselves, paying only cursory attention to whoever was singing. Even during Sensei's lessons at Chou's classes, some students would still sneak in opportunities to converse among themselves if they felt that they were out of Sensei's sight. The topics for conversation varied widely, from gossiping about common acquaintances, to complaining about life at home, to admiring each other's beauty and fashion, to proclamations of admiration and love. During these conversations, karaoke participants had to move close to each other, often speaking into each other's ears, so that they could hear each other over the sound of karaoke. In effect, these close proximity conversations felt like the sharing of secrets. Perhaps in this way, these regulars dispensed with pleasantries and poured their hearts out to each other, and began to develop strong emotional and social ties as they chatted more. Although singing was the core activity around which the karaoke class and *kissa* was organized, these conversations arguably proved to be more important in the overall experience of singing karaoke, especially in its social aspects.

The consumption of food and drinks was another activity that figured as a major part of the karaoke experience at classes and *kissas,* although it did not capture the regulars' attention as much as singing or chatting did. The *kissas* Sachi and Chou, in particular, took the serving of food very seriously. Mama, Sensei and their helpers often toiled in the kitchen to prepare what often amounted to full meals for customers,

---

[216] I discuss the *iemoto* system of learning in greater detail in Chapter 3.

although they did not advertise this level of food offering in the cover charge. Customers thus frequently went home well fed, sometimes even being offered extras to take home. "I get to eat a lot if I come here instead of staying home, so that's why I'm here so often," Nishi, a 72-year-old female regular at Chou, explained. Meal parties were central occasions for Chou's classes, too, providing students with not only more opportunities to gather, chat and make merry, but also to contribute to the classroom by sharing dishes that they had brought from home. Food was thus a central element in generating a sense of homeliness at the *kissas* and classes.

Drinks, particularly alcohol, played an even deeper role at the *kissa*. Although it cost extra to order alcoholic drinks, beer, whiskey and Japanese rice wine were the preferred beverages of most male regulars, and many females too. While non-alcoholic drinks served well in keeping throats well-moisturized during karaoke, alcohol seemed to directly affect customers' moods, allowing them to loosen up to have a more enjoyable experience. This was most often the case with Maki, a 78-year-old male regular at Chou. I often met him in the restaurant next to Chou during lunch when he had yet to take in alcohol, and here he was sober, clear in speech and somewhat restrained, despite his obviously happy demeanor. However, as we moved next door to start singing at Chou, and Maki started to have a few drinks, he would become more rowdy, laugh more frequently and heartily, sing with little recognition of song melodies and rhythms, and even start flirting with the female customers who were with us. In this way, alcohol provided an important tool for transformation, or even escape from "normality", that was vital in making the karaoke experience enjoyable. The benefits of merry inebriation was something Sensei, Master and Mama had to balance with their ethical concerns of making sure their customers did not offend each other, or get ill or injured, during their visits.

The karaoke experience at classes and *kissas* should thus be considered as involving not only the core activity of singing, but also the associated activities of conversation, and food and drink consumption. Together, these activities allowed regular participants to experience karaoke physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. Over the course of my visits to Sachi, Ami and Chou, I particularly noticed three themes through which regulars found meaning and motivation to come back frequently, and worked to influence multiple aspects of the karaoke experience: romance, learning, and temporality. The following chapters of this thesis describe this karaoke experience by considering each of these themes in detail, and show how issues of old age, class and gender intersect in these karaoke classes and *kissas*.

Chapter 2: The Game of Love between Men and Women

It had been a month since I had last met Sensei, the proprietress of Chou. Although I had made weekly visits, these were in the daytime, when she was out conducting karaoke lessons for her other classes around the Osaka region. As I stepped through the double doors and entered on a cold February night, she beamed a wide smile from behind some electronic consoles. "It's been a long time! Nice to see you again! I hear you've been coming regularly in the afternoons. Thank you so much!" She welcomed me warmly, and ushered me to a counter seat at the far end of the premises. There was one other man, Ike, seated at the near end of the counter. Dressed in a polo shirt and jeans, and having a head full of black hair with some gray strands, he projected an aura of youth despite showing some evident signs of old age.

Nishi (72), a student at Chou's classes whom Sensei had also employed to help run the *kissa* operation, prepared the hot coffee that Ike and I had requested. As the karaoke machine had not been started before I arrived, Nishi asked if it was okay for us to start singing karaoke now. Sensei agreed, and Nishi passed the karaoke remote and microphone to Ike and me.

Ike selected *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs. He sang recent releases of both genres as well as slightly older ones from the 1980s and 1990s, and showed great finesse and technique. On his third turn on the microphone, he sang the classic 1974 *kayōkyoku* song *"Uso"* (Lies) by the male singer Nakajō Kiyoshi. The lyrics depicted a female's suspicion of her male lover's infidelity:

Oreta tabako no suigara de	From the stubbed cigarette
Anata no uso ga wakaru no yo	I can see through your lies
Dareka ii onna dekita no ne	You've found yourself another woman

Dekita no ne   Haven't you?

First verse of *"Uso"*. Released by Canyon Records, 1974.

Nishi and Sensei quickly made fun of Ike's song choice:

"You chose this song because you're a big liar!"

"Hey, a liar is singing 'Lies'!"

They laughed hysterically while Ike playfully objected to their mock accusations, claiming that he was "a good, faithful man". Some parts of the song were sung very quickly, and Ike fumbled over the lyrics. This did not go unnoticed by Sensei, who looked at Ike with a mischievous smile that said, "I caught you out there!" We laughed together at Ike's mistake. Ike protested that his tongue couldn't keep up with the relatively fast pace of the songs.

After Ike and I took turns to sing a few more times, Ike asked for a duet with Sensei, who obliged. However, they took a while to settle on a song while looking through the song catalog on the karaoke remote control, and disagreed on a few suggestions they made to each other. "What, '*Kimi wo Hanasai*' (I Won't Let You Go) again? Fine, if that's what you want now," Sensei reluctantly acquiesced to Ike's request. However, she then identified the song "*Moshikashite Part 2*" (Could it Be Part 2), a 1984 *kayōkyoku* duet by Kobayashi Sachiko and Miki Katsuhiko, and said that it would be a better choice. Ike knew this song too, and accepted Sensei's suggestion. Having keyed the song's code into the karaoke system, it was time for their duet performance.

Ike and Sensei took to the mini-stage, and stood side-by-side while slightly facing each other. As they sang, Sensei and Ike looked each other in the eye, and for a moment they were greatly immersed in their song performance. However, during the second verse, Ike noticed that the lyrics again depicted the female suspicion of her male lover, and began to laugh. This made Sensei laugh hysterically as well, and they were unable to sing properly for the rest of the song. However, both of them seemed to enjoy the duet, even if Sensei jokingly chided, "Hey it's all your fault! Don't make us laugh like that!" Nishi said to Ike, "You must have realized that the lyrics talked about your lifestyle, right?" Ike laughed together with Nishi and Sensei in a sort of agreement about their joking accusations about his storied past with women.

Exchanges like these, based on the topics of sexuality and romance, were everyday occurrences on my visits to karaoke *kissas*. Regular customers teased each other or fantasized together about having romantic and sexual desires even at "this age" (*kono toshi ni natte mo*). Men and women also approached the people they had developed a romantic interest in, and tried to find as many opportunities as they could to chat, offer drinks and snacks, and sing together, so that they could capture their interest's attention. Sometimes these attempts succeeded, and men and women developed a substantial level of emotional and physical intimacy. Other times the attempts failed, but the men and women were undeterred, and continued to enjoy flirting with other customers. For the most part, the operators did not seem to mind such romantic exchanges, and sometimes even participated in the teasing and flirting to enliven the atmosphere, or to secure another alcohol order.

Existing research and popular discourse on Japan, which objectify the elderly as mere recipients of care through the "medical gaze", have tended to assume that the

elderly have run out of energy to pursue romantic and sexual experiences.[217] Such ageist

approaches have even criticized the right of the elderly to engage in romantic love,

describing these as "shameful".[218] For example, in his book "Is it a Problem that a

Withered Tree Blooms Again?: A Consultation Guide for the Troubles from Elderly

Romance" (*Kareki ni Hana ga Saitara, Meiwaku desu ka? Kōreisha Renai Toraburu*

Soudanshitsu), Nishimoto Kunio (2013), a lawyer who has written several legal advice

books oriented toward the Japanese general public, depicts elderly romance as a

potential pitfall for many problems, such as inheritance problems, romantic scams,

caring for elderly partners, and children born out of wedlock, to which he offers his

legal interpretation.[219]

However, my experiences at Japanese karaoke *kissas* suggest that these ageist

views of romantic love do not do justice to the everyday lived realities of elderly

Japanese. These aged men and women still carried passions and desires for affection

and intimacy, and actively sought opportunities for such fulfillment. This chapter

discusses how male and female regulars at karaoke *kissas* acted on their romantic

sentiments and desires in various ways to make their karaoke experiences more

enjoyable and fulfilling. To provide the socio-historical context for such activities, I

first describe the dominant ideology regarding gender roles and sexuality in postwar

Japanese conceptualizations of love and intimacy, through which elderly karaoke

participants developed their identities as men and women. I also detail the gendered

aesthetics of romance as portrayed in the *enka* and *kayōkyoku* that they sang. I then

discuss the various kinds of romantic experience in which these gender ideologies and

---

[217] Wilińska & Anbäcken, "In Search of the Everyday Life of Older People in Japan", 439-45.

[218] Kim (2015) lists some of the terms that have been used, such as *"mittomonai"* and *"hazukashii"*. Kim Yongyon, *"Kōreisha no Renai/Kekkon"* (The Romance and Marriage of the Elderly), Naitō Tetsuo and Tamai Hiroshi (eds.), *Kurōzuappu: Kōrei Shakai (Close-up: Elderly Society)* (Tokyo: Fukumura Shuppan, 2015), 163.

[219] Nishimoto Kunio, *Kareki ni Hana ga Saitara, Meiwaku desu ka? Kōreisha Renai Toraburu Soudanshitsu (Is it a Problem that a Withered Tree Blooms Again?: A Consultation Guide for the Troubles from Elderly Romance)* (Tokyo: Gentosha, 2013).

aesthetics operated. Firstly, I look at how songs provided opportunities for nostalgic

remembrance of loved ones who have passed away or left. Secondly, I investigate how

karaoke also provided opportunities to meet possible new romantic partners, and

allowed for the possibility of developing emotional and physical intimacy. I particularly

focus on the activity of singing duets, and explore the sensations that men and women

may have felt when singing with someone they were interested in. Through these

activities, I highlight how the participants' romantic engagements at the karaoke *kissa*

point to a possible lack of affection at home, and a wish to continue to affirm their

virility. I conclude by discussing why karaoke was able to provide this romantic

reprieve, and fulfill participants' wishes for recognition as *otoko to onna*, men and

women with sexual and romantic desires.

Love and intimacy in postwar Japan

As discussed in Chapter 1, scholars of postwar Japan have given much attention to the

issues of gender and sexuality. However, they have generally approached the topic with

what might be termed more orthodox sociological concerns, such as gender equality,

work, and family structure. I use these perspectives as a departure point to explore the

notions of "love" that tie Japanese men and women together. By comparing these

perspectives to recent research on mature sexualities on Japan and elsewhere, I question

how love and intimacy may be thought of and practiced in Japanese later life.[220]

Studies on Japanese love, particularly regarding its affective aspects, are

surprisingly rare. Here, I draw upon the ideas of the two scholars who have conducted

in-depth research on this particular aspect, Sonia Ryang and Tanimoto Naho. In their

---

[220] The discussion of love and sexuality in this chapter deals exclusively with the heterosexual
relationships I observed during my fieldwork at karaoke *kissas*, as I did not come across any homosexual
relationships and what might be considered alternative sexualities. Nevertheless, research on alternative
sexualities in Japan has recently begun to develop rapidly. For a succinct and comprehensive introduction,
see Mark McLelland and Romit Dasgupta (eds.), Genders, Transgenders and Sexualities in Japan
(London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

critical theorizing of love in Japan, they share a common premise that the analysis of ludic or playful elements, such as lust and romance, cannot be ignored. For both scholars, love is both social and embodied.[221] To discuss the dynamic changes in Japanese conceptualizations of love, Ryang and Tanimoto highlight the shifts in position within love that these elements have occupied, particularly over the postwar lifetimes of the elderly participants at the karaoke *kissas*.

A particularly important thread in Ryang's (2006) overall analysis is the gradual separation of sex and love, especially between private individuals/citizens, over the modern Japanese nation-state's movement through the eras of imperialism, postwar economism, and the current economic malaise.[222] She notes that the introduction of ideas of more spiritually-focused "pure love" in the Meiji period, such as *rabu* (a direct transliteration of the English term) and *ai* (selected as the referent for God's love in Japanese translations of the Bible), reduced the pre-modern terms of *iro* and *koi* to a heavier focus on profane and sexual desires.[223] Tanimoto (2008) also highlights the relatively recent introduction of "pure love" romance, and notes that this kind of romantic love did not become hegemonic until at least the mid-1960s.[224] This separation of sexual and ludic elements from ideas of pure love during this period of modernization led to a subsequent major shift in the emotional and bodily aspects of male-female relations.

A major aspect of such postwar gender relations was the continuation from prewar and wartime ideology of the image of the *ryōsai kenbo*, or the "good wife and wise mother", as the ideal image of Japanese femininity.[225] These *ryōsai kenbo* would

---

[221] Sonia Ryang, <u>Love in Modern Japan: Its Estrangement from Self, Sex and Society</u> (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 1-2; Tanimoto Naho, *Renai no Shakaigaku: "Asobi" to Romantiku Rabu no Henyō* (The Sociology of Love: Changes in "Play" and Romantic Love) (Tokyo: Seikyusha, 2008), 231-4.

[222] Ryang, <u>Love in Modern Japan</u>, 1-2.

[223] Ibid., 33, 42.

[224] Tanimoto, *Renai no Shakaigaku*, 73-75.

[225] Ryang, <u>Love in Modern Japan</u>, 61, 72.

now be the perfect marriage partners for the corporate warrior "salaryman" husband, who devoted himself solely to work as the breadwinner of the family. Gender relations in the postwar order was constituted along these patriarchal lines by the male policing of female sexuality. This was mainly achieved through *junketsu kyōiku*, or "purity education", in the postwar Japanese education curriculum. Directed at female students, who were deemed appropriate candidates to be *ryōsai kenbo* (a concept without a male equivalent), *junketsu kyōiku* divorced sexual pleasure completely from ideals of "pure love", in a continuation of a eugenicist approach towards preserving the "purity" of reproduction.[226] "Pure love" was thus portrayed as being pre-sexual: one had to be in love first, before having sex.[227] "Pure love" was also serious: one was devoted to one's partner solely.[228] Sexual play and pleasure were activities that prostitutes, nightclub hostesses, and other undesirable lower-class women (collectively termed as the women of the *mizu shobai*, or "water trade") indulged in, and were unbecoming for "good" (implying middle and upper-class) girls.[229]

This view of "pure love" also meant that women rarely engaged in sexual activities after concluding their reproductive duties. As an unfortunate side-effect of *junketsu kyōiku*'s averse attitude to sex, the baby-boomer women who grew up in this educational curriculum found themselves lacking sexual knowledge and experience, especially from the 1960s onward, when they became wives and mothers.[230] Thus, while many of these women did marry their husbands out of love (rather than through arranged *omiai* marriages) and successfully gave birth to children, once their reproductive duties were fulfilled, they had little idea of the benefits of post-

---

[226] Ibid., 67-69.
[227] Ibid., 66.
[228] Tanimoto, *Renai no Shakaigaku*, 84-85.
[229] Ryang, Love in Modern Japan, 72, 74.
[230] Ibid., 69-70.

reproduction sex in the maintenance of their marriages.[231] Together with the increasing

absence of the husband/father as a result of the invasion of work into "leisure" time,

such as obligatory after-work drinking in bars, and the burden of child-raising for wives,

these conditions made baby-boomer marriages largely asexual.[232] Indeed, all traces of

bodily contact had been erased from the image of the ideal marriage and family.

However, this did not mean that baby-boomer men and women totally eliminated their

desires for affection and/or sexual relations. Husbands continued to visit bars and

prostitutes both within and outside Japan.[233] Anne Allison has famously documented

such nightlife culture as the objectification and commodification of the women of the

mizu shobai solely in order for men to maintain their egos, within work and family lives

that leave little chance for sexual satisfaction with spouses.[234] Allison also notes many

housewives indifference to their husbands' activities outside of the home, describing the

absence as a major component of masculinity that was "inevitable and couldn't be

helped" (*shikata ga nai*).[235] These wives also note that their main reason for remaining

in these marriages was purely for the financial support of their husbands, but otherwise

everyday family life operated well without the men; some wives even seemed to prefer

their husbands to be absent from the home.[236] In terms of addressing affective desires,

Ryang notes activities such as housewives' devotion to romantic soap operas,

culminating in the tremendous popularity of the Korean series "Winter Sonata", and its

male lead Bae Yong Joon, in the early 2000s.[237] Particularly, Ryang suggests that one

---

[231] Ibid., 69; Tanimoto, <u>Renai no Shakaigaku</u>, 73-75.
[232] Ryang, <u>Love in Modern Japan</u>, 88.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Anne Allison, <u>Nightwork: Sexuality, Pleasure, and Corporate Masculinity in a Tokyo Hostess Club</u> (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 181-2, 187.
[235] Ibid., 104-5.
[236] Ibid., 107-110.
[237] Ryang, <u>Love in Modern Japan</u>, 116-122.

reason the latter phenomenon occurred was because Winter Sonata's plot nostalgically recalled the "pure love" that these women had grown up idealizing.[238]

While these baby-boomer men and women came of age in the 1960s and 1970s, the maturation of their marriages into this asexual "norm" occurred as consumerism became an increasingly dominant aspect of Japanese everyday life from the 1980s. Besides the male visits to nightclubs and other establishments of the *mizu shobai* depicted by Allison, Ryang notes the growing prevalence of adultery and infidelity in the 1990s, in which mature married women began to take part. She argues that during this period the best-selling novels depicting adultery, such as *Shitsurakuen* (Paradise Lost), symbolized the unsustainability of the asexual marriage norm established in earlier decades.[239] Tanimoto (2008) argues that with the bursting of the economic bubble in the early 1990s plunging the Japanese economy into a malaise that it has yet to recover from, and the increasing emphasis on materialistic consumption as a way to cope with the uncertainty and alienation stemming from this, the pursuit of love has taken on increasingly ludic elements.[240] She sees the current ludic approach towards romantic love as *asobi* (play), brought about by the financial and emotional uncertainty that now characterizes marriage in Japan, as both a form of risk hedging against other imagined romantic possibilities, and as a form of consumption through which the fluid and uncertain nature of contemporary love is made enjoyable.[241] Within this approach to romantic love, both men and women emphasize sensory and emotional experiences and

---

[238] Ibid., 118-9.
[239] Ibid., 115-6.
[240] Tanimoto, *Renai no Shakaigaku*, 231-34.
[241] Ibid., 213-24. Tanimoto argues for the risk hedging interpretation based on Anthony Giddens' idea of the high-risk society of late modernity, and for the consumption interpretation though Zygmunt Bauman's ideas of liquidity and the primacy of consumption of late modern society. See also Anthony Giddens, Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 1991); and Zygmunt Bauman, Liquid Modernity (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 1999).

being "in the moment", rather than the goal of marriage.[242] The mature married women who delved into extramarital affairs that Ryang discusses can be understood as having realized the possibilities of such a mode of romantic love in providing the kinds of emotional and physical fulfillment that their asexual marriages could not/cannot.[243]

The theories of Japanese love presented by Tanimoto, and to a lesser extent Ryang, are based mainly on textual readings of cultural phenomena and mass media products centered on a younger audience demographic. However, I consider their arguments in depth, because the desire for love and affection that the elderly regulars at karaoke *kissas* often hinted at their own changing understandings of romance and sexuality in ways that mirror at least partially the ideas of Tanimoto and Ryang. Indeed, besides the male bar regulars and female drama fans described by Ryang, Japanese investigative research, such as that by Kobayashi Teruyuki (2004) and Kim Yongyon (2015), has revealed that a substantial number of elderly Japanese, both male and female, retain a level of desire and capability for sexual and emotional intimacy.[244] They argue that these erotic engagements have very real benefits for improving the physical and mental quality of life, and thus more research and advocacy is needed to promote awareness of such issues in discussions about future models of aging.[245] Contrary to popularly held notions of old age (the "medical gaze"), it seems inevitable that elderly Japanese continue to hold desires for physical and emotional intimacy.

Here, I wish to introduce two conceptual developments that have been developed in the nebulous scholarship on elderly sexuality and intimacy. Firstly, Nana Okura Gagne's (2014) research on salsa clubs in Tokyo posit these leisure establishments as a kind of space of suspended sexual morality, in which the gender

---

[242] Tanimoto, *Renai no Shakaigaku*, 232-3.
[243] Ryang, Love in Modern Japan, 116.
[244] Kobayashi Teruyuki, *Jukunen Renai Kōza: Kōrei Shakai no Sei wo Kangaeru* (Lecture on Mature Romance: Thinking about Sex in an Aged Society) (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 2004), 16-21; Kim, "*Kōreisha no Renai/Kekkon*", 165-8.
[245] Kobayashi, *Jukunen Renai Kōza*, 234-5; Kim, "*Kōreisha no Renai/Kekkon*", 168.

relations expressed through the aesthetic ideology of salsa override the hegemonic gender discourse of everyday Japanese social life. The aesthetics and sociality of salsa club participation construct a "parasexuality" (a concept borrowed from Peter Bailey (1990)), in which male and female dancers are able to express an alternative kind of sexuality that provides liberation (even if only temporary) from the straitjacket of hegemonic gender roles in Japan, through the challenging of Japanese ideas of sensuality and bodily expression, and the suspension of the stable identities and relationships of everyday life.[246] Secondly, Torbjörn Bildtgård & Peter Öberg (2017) have called for a greater understanding of the structural contexts of elderly intimacy, with their study of older Swedes' intimate relationships particularly attentive to the emergence of a post-retirement "third age" before the onset of frailty and dependence, the development of ideologies of love and affect more centered on individual self-actualization, and the unique existential structure of elderly life characterized by the dilemma of having greatly increased free time, but little time left in life. Their ensuing work thus bridges the macro and micro perspectives, by detailing individual experiences and biographies within local Swedish sociocultural history and trends.[247] I refer to the concepts of parasexuality and contextually-based understanding because they promise an understanding of elderly intimacy that are grounded in the local conditions and nuances of Japanese life in general, and the karaoke *kissa* specifically.

Situating this chapter within such nascent efforts to incorporate issues of later life sexuality into an understanding of elderly life and well-being both in and outside Japan, I study how concepts of love and intimacy figure to create enjoyable experiences in karaoke *kissas*. In recent years, Japanese popular media, including print and social

---

[246] Nana Okura Gagne, "Romance and Sexuality in Japanese Latin Dance Clubs", Ethnography 15(4), (2014), 446-68. See also Peter Bailey, "Parasexuality and Glamour: the Victorian Barmaid as Cultural Prototype", Gender and History 2(2), (1990), 148-72.

[247] Torbjörn Bildtgård and Peter Öberg, Intimacy and Ageing: New Relationships in Later Life (Bristol: Policy Press, 2017), 13-28, 159.

media platforms, have provided examples of the (re-)kindling of intimacy within the mature marriage. For instance, in 2014 the publishing company Shufu to Seikatsu Sha released a photo book titled "*Futari no Oshare*" (Our Fashion), introducing the fashion and lifestyles of twelve old-age couples.[248] More recently from 2016, Bon and Pon, a married couple in their sixties who post onto various social media platforms stories of their activities together and photos of their coordinated outfits.[249] However, in my fieldwork, the cases of romantic courtship and intimacy I came across were of men and women who sought these feelings and sensations with other partners away from their spouses. The ensuing narrative in this chapter is thus not strictly limited to the husband-wife dyad, but also explores the implications of extramarital relationships, and the role that karaoke *kissas* play in them.

Passion and romance in *enka* and *kayōkyoku*

The asexual image of the elderly in Japanese public discourse seems all the more surprising when we consider the prevalence of romantic themes in the genres of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* popular among older people. Within these genres, romance is enacted lyrically through several key words depicting male-female relations. Although the participants sang more recent songs in addition to classic hits, my analysis of romantic tropes in *enka* and *kayōkyoku* is roughly based on Christine Yano's (2002) and Mita Munesuke's (1992) taxonomy of themes, as the lyrical corpus in these genres has remained almost the same since their research in the 1980s and 1990s. These themes set

---

[248] Shufu to Seikatsu Sha, *Futari no Oshare* (Our Fashion) (Tokyo: Shufu to Seikatsu Sha, 2014).
[249] Bon to Pon, *Bon to Pon Ofisharu Burogu* (Bon and Pon's Official Blog), https://lineblog.me/bon_pon/. Accessed on 26 October 2018; @bonpon511, bon.pon, Instagram page, https://www.instagram.com/bonpon511/. Accessed on 26 October 2018.

a "musical habitus" that allows karaoke participants and listeners to "consume the song at a primal level, through direct emotional, even bodily, appeal."[250]

In Mita's (1992) analysis of key words in *enka* and *kayōkyoku* from the Showa period (1925-1989), the main referent for love is *koi*, instead of *ai*, which is used mainly as a verb (*aishiteru*, "to love") or *rabu*, which is almost never present.[251] This use of *koi* is deliberate: romance in these genres is typically depicted with a heavy focus on sensuality and emotions, and often conflicts with the established social order:

Hoho ni kirakira hikaru shizuku wa	The drops that glisten on my cheek
Koi no kakera yo namida ja nai wa	Are pearls of my love, not my tears
Yozora wo megake nagetsukete yaru	I'll throw them at the night sky
Hoshikuzu ni nare aitsu nanka	Go be a speck of stardust, you who left me

"*Hoshikuzu no Koi*" (Stardust Love), a *kayōkyoku* song by male singer Hashiri Yūsuke. Released by Nippon Columbia, 2016.

Aishitemo aishitemo	No matter how much I love you
Aa, hito no tsuma	You're the wife of another
Akaku saitemo fuyu no hana	We're nothing but a winter flower, no matter how brightly we bloom
Saite sabishii, sazanka no yado	We're lonely blooms at the inn of the camellia flower

---

[250] Yano, <u>Tears of Longing</u>, 91. See also Pierre Bourdieu, <u>Outline of a Theory of Practice</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

[251] Yano, <u>Tears of Longing</u>, 94. See also Mita Munesuke, <u>Social Psychology of Modern Japan</u>, Stephen Suloway (trans.) (London: Kegan Paul International, 1992).

"*Sazanka no Yado*"

A key word that occurs very frequently is *yume*, or dream.[252] In both genres, dreams inevitably reminisce about past loves, as they are referred to in the past tense. This kind of reminiscence highlights the inaction and resignation at the end of dreams, and the detachment of passionate romantic feelings from reality. The kind of passionate romance denoted by *koi* is fleeting and perishable, and it is this ephemeral nature that makes it beautiful:

Anata ni dakarete	Embraced by you
Anata ni dakarete shirimashita	Embraced by you, I understood
Yume no owari wo	The end of our dream
Koi hitoha	The lone leaf of love

"*Koi Hitoha*" (The Lone Leaf of Love)*,* a *kayōkyoku* song by male singer Teramoto Keisuke. Released by Crown Records, 2016.

The next most frequently used key word is *kokoro*, or the heart and soul.[253] The romantic feelings of *koi* depicted in *enka* and *kayōkyoku* are felt and spoken from the heart and soul, even if sometimes they are not expressed clearly to romantic partners.

Anata…anata…modotte yo	My dear, my dear, please come back
Ai ni kite yo…	Please come back to me
Kokoro no namida ka	Are these my heart's tears

---

[252] Yano, <u>Tears of Longing</u>, 94.
[253] Ibid., 96.

Shitoshito to	That fall so gently?
Mado wo kosame ga nurasu yoru	On this night gentle rain falls on the window

"*Aishū no Sake*" (The *Sake* of Sorrow), an *enka* song by female singer Kim Yonja. Released by Crown Records, 2016.

The longing and reminiscence of unfulfilled *koi* is, of course, heartache. Comparing these songs with "Euro-American popular songs" (it is not clear which genres specifically), Yano suggests that heartache in *enka* and *kayōkyoku* is left to continue without resolution, and that it is this unrequited love, which is sincere but impermanent, that makes it worth idealizing and aestheticizing.[254] A couple of important imageries mark the difference between being in and out of love. The first is the heat metaphor: a heart in love is warm and burning, while heartbreak is cold and freezing. The second is the image of flowers and leaves: the heart blooms in love, while it wilts at the end of love:

Female: *Yoru no Sapporo, anata ni aete*	When I met you that Sapporo night
Female: *Itetsuku kokoro ni akari ga tomoru*	A flame lighted in my frozen heart

"*Kita Kūkō*" (Northern Airport), a *kayōkyoku* duet by male singer Hama Keisuke and female singer Kye Unsook. Released by Toshiba EMI, 1987.

Itsuka wakareru sadame demo	Even if we were fated to part
Towa no enishi wo shinjiteta	I believed in our everlasting bond

---

[254] Ibid.

Kiri no hitoha ga ochiru no wo mite	Watching the lone paulownia leaf fall
Aki no otozure shiru you ni	I felt the coming of autumn

"*Koi Hitoha*".

Futari, yorimichi, mawarimichi	The two of us, detouring, taking the long way around
Itsuka sakaseru	Someday we will bloom
Tsuresoibana yo	As companion flowers

"*Tsuresoibana*" (Companion Flowers), an *enka* song by female singer Masaki Yōko. Released by Crown Records, 2016.

Kokoro is a highly gendered concept. Many songs written with a female perspective sing about *onna-gokoro*, or "a woman's heart", but the opposite term *otoko-gokoro* ("a man's heart") is non-existent.[255] *Onna-gokoro* is committed to the man she loves, as expressed in terms such as *tsukusu* (to serve faithfully) and *hitosuji* (faithful). But frequently this love does not last as men depart, leaving her to be torn apart by her longing on the one hand, and desire to move forward on the other. This painful lingering affection is called *miren*.[256]

Ah, yurari yureru furiko no you ni	Ah, just like a swaying and swinging pendulum
Onna-gokoro ga yurameite	My "woman's heart" is wavering

---

[255] Ibid., 97.
[256] Ibid., 165-66.

Ima watashi kizuitano	I've just come to realize
Zutto anata wo aishiteta	I've always loved you

"*Furiko*" (Pendulum), a *kayōkyoku* song by male singer Wakahara Ryō. Released by Holiday Japan, 2016.

Horeta otoko ni tsukusu no wa	To serve faithfully the man you love
Sou yo, onna no ikigai yo	Yes, that's the purpose of a woman's life

"*Tsuresoibana*".

Nigetemitatte shiawase ni	Even if I tried to escape (from this love)
Nareru ate nado nai watashi	I can never be happy
Ushirogamihiku kamome no mure yo	Dear seagulls that ever pulling me back
Dōka tsutaete, tsutaete dōka	Please tell him, tell him please
Ima mo…ima mo koishii	I still miss him now…even now
Kaikyō miren	Lingering affection at the harbor inlet

"*Kaikyō Miren*" (Lingering Affection at the Harbor Inlet), an *enka* song by female singer Mizuki Kaori. Released by Crown Records, 2016.

The first verse of "*Kaikyō Miren*" presents another crucial theme in the beautiful wretchedness of passionate love in *enka* and *kayōkyoku*: tears, or *namida*.[257] Again, it is almost always women who cry for love: the example of "*Aishū no Sake*" earlier provides a clear example of female tears that always fall privately, gently and beautifully. Tears are never forced, but well up from the *kokoro* when the sadness becomes too much to bear:[258]

Ochiru namida wa miren desu	These falling tears show my longing
Tsurai kedo	Painful as they are

"*Koi Momiji*" (Autumn Leaves of Love), an *enka* song by female singer Kōzai Kaori. Released by Polydor, 1992.

Botoru ni wakareta hi wo kaite	I wrote down the date we parted on the bottle
Sotto namida no koyubi kamu	I bite my little finger hiding my tears

"*Omoidezake*" (*Sake* of Memories), an *enka* song sung by female singer Kobayashi Sachiko. Released by Warner Music Japan, 1979.

Men, on the other hand, are encouraged *not* to cry:[259]

Tsurai namida ya kuyashisa wo	I suppress my bitter tears and regrets

---

257 Ibid., 98-100. See also Mita, <u>Social Psychology of Modern Japan</u>, 31.
258 Yano, <u>Tears of Longing</u>, 99-100. The examples are also cited from Yano.
259 Ibid., 98. The examples are also cited from Yano.

Hara ni osamete niōdachi	Deep in my guts, and stand firm with feet apart

"*Otoko-michi*" (The Path of a Man), an *enka* song by female singer Nakamura Mitsuko. Released by Toshiba-EMI, 1991.

Kimeta michi nara otoko nara	If you are a man and have decided your path
Naku na, nurasu na, yoru no ame	Don't cry, don't get drenched, in the evening rain

"*Otoko no Jōwa*" (Love Story of a Man), an *enka* song by female singer Sakamoto Fuyumi. Released by Toshiba-EMI, 1989.

Frequently accompanying these tears is the drinking of alcohol.[260] While the drinks may generally be referred to as *osake* (alcohol in general terms), often the alcoholic drink of choice is Japanese rice wine, *sake*. Drinking, as understood in these songs and also by the participants at karaoke *kissas*, allows one to let his or her hair down, and express the *kokoro*. In other words, drinking allows one to feel emotions to the fullest extent:

Anata, anata, samishiiyo	My dear, my dear, I'm so lonely
Ai ni kite yo…	Please come to me
Osake wo nomu tabi horohoro to	With each drink, rolling drunk
Yoru yo watashi wo naze nakasu	Oh night, why do you make me cry?

---

[260]   Ibid., 100.

"*Aishū no Sake*".

Namida ni wa ikutsu mo no omoide ga aru	There are many memories in these tears
Kokoro ni mo ikutsu ka no kizu mo aru	And there are many wounds in this heart
Hitorizake, tejakuzake,	I drink alone, pouring for myself,
Enka wo kikinagara	Listening to *enka*
Hororizake, sonna yoru mo	Getting a little tipsy, on nights like this
Tamanya naa iisa	Sometimes it's not so bad

"*Sake yo*" (Oh, *Sake*), an *enka* song by male singer Yoshi Ikuzo. Released by Tokuma Japan Communications, 1988.

Drinking alcohol is a private way of facing heartache, but more often than not, the drinking is implied to take place in *snack* bars and other related drinking establishments (including karaoke *kissas*) called *sakaba*. This is implied not only in the karaoke music videos that play during *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs about heartache, but also frequently in the lyrics, especially for *kayōkyoku* duets. This formula persists even in the latest song and music video releases for these genres. While drinking alone at bars and karaoke *kissas* mark the painful end to passionate romance, these *sakaba* may not only nurse broken hearts, but also bring forth meetings and opportunities for new secret relationships. The heavily Western blues-influenced melodies seduce men and women into intimate relationships:

Female: *Kokoro no soko made shibireru you na*	Sending chills to the bottom of my heart
Male: *Toiki ga setsunai sasayaki dakara*	You whispered to me in sad breaths
Female: *Namida ga omowazu waitekite*	Unbidden tears welled up
Male: *Nakitakunaru no sa, kono ore mo*	You made me want to cry too
Both: *Tōkyō de hitotsu, Ginza de hitotsu*	We became one in Tokyo, we became one in Ginza[261]
Both: *Wakai futari ga hajimete atta*	The first time we two young people met
Both: *Shinjitsu no koi no monogatari*	A true love story

"*Ginza no Koi no Monogatari*" (Ginza Love Story), a *kayōkyoku* duet by male singer Ishihara Yūjiro and female singer Makimura Junko. Released by Teichiku Records, 1966.

Female: *Nomisugita no wa anata no sei yo*	It's your fault that I've drunk too much
Male: *Yowai onna no itoshisa wo*	The loveliness of a weak woman
Both: *Dakishimete, dakishimete, kaeshitakunai*	Hold me, hold me, I don't want to let go
Both: *Mizuwari, yukizuri, furui kizu*	Diluted *sake*, a casual encounter, old heartaches

---

[261] A major night entertainment district in Tokyo.

Both: *Otoko to onna no rabu gēmu*   The love game between

                                          men and women

"*Otoko to Onna no Rabu Gēmu*" (The Love Game between Men and Women), a
kayōkyoku duet by male singer Aoi Shirō and female singer Hino Mika.
Released by Polydor, 1987.

While men and women both drink to cope with their heartaches in *enka* and
kayōkyoku, they are portrayed very differently in the stories told by song lyrics (and
karaoke videos). Women are "found" drinking alone at the *sakaba* by the men who
"visit" occasionally, and make approaches to the passive women.

Enka and *kayōkyoku* thus provide a rich corpus that beautifies and aestheticizes
passionate love, and makes it highly desirable. In addition, it tells listeners and karaoke
participants that this kind of romance is available to them also, through the interestingly
reflexive approach that describes the chance meetings and flirtations occurring at the
very *sakaba* places where *enka* and *kayōkyoku* are enjoyed communally. In the next few
sections I introduce some instances of affectionate behavior, ranging from flirtation to
well-developed emotional and physical intimacy, to see how such a song corpus
influenced or resonated with the interactions between male and female regulars at
karaoke *kissas*.

Coming to the *kissa* as individual men and women

I came to Ami on a chilly Thursday afternoon in March 2016, hoping to meet Tsuru
(76), a male regular, for yet another of our almost weekly chats. By this time, I had been
coming to Ami regularly for the past two months, and developed a regular rhythm of

visiting on Wednesdays or Thursdays.[262] True to my hopes, Tsuru had indeed come today, taking the sofa seat closest to the door. Encouraged by Master (73), Ami's operator, I took my usual seat along the sofa at the table next to his, and we greeted each other by asking about our past week.

We were soon joined by Miki (78). As she entered the *kissa*, she smiled widely to both of us. "It's nice to see the both of you again!" she remarked happily. Master ushered her into a seat between Tsuru and me. Tsuru and I both shifted from our seats slightly to make space for her. "Maybe I should sit next to the young man!" she joked. However, she decided to sit next to Tsuru.

Tsuru and Miki were both long-time regulars at Ami, and had gotten to know each other through their time there. Tsuru had regularly visited Ami for seven years, although he had known about the *kissa* from before as he used to visit other drinking and karaoke establishments in the vicinity. He explained his reason for becoming a regular here:

My wife passed away at that time. I loved her whole-heartedly (*ichizu*), and never harbored the thought of going astray (*uwaki*). Without her, I became bored and lonely. Coming here helped me to deal with that.

Tsuru had a daughter, but she had married and did not visit him often. Since becoming a regular at Ami, he became an informal leader of sorts, regularly starting conversations with other customers, and inputting song requests into the karaoke machine for other customers who could not operate the remote control, whenever Master was unavailable. I also came under his wing as I came to visit Ami regularly. He would dispense life advice to me in our lengthy conversations, and introduce other

---

[262] I discuss further the issue of temporal rhythm, especially in elderly life, in Chapter 4.

customers upon first encounter. In fact, I had come to refer to Miki using this very affectionate form of her name because that was how Tsuru called her.

Tsuru's pieces of wisdom were based on the rags-to-riches story of his earlier life. A poorly-performing student who migrated to Osaka from rural Kagoshima (in the southwestern-most tip of Kyushu) straight out of middle school in the mid-1950s, he found blue-collar work as a furniture manufacturer. It was here that Tsuru picked up enough skills and knowledge to found his own furniture company, which he nurtured over decades into a sizable company that provided bulk orders for hospitals and hotels. As he showed me the furniture catalog (which bore his surname on the company logo printed on its front cover) that he still carried with him all the time, he often told me that he became successful and happy because he was never over-ambitious and too greedy. "*Bochi-bochi de ee ya*," ("just keep going little by little" in Kansai dialect) he would frequently remind me. He did not specify when he retired, nor the fate of his company after retirement. He seemed completely satisfied to have left, and rejected what he felt to be the trap of becoming too obsessed with attaining an upper-class lifestyle. "I retired because I didn't want to be consumed by greed. And now, I'm happily (*tanoshiku*) enjoying my life," he explained. After retiring, Tsuru spent most of his time going around different karaoke *kissas* (in the day) and *snacks* (in the evening), driving to the Nagai area from his house in neighboring Sakai City, but also leaving a bicycle here to quickly move in between establishments. Thus, while Tsuru was a regular customer at Ami, visiting for four to five hours at least twice a week, this was but one of his several haunts for karaoke.

Miki had been a regular at Ami for quite some time before her husband passed away five years ago. She explained how she came to visit often:

Even when he was fine and healthy, he'd encourage me to come here to sing and have some coffee. He'd then come pick me up after a few hours, and all our neighbors knew that too. He said that it was stressful to stay home all the time, so he told me to come here to sing.

Unlike Tsuru, who rarely talked about his family, Miki seemed all too happy to speak about hers. She was born and raised in Wakayama, her mother's hometown. Miki did not have particularly fond memories of her childhood. She was frustrated that her father, who wanted her to become a schoolteacher, made her study a lot, even though she generally struggled with grades. She noted, however, that she scored well in music classes, and loved to sing. Upon moving to Osaka for work after graduating from middle school in the mid-1950s, she met her late husband, and started a family with him. She spoke very lovingly about her husband, and said that she was still very much in love with him. She was very proud of her children and grandchildren, and waxed lyrical about how they had both gone to university, as she showed me some photos which she kept in her wallet. She talked happily about her son's frequent impromptu visits to the apartment from his current home in Nara Prefecture, and her daughter's offer to live together in another apartment elsewhere in the south of Osaka. However, she insisted that she was better off living alone:

My daughter lives on a very high floor, so that's kind of scary. Besides, she's still close by, and so is my sister. So although she says that she'd take care of me if we lived together, I thought that it'd be easier on both of us if I lived alone here, even if my place isn't as good as hers.

It was clear that Tsuru and Miki had considerable freedom of activity in their daily lives, especially after being widowed. They always came to Ami individually, rather than with children. Coupled with the kind of privacy that Ami provided with its soundproofing and barely visible interior, these conditions provided interesting opportunities for regulars like Tsuru and Miki to interact with each other as *otoko to onna,* men and women with sexual and romantic desires.

"My wife will get angry in heaven!"

As Miki settled down next to Tsuru at the same table, Tsuru smiled playfully. "Don't you get too close to me now, my wife (*shinda nyōbo*) will get angry in heaven!" Tsuru said to her laughing. Miki also laughed, and replied, "So will my late husband up in heaven (*tengoku no otōsan*)!"

Miki then noticed Tsuru's bag of cushions, and told him that she thought it was something else instead. "That's for when my buttocks hurt from sitting on these sofas too much! Ah, but we used to sing with you sitting on my lap, didn't we? We can't do that now though, because it'll just hurt a lot," Tsuru said.

They turned to me and talked about their long-time connection to each other. "We've known each other through this place for quite some time now. Somehow, we also keep running into each other even outside of Ani. For example, I would be walking around at the nearby park, and there she would be, walking towards me," Tsuru said.

"Yes, and we would just simply raise our hand and slightly bow to say hi to each other. We wouldn't stop and talk for long outside though. We didn't want to raise the suspicion of others, particularly our families. They'd immediately sense something fishy (*ayashii*)," Miki added.

I was fascinated by their frank revelation of the kind of physical and emotional intimacy that they shared. This was not something that I had specifically wanted to

investigate when I first came to Ami, but Tsuru and Miki's open account and behavior, at least in front of Master and me, remained etched in my mind even after the fieldwork period. Their latter explanations also revealed that part of their emotional bonding came from a sense of shared secrecy, that they were doing something they knew their families and acquaintances would not easily approve of. To them, Ami was the only place where they felt that they could indulge in their desires for romantic interactions.

As the afternoon passed, they began to sing a few songs in turn. Miki did not know how to use the karaoke remote, and usually relied on Master to enter songs for her (she would sing whatever Master selected). However, with Master now napping, Tsuru took the initiative to input Miki's song requests, and even recommended songs for her to sing. Tsuru selected "*Futarizake*" (Shared *Sake*), a 1980 *enka* song by the female singer Kawanaka Miyuki, while Miki selected "*Onna no Michi*" (The Way of a Woman), a 1972 *enka* song by the male group Pinkara Trio. During the performances, they clapped, and praised each other's wonderful singing. Both of them noted that the songs were nostalgic (*natsukashii*), as they were favorites of their late spouses. This led to some common reminiscing, and Miki was particularly bubbly in talking about her family. "My late wife is probably getting really jealous right now that we're so friendly with each other!' Tsuru commented.

Miki then took out the old photos from her wallet that she had shown me previously. She pointed at a stout and handsome middle-aged man seated in a train carriage. "This is my husband, when we were on the train to Kanazawa. He looked pretty relaxed, right?" Miki asked us, with a considerable hint of gushing. Tsuru told Miki that he was very handsome and stylish (*otokomae ya na*), and I agreed. "Oh, he was a big hit with the ladies (*moteta*)! It caused me quite a bit of worry!" she replied laughing. Both Tsuru and I laughed along.

She then showed us a photo of four young adults at a rocky cliff, and told us about her two sons and two daughters. "This is my elder son, when he was attending university at Kanazawa. And these are my daughters, when all of us in the family went to visit him. They look alike, don't they?" she asked excitedly. We replied that her children looked very healthy and happy. "I'll bring along more photos next time round," she said as she kept her photos back into her wallet.

Miki and Tsuru continued to chat with each other frequently over the course of the afternoon. Much of their conversation centered on their interactions with their children, and concerns over their health. Miki complained about some of her aches and pains. She held her hand up in front of Tsuru to show him the exact parts where it hurt, and Tsuru held her hand for closer inspection. "Yes, it does tend to hurt here, doesn't it?" Tsuru empathized, and gave her some advice about pain relief.

A few turns later, it was Tsuru's turn to sing again. He had selected "*Hoshikage no Warutsu*" (Starlight Waltz), a 1966 *kayōkyoku* classic by the male singer Sen Masao. "I dedicate this song to you," he said to Miki through the microphone, as the intro melody started. "Oh my, what a pleasure," Miki commented with a smile. She seemed very pleased by Tsuru's dedication, and looked on admiringly as Tsuru sang:

Wakareru koto wa tsurai kedo	Breaking up is hard
Shikata ga nainda, kimi no tame ni	But we have no choice, it's for your sake
Wakare ni hoshikage no warutsu wo utaou	In parting, let me sing you a starlight waltz
Tsumetai kokoro ja naindayo	It's not that I'm cold hearted
Tsumetai kokoro ja naindayo	It's not that I'm cold hearted
Ima demo suki da, shinu hodo ni	I still love you, till my death

"*Hoshikage no Warutsu*". Released by Taihei Onkyō, 1966.

Miki applauded. "You're such a great singer!" she praised again. I poked fun at Tsuru about the end of the first verse. Miki laughed loudly, and commented, "My late husband would be so angry hearing this!" She must have been very pleased to laugh so heartily, since she was meek and quiet at other times, especially when Tsuru was not around.[263]

Miki realised that Master had yet to select a song for her to sing next, even though he had woken up by now. "Master, put another song in for me (Master, *irete na*)!" She said. Tsuru took particular attention to the way she said the sentence without any referent, and laughed heartily. "Hey, don't just go around telling people to put 'things' in!" Tsuru said to Miki, referring to sexual intercourse. Miki immediately caught onto Tsuru's lewd joke. She looked slightly embarrassed but took it in good fun, playfully slapping Tsuru on the arm while turning to me in laughter. "Oh dear, my late wife would be so angry with me!" Tsuru commented as he continued laughing.

By now, it was four o'clock in the afternoon, a full two hours after the three of us had gathered. Miki decided that it was now time for her to return home. "My husband (*otōsan*) will get suspicious if I stay out too late," she explained humorously.

"Ah yes, you have to go report in front of his altar right?" Tsuru replied with laughter.

"He's still very much alive to me!" Miki replied in good humor, revealing why she had left out the word *tengoku* (in heaven) in this instance.

---

[263] For example, she refused on several occasions my request to conduct an interview with her. The information I managed to get about her family and biography was mainly through informal chats, often with Tsuru also sitting in.

As Miki gathered her things and prepared to leave, they promised to meet here again soon. Miki also turned to me and made the same promise, before paying Master her share for today and exiting Ami.

Participating in karaoke at Ami thus provided Tsuru and Miki very intricate ways through which they could act upon their romantic desires directed both at the past and the present. It was obvious that Tsuru and Miki still thought greatly about their late spouses, by mentioning them as the main reason for the selection of songs, and joking that they were incurring possible jealousy. At the same time, however, Tsuru and Miki also took up the opportunities that the karaoke *kissa* provided for new romantic and intimate encounters focused solely on the present. Despite recognizing their decreasing bodily functions and a disdain towards elderly romance in the general Japanese public, Tsuru and Miki were able to recapture the kind of romantic passion and joy that they had previously experienced with their late spouses. Indeed, Ami was the only place that they could do so. In this way, karaoke at Ami was an important activity through which Tsuru and Miki could both reminisce about past loves, and re-experience the emotional and sensorial joys of "being in love" in the present. Put in another way, the *enka* and *kayōkyoku* that they sang recalled memories of their late spouses while also acting as a vital catalyst for joyful romantic moments now.

Romance and intimacy as play

Miki's and Tsuru's bliss as a romantic couple did not last for long, however. Shortly after this meeting at Ami, Tsuru developed complications in his digestive system. It was decided that he needed to undergo emergency surgery, and he remained in hospital for the next three months. It was a great relief when I finally met Tsuru again in August, having not known about his health problem. "It was a miracle that I survived," he told Master and me.

But his health was not the most important reason why Miki and Tsuru stopped being affectionate with each other. When Tsuru finally came back to Ami, it was to meet another woman, Yoshiko, whom I had not seen before. I did not manage to ask for her age directly, but she must have been in her late sixties or early seventies. Compared to most older Japanese women (including Miki) who wore non-existent makeup and dull-colored blouses and pants, Yoshiko put on brighter makeup and wore flashier blouses and skirts. Perhaps she had dressed for the occasion.

They seemed to enjoy each other's company greatly throughout the afternoon, as they sang, drank tea, and nibbled on the croquettes that Yoshiko had brought. They also shared the microphone, taking turns to sing verses from some of Tsuru's favorite tunes in his late wife's memory, such as the 1967 *kayōkyoku* classic by Ishihara Yūjirō, "*Yogiri yo Konya mo Arigatou*" (Thanks for Tonight Too, Night Mist).

Besides being clearly comfortable with each other on an emotional level, it was clear that Tsuru was also on rather physically intimate terms with Yoshiko. Early on in the karaoke session, Tsuru wanted to retrieve a pouch, and began searching around. Without telling Tsuru, Yoshiko reached into one of the pockets in his pants, and soon took out the black pouch that Tsuru had been looking for.

As Tsuru turned to me to explain how he had lost much weight because of his health problem, Yoshiko consoled him. "You don't look too skinny at all. These clothes still fit you very well," she told Tsuru, and pointed to the floral shirt that he wore today.

"Do you want to feel it directly?" Tsuru replied pointing to his stomach. Yoshiko stuck a hand beneath Tsuru's shirt to feel his stomach.

"See, it's really slimmer now, right?" Tsuru asked.

"Don't worry, you're still fine!" Yoshiko replied, her hand still inside Tsuru's shirt, close to his groin. It was only after a few more seconds that Yoshiko's hand re-emerged.

They even seemed to openly seduce one another through their verbal exchanges. For her first song of the afternoon, Yoshiko had selected "*Onna no Misao*" (A Woman's Chastity), an *enka* hit from 1973 by the male group Tonosama Kings:

Anata no tame ni	Just for you
Mamori tōshita onna no misao	I have kept my female chastity
Ima sara hito ni	How could I now
Sasagerarenai	Give it away to anyone else?

"*Onna no Misao*". Released by Victor Records, 1973.

These words, which also flashed across the bottom of the karaoke video, did not escape Tsuru. "Tomorrow, I will definitely make you satisfied (*manzoku saseru kara*)," he told Yoshiko after this first verse.

Yoshiko smiled mischievously and shyly. "Sure, but I don't want to have any kids," she retorted. Her answer made it clear that she had picked up on Tsuru's sexual innuendo, and was looking forward to having intercourse with him soon.

I was very surprised to see Tsuru flirt so openly with another woman at Ami, not only so soon after his major surgery, but also while Miki continued to come here regularly. I was unable to fully digest immediately what I had just witnessed. It was only by asking Master later that I learned that Tsuru had developed romantic and sexual relations frequently with other women, after entering retirement and widowhood. Tsuru seemed to have maintained a substantial sexual appetite, and was always looking out for the next attractive woman:

Master: Tsuru has a lot of women friends. Sometimes he comes in in the afternoon with one lady, and reappears at night with another. But I think it's alright for him because he has time and money. He's just playing around (*asonderu dake*).

Benny: So they're just friends.

Master: Yes. And there are some ladies who approach him for the money. He doesn't do so now, but back when he first started coming here, he used to always quickly go with these women to a hotel for a quick tryst (*sugu ni hoteru e icchau*). Once they had sex (*yattara*), the women would maybe lose their money to *pachinko*, and come back to him asking for more.[264] At one time, he had 17 women!

Benny: Wow!

Master: It was quite complicated. But he's sorted that out now, and I've told him that he needs to go home at midnight. After all, he's had so much illness and multiple surgeries.

Benny: He told me that his wife has passed away also.

Master: That's true. He was very loyal to his wife when she was alive, so that's probably why he started to get involved with more women after her death.

Benny: He looks like he really enjoys life these days.

I found it difficult to ask Miki how she thought about Tsuru's dalliances with other women like Yoshiko. Perhaps it was better for her personally to not have met Tsuru or his other female companions before he stopped coming to Ami, shortly after these appearances with Yoshiko, although it also meant that the feelings between Tsuru and Miki were left unresolved. However, judging from the continued visits to Ami at

---

[264]   Master implied that Tsuru paid the women for the sexual favors.

her regular times in the afternoons, it seemed that Miki did not obsess over being passed over for Tsuru's latest interest. Rather than expressing her *miren* for Tsuru, Miki talked happily to other regulars and me about her walking routine, and her continuing affection for her family and late husband.

The end of Tsuru's and Miki's romantic affection suggests that the elderly men and women at karaoke *kissas* such as Ami focused greatly on momentary sensual and emotional experiences in their current attitudes towards love. Tsuru, in particular, appeared to approach romance and love in a highly playful and ludic manner: he seemed to know how to skillfully use his knowledge of songs and words to charm potential female partners into emotionally and physically intimate relationships. That many of his flings ended up involving sexual intercourse also suggests that Tsuru still desired to remain sexually active, and reaffirm his virility at this advanced stage of life. On the other hand, although Miki appeared to have been "discarded" (*suterareta*), her lack of *miren* to Tsuru indicates that she had not fully invested herself emotionally into him. Miki too did not consider romance as being much more than a game, unlike the unfortunate female protagonists of many *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs, who carry on weeping for men who never return.

Experiencing a duet

The performance of duets, in particular, best encapsulated the kind of playful approach towards romantic love that I frequently noticed at karaoke *kissas.* As seen in an earlier section of this chapter, duets in *enka* and *kayōkyoku* are usually sung by a male and female singer. They provide an interestingly reflexive corpus describing the possibility of nursing heartbreak and finding new romantic partners through song and drink. The regulars of the karaoke *kissa* Sachi showed that performing these duets facilitated the expression and maintenance of romantic feelings.

During my first stint of fieldwork at Sachi, from April to July 2013, I frequently spent time conversing with Mura (67) and Akiko (55). They were the first regulars whom I got to know, as they quickly warmed up to having a young male companion enliven their frequent visits to Sachi. They had started to come here not long before I started my fieldwork, although they already seemed rather familiar with Mama, the proprietress, and other long-time regulars. They appeared inseparable and were rarely seen without each other, even though their contrasting personalities also meant that they interacted with other regulars differently. Particularly, their experiences in developing romantic relationships through the performance of duets differed markedly.

Mura was born in 1946 in Kagoshima, and had originally moved to Osaka for employment at the age of 18. Although she returned to Kagoshima to get married, this union did not last long. Mura eventually remarried, and followed her husband to Tokyo, settling down in the immediate vicinity of Sachi. Since being widowed a few years ago when her husband passed away, her immediate family consisted of herself and a son in his late thirties. Mura frequently complained about her son, describing him as an unkempt and lazy "good-for-nothing" (*roku de nashi*). She also appeared grouchy much of the time, the wrinkles around her eyes and mouth forming a natural frown that intensified when she was separated from Akiko. Indeed, I only started to talk with Mura after Akiko initially acted as an intermediary.

Mura was not a skilled singer, frequently going off-tune and missing beats when she sang. Yet, she came back to Sachi to sing week after week, and I wondered what special pleasure karaoke provided her. Mura unexpectedly provided an answer on a summer afternoon. Underneath her brooding demeanor, she had been secretly eying another male regular, Kaneyama (80), during her visits to Sachi. She had only let Akiko in on this secret recently. On this day, Mura finally mustered enough courage, with help from Akiko, to request Kaneyama for a duet performance of the *enka* number, "*Futari*

no Ōsaka" (Our Osaka). He obliged, and Mura shyly approached the stage to sing by his side.

And then, silence. Mura could not find her voice when her turn to sing came. Even as the intro melody had ended and the lyrics for her part flashed across the karaoke video screen, she stood there with her face flushed red. However, I also noticed a coy smile that revealed her joy at sharing the stage with Kaneyama. She seemed totally smitten, and recognizing that she was unable to suppress her elation to sing properly, she wrapped her arms around herself gleefully. Throughout the rest of the afternoon, Mura would sit beside Kaneyama, lavishing praise on his handsome features, strong singing voice, and affable personality. Kaneyama seemed slightly embarrassed by the sudden wave of affection that he was receiving, and Akiko and Mama teased Mura's unusual behavior, saying, "You're clinging on to him like he's your husband (*danna san mitai*)!" Kaneyama gently kept Mura company, but his facial expressions suggested he was somewhat overwhelmed and embarrassed.

Mura's infatuation over Kaneyama was ultimately brief. In an email Akiko sent to me after I had left Japan, she said that Kaneyama eventually informed Mura that he was not interested in developing a romantic relationship with her, and Mura's interest also quickly moved on to other male customers. However, Akiko continued in her email that she had gotten herself a *kareshi* (boyfriend). She quickly qualified her revelation by saying that he was really "just a friend at Sachi" (*Sachi nai de no tomodachi dakedo*). But I was fascinated by her use of the term *kareshi*, which carried obvious connotations of romantic feelings. How did Akiko and her *kareshi* engage with each other at Sachi?

I was able to find out when I visited Sachi again in December 2016, together with Akiko (by now 58) and her *kareshi*, Motoyama, who was 68. Throughout the afternoon, they sat side by side, and seemed thoroughly comfortable with each other as they listened and cheered other customers' performances. They also conversed with

each other largely by leaning into each other's ears, so that they could hear each other over the sound of the karaoke system. At one point, Akiko obliged to Motoyama's invitation to perform the duet "*Futari no Ōsaka*" together, and they went up to the mini-stage.

Female: *Hoho yoseatte, anata to odoru*	Cheek to cheek, I dance with you
Male: *Wakare ni niai no Shinchi no kurabu*	This Shinchi club really suits breakups
Female: *Nakanai yakusoku shiteta no ni*	Although I promised not to cry!
Male: *Omae no senaka ga shinobinaku*	But your back gives it away
Both: *Nokori wazuka na kono toki wo*	In these last moments we have left together
Both: *Aa, dakishimete, futari no Ōsaka*	Ah, hold me tight, in our Osaka
Both: *Rasuto dansu*	Last dance

Futari no Ōsaka, a *kayōkyoku* duet by male singer Miyazaki Tadashi and female singer Miyako Harumi. Released by Nippon Columbia, 1981.

They initially stood a slight distance from each other, but would sporadically look at each other with kindness and tender loving. Swaying softly to the slow beat of the ballad, they gradually moved closer to stand side by side. The shorter Akiko looked very much like a smitten woman, singing with a warm smile as she periodically looked up at the taller Motoyama. Perhaps they were only checking with each other to make

sure they stayed on tune and in time with the beat, but they radiated an aura of affection. When Akiko mistakenly sang one of Motoyama's lines, they laughed together, and Motoyama gently held her around the waist. Akiko did not show any great sign of joyful surprise at this moment, but her coy smile suggested that she enjoyed this moment of physical intimacy greatly. At the end of the performance, everybody applauded Akiko and Motoyama for their entertaining and heartwarming rendition of the song.

If the duet was a way for Mura to clearly express her romantic feelings to male regulars at Sachi, Akiko and Motoyama's performance showed clearly it was effective in deepening such romantic feelings between regular customers at the karaoke *kissa*. They were not the only romantic couple at Sachi and other karaoke *kissas*, as other customers also paired off with each other in spending their afternoons singing. Ballads such as "*Futari no Ōsaka*", with their suggestive lyrical imagery and slow and seductive rhythm and melodies, create an aural and discursive mood that encourages karaoke *kissa* participants to explore and act upon their desires for passionate romance. These desires and moods that characterize not only the space of the *kissa*, but also the act of performing a duet together, augment their romantic feelings. Sitting next to each other, leaning and whispering into each other's ears, looking into each other's eyes while singing, holding one another around the waist or the hip: these highly sensual actions seemed to be very potent in generating intimacy and affection. Perhaps this was because the karaoke participants' desires for physical and emotional sensations of touch and connection have long been suppressed in the mainstream Japanese discourse of pragmatic and functional love and marriage. Singing together at karaoke *kissas* like Sachi thus provided them with opportunities to fulfill their desires and fantasies to live and love vicariously, like the protagonists in *enka* and *kayōkyoku* duets.

Looking for affection beyond mature marriages and families

I was invited to have dinner with Akiko and Motoyama after our karaoke session at Sachi. Sensing that they had become thoroughly comfortable with me regarding their status as "*kareshi to kanojo*" (boyfriend and girlfriend), I decided to ask about how they met each other, and how they thought about their relationship within their life outside of the *kissa*.

While the case of Tsuru and Miki at Ami involved widows, both Motoyama and Akiko still lived with their spouses. A portly woman, Akiko was very lively and cheerful, in contrast to her friend Mura. She possessed a quick wit, and quickly made regular conversation with me during my first visits to Sachi. She also became very enthusiastic in participating in and facilitating interviews, when she heard about my research interest. Akiko was slightly younger than most other regulars at Sachi, being born in Hokkaido in 1958. She came to Tokyo upon graduation from middle school at the age of fifteen (coinciding with the tail end of the period of the "postwar miracle" of high economic growth), working at a job to which her teacher introduced her. She moved into the vicinity of Asaka after marriage, living with her husband, brother-in-law and son.

Akiko had known about karaoke since its invention in the early 1970s, and had even been hooked (*hamacchatta*) on singing for a brief period in her thirties. But she noted that it was not until 2012 that she came to frequent Sachi multiple times a week. "For us women, it's hard to devote time to pursue something like karaoke frequently, since we're so busy with raising our kids. It's no good to be away from the kids for too long. So I never got so involved with karaoke until recently. You hardly see any younger women here, right? They're all probably at home watching over their kids," Akiko said. Although she had been listening to most popular genres since her childhood, she said that she naturally came to develop a liking for *enka*. She also liked the idol pop

of the 1970s, but rarely performed them at Sachi, which she described as "an *enka* place" (*enka no tokoro*).

Motoyama was slim and handsome. However, his previous habit of chain-smoking had taken a heavy toll on his health, as I noticed with his heavily stained and damaged teeth, and his need to take many pills as part of his ongoing treatment for lung cancer. Motoyama explained that he shared a similar life history to Akiko, having come to Tokyo and the Asaka area for work from the rural parts of Yamanashi Prefecture, after graduating from high school. He had enjoyed singing since kindergarten, and found himself naturally attracted to karaoke singing when the technology was invented. He had the opportunity to frequently visit karaoke *snack* bars in his work in an accounting firm, and thus continued singing as a hobby until now. Motoyama first visited Sachi with a friend in 2012, and quickly became a regular customer. "Now that I sing so much, I've run out of songs that I really want to sing!" he laughingly complained about his latest problem at karaoke. When we first met, Motoyama also openly told me that he had a family of his own, and had just returned from a holiday with his wife to Europe, where their eldest son was working.

As we waited for our food orders to arrive, I asked Motoyama and Akiko how they got together:

Motoyama: We met at Sachi.

Akiko: Well, I had seen him while Sachi was in the previous location…

Benny: I wonder if that happened after I had returned to Singapore back in 2013…

Motoyama: We've known each other for 3-4 years now.

Benny: That explains it then, it probably was after I had returned.

Akiko: I had seen him around before, but it was only after Sachi had moved here that I decided to make an approach (*nanpa*) and chat him up. My other friends had told me his name, and egged me on saying that he came because I was around. I was skeptical of course, but I decided to approach him anyway! (laughs)

Motoyama: She's a really nice person (*yashashii*), isn't she?

Benny: Definitely, she's really generous and kind.

(Akiko laughed heartily.)

Motoyama (whispering to me with a smile): And I also like fatter women!

Akiko: Did you just say something? (smiling mischievously)

Benny: It was a compliment!

Akiko: But I just can't slim down…I always put it back on even after losing weight for a while! (still laughing heartily)

Akiko then noted to Motoyama how she thought my partner was very beautiful, and insisted that I show him a photo. As he inspected one of the photos I had on my mobile phone, Motoyama joked about how he found Akiko less attractive. Akiko took it in her stride. "Yes, and make-up only makes me look even more like a ghost!," she said with loud self-effacing laughter. Akiko asked if I found Motoyama handsome, and I replied that I wanted to age like him in the future. I pointed out that the elderly who visited karaoke *kissas* frequently were all full of energy, with which the two agreed. It seemed that although physical attractiveness did play at least some role in generating Akiko's and Motoyama's romantic interest in each other, what really drew them together was the kind of emotional intimacy and comfort that they got from talking with each other regularly, as seen by their light-hearted jibes. While Motoyama highlighted

how Akiko was a nice person, Akiko, in a later conversation, also noted specifically that she liked how he was very "gentlemanly" (*shinshiteki*) to her and others at Sachi.

I then asked more about their current meetings:

Akiko: Just the two of us, or also sometimes with other friends.

Motoyama: And we meet up about five days every week. Haha.

Benny: And it's all karaoke?

Akiko: Yes, only karaoke.

Benny: Do you do duets together too?

Akiko: Yes, we do. Actually we sing so much that I've begun to be tired of singing the same songs haha. So I don't get bothered when my turn gets skipped actually!

Benny: Do you know a lot of duets then?

Akiko: Yes, we both know quite a number of the old classics because we've grown up listening to them. The newer songs, maybe we're not so familiar with them though.

Benny: I see. I don't really have a wide repertoire for duets though.

Motoyama: Really? Which duets do you know?

Benny: It's really limited. I know "*Kita Kūkō*", "*Futari no Ōsaka*", "*Ginza no Koi no Monogatari*". That's about it really, I think.

Akiko and Motoyama: What about "*Tokyo Naitokurabu*"?

Benny: I'm not really familiar at all…

Akiko: Maybe you'll get the hang of it once you hear it.

Akiko and Motoyama's explanation reinforced the importance of duets in helping to maintain their emotional intimacy, through the sharing of song repertoires

and common performance. Just like Tsuru and Miki, they saw the karaoke *kissa* as the only place where they could comfortably meet and approach each other as romantic partners, or *kareshi to kanojo*. While they also talked about how they preferred to meet only at Sachi because they did not want to be viewed suspiciously by others, I could not help but wonder why they still sought romantic affection outside of their families.

Noticing the ring on my ring finger, Akiko pointed out with laughter that Motoyama kept his wedding ring on all the time. Motoyama told us that he was going to go home on time for dinner tonight, as he always did, because his wife always made dinner without fail. He described her as a very dutiful and loving wife, and they had been together for around 40 years despite being an arranged marriage. Motoyama's expression of affection for her surprised me, as Akiko was also part of the conversation. When asked about how important he considered his wife, Motoyama replied, "It's hard to describe, but I think she's like air (*kuuki mitai*)? We don't really take special notice of each other at home, but when she's missing I feel that something's not right (*inai to nanka chigau*)."

In other words, Motoyama's wife seemed to occupy a very taken-for-granted part of his current life. While he still obviously thought of her importantly, it was also clear that her presence was no longer something that provided excitement and stimulation, not least in the romantic sense. Indeed, Motoyama pointed out that his marriage never started off with a romance in the first place; Akiko was the first woman that he had "properly" approached romantically. It was highly illuminating, too, that he chose the metaphor of air to describe his wife, which hinted that he had lost sight of her spiritual and physical presence, and their marriage had developed the kind of asexuality that Ryang (2006) has described.[265] Being a relative newcomer in his life who could provide emotional and physical intimacy through her interesting conversations and

---

[265]   Ryang, Love in Modern Japan, 88.

warm personality, Akiko was able to fill in the kind of romantic stimulation that Motoyama had lost in his marriage, particularly in an emotional and sensual manner.

Akiko did not seem to mind Motoyama's positive appraisal of his wife, concurring with Motoyama that he had a very loving wife and fulfilling family life that she had also known about from previous conversations. Akiko even seemed to take sides with Motoyama's wife, as she laughingly reprimanded Motoyama for describing his wife as "air", and Motoyama laughed as he acknowledged Akiko's criticism. Akiko seemed to really believe in treating her relationship with Motoyama as a fun fling, a game to be enjoyed.

Perhaps she especially savored the intimacy with Motoyama in such a ludic manner because of her unfulfilling marriage at home. During our afternoon karaoke session, Akiko had to excuse herself for a while, as she had to fetch her husband from Kawagoe, where he had been attending to some business, and accompany him back to their home near Sachi. Although she felt obliged to run this errand, she also told us about her displeasure quite animatedly, and refused to reschedule our karaoke session to accommodate her husband's request.

Akiko called him on her mobile phone to see if she could get the errand done quickly. "4:30pm is going to be a bit difficult, I want to come back here afterward. Can you come by 4pm instead? *Tanomu ne, otōchan*?" she requested in a harsh tone. Her disdain was obvious to anybody who heard her, since she used "*tanomu ne*", considered a rougher way to make a request, rather than "*onegai*", which carries a less hostile tone when requesting favors, even in established relationships. Perhaps referring to him as "*otōchan*", rather than more endearing terms such as his first name, also revealed that there was little affection left in her marriage.

Other regulars who overheard Akiko's conversation jokingly noted that her husband was very pitiful. Akiko reiterated in a serious tone that she really wanted to

come back to Sachi as soon as she could, since I had to go back to Osaka from Tokyo in the evening. "I didn't have to pick him up yesterday, but it just so happened that he wanted me to pick him up today. It's probably because I haven't been behaving well (*fudan no okonai ga warui kara*)," she lamented to me with a wry smile that also wistfully indicated that her annoyance about this errand was serious. However, we both managed to laugh at her self-recognition of her relationship with Motoyama as being inappropriate.

Upon returning from her errand about an hour and a half later, Akiko settled back into her seat in between Motoyama and me, breathing somewhat heavily due to fatigue. "I was complaining while driving earlier, wanting him to hurry up and allow me to come back here quickly. I was surprised that it worked!" The persistence of her annoyed tone suggested that Akiko now had little romantic affection for her husband, although she still felt obliged to carry out her remaining duties as an older housewife. It was this lack of happiness and fulfillment in her marriage, it seemed, that provided a stimulus for her to start a romantic relationship with Motoyama at Sachi, when she felt certain enough that she was receiving attention and affection from him.

Why karaoke to fill in the time and loneliness?

For regular karaoke participants at *kissas* such as Miki, Tsuru, Mura, Akiko and Motoyama, then, singing karaoke was an important activity through which they could re-kindle romantic feelings. By becoming friendly with regular customers of the opposite sex, they could explore the sensual and emotional intimacies of passionate love which had by now disappeared from their marriages, either from bereavement or from the transformation of spousal relationships into a pragmatic division of labor. I conclude this chapter by considering how these romantic aspects of karaoke participation allowed

regular visitors to construct musical meaning, achieve musical experiences of flow, and attain a sense of *ikigai* and well-being.

Regarding the kinds of romantic meanings that karaoke regulars derived out of their musical participation, I want to refer back to Turino's (2008) ideas of semiotic chaining discussed in the introduction. On first glance, it seems that regulars attributed meanings to musical signs mainly through indexing processes, in which music is connected to meanings in terms of co-occurrence.[266] For example, Tsuru's and Miki's frequent linkage of songs like "*Futarizake*" and "*Onna no Michi*" with their late spouses can be understood as an indexical understanding, since these were developed through spending decades noticing their spouses' musical preferences. In other words, these indexical connections were dependent on Tsuru and Miki's life histories.[267]

In his model of musical understanding, Turino suggests that most musical signs operate primarily indexically, with symbolic connections featuring much less due to the linguistic recognition and agreement needed.[268] While I agree that many of the romantic connections that the participants made with each other through musical performance relied on indexical understandings of songs with romantic memories with loved ones, I believe iconic and symbolic understandings play a more important role than Turino allows for. The heavily formulaic compositional structure (*kata*) allows musical meanings and themes to be entrenched in *enka* and *kayōkyoku* listeners through more iconic understandings (see Chapter 1 for a detailed explanation of such *kata*), via the frequent repetition of certain sounds and musical phrases in corresponding to certain "traditional" and "old-fashioned" expressions of longing and passion. Lyrical *kata*, as described earlier in this chapter, also provide clear linguistic referents of romance and passion, which allow for greater shared symbolic recognition of these discursive themes

---

[266] Turino, <u>Music as Social Life</u>, 8.
[267] Ibid., 9.
[268] Turino, <u>Music as Social Life</u>, 13-14.

as they occur in *enka* and *kayōkyoku.* These differences in understanding the generation

of musical meaning perhaps arise from Turino's musical interest in genres that promote

spontaneous communal participation, rather than the more rigidly structured Japanese

forms of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* that karaoke *kissa* regulars sing.[269]

Looking further into the myriad ways that songs generated conversations and

interactions, and vice versa, reveals the kind of complex semiotic chaining that occurred

at Ami and Sachi, which allowed regular customers to construct engaged, nuanced and

varied musical experiences. In the case of the karaoke *kissa*, we can understand such

chaining as follows: songs were selected through their indexical relations to late spouses,

but also through iconic understandings to the genres of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* and their

associated moods and themes, and symbolic relations to the musical themes and

codified *kata* of longing, passion and impermanence; the songs selected generated an

empathetic interest from other regulars who shared similar indexical understandings of

songs with their own loved ones, iconic understandings of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs

with genre and mood, and symbolic understandings of lyrical themes of passionate

romance; this process tied these songs to karaoke performances of other songs that are

similar indexically, iconically and symbolically, and conversations about the kinds of

romantic meanings the songs took on for each participant. Such semiotic chaining

continued until the line of feeling/reaction/thought was interrupted.

Turino's seeming oversight of the roles of non-indexical musical meanings in

his idea of semiotic chaining may also be traced to the origins of his framework in

Peirce's theory of semiotics, which is primarily concerned with how the interpretation

of signs forms the basis of logical and rational reasoning, and what signs mean.[270]

However, moving away from a purely rational perspective to include more non-rational

---

[269] Ibid., 49.
[270] Peirce Edition Project, "What is a Sign?", 4-10.

or affective processes, or in the words of Biddle & Thompson (2013), shifting the focus question from "what does music mean?" to "what does music do?", we stand to gain more clarity about the variety of ways in which music and sound is used for various purposes and effects.[271] In the case of the karaoke *kissa* in this chapter, a detailed interest in the associated after-effects and activities of the musical activities, following down the semiotic chain that transpired over the course of karaoke sessions, may allow us to better appreciate the iconic and symbolic ways in participants engaged with the music. Here, I draw attention to Stebbins' (2015) ideas of core and associated activities, in his concept of serious leisure.[272] While much of Stebbins' serious leisure perspective focuses on understanding the pursuit of core activities, in this chapter, I have consciously detailed the associated activities surrounding and stemming from the core activity of singing at the karaoke *kissa*. These associated activities of talking and flirting provided and reinforced the kinds of iconic and symbolic musical meanings that accompanied indexical ones stemming from more personal experiences, and also expanded each participant's corpus of personal and shared experiences through which indexical, iconic and symbolic musical meanings can be constructed in future.

The associated activities of talking and flirting also provided the kinds of romantic fulfillment and connections that made regular visits to the karaoke *kissa* enjoyable. Particularly, I want to examine the romantic exchanges with respect to the seven components of flow experience that Csikszentmihalyi (1990) lists:[273]

1. Sense of competence in activity

2. Merging of action and awareness in concentration

3. Clear goals and feedback

---

[271]   Biddle & Thompson, "Introduction", 19.
[272]   Stebbins, <u>Serious Leisure</u>, 1.
[273]   Ibid., 49-67.

4. Deep, focused involvement in activity

5. Sense of exercising control, even if situation is not fully under control

6. Loss of self-consciousness, interpersonal connection

7. Transformation of sense of time

While talking and flirting did not work with all seven components equally, nevertheless there were some important effects within this framework. First was the role of such romantic exchanges in breaking down self-consciousness; for Tsuru, Miki, Akiko and Motoyama, romantic interactions clearly helped them build intimate interpersonal connections that heightened the enjoyable experience of karaoke. However, the example of Mura blushing during her turn on the microphone shows that romantic feelings sometimes worked in the opposite way to increase self-consciousness and hinder the experience of musical flow. Mura's own introverted character and lack of singing ability may have exacerbated this self-consciousness. Regular praises of each other's singing, as in the case of Miki and Tsuru, and looking into each other's eyes to remain in time with the beat, as Akiko and Motoyama did, equally provided clear feedback for not only their competence in singing, but also their reciprocated feelings towards each other. This allowed them to be fully immersed in their experiences at the karaoke *kissa*, and even create a bubble in which they could negate, if not forget, the loneliness and boredom that characterized the time outside.[274] In other words, the feelings of musical enjoyment that they individually felt was augmented through the shared nature of their experience, similar to the social model of musical flow described by Custodero (2012).

The facilitation of flow experiences at karaoke *kissas* through romantic exchanges also speaks greatly to issues of *ikigai*. I argue that such romances provided

---

[274] I address the issue of temporality and escapism in more detail in Chapter 4.

ikigai more in terms of the individual fulfillment of *jiko jitsugen* than the social integration of *ittaikan*. Through the aesthetic themes and values highlighted by *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, and facilitation by the intimate closed spaces that characterized such karaoke *kissas*, participants had the discursive tools and space in which they could engage with their individual desires for passion and romance, which would be frowned upon in public. We can understand Tsuru's and Miki's relationship development in this way especially. Their ludic approach towards developing romantic feelings, as seen in Tsuru's dalliances with other women and Miki's lack of *miren* after Tsuru had switched his romantic pursuits, can be seen as being based on their focus on fulfilling their individual desires (*jiko jitsugen*) in participating in romantic interactions, rather than a desire for commitment and oneness with others that characterizes an *ittaikan* approach to *ikigai*. While Akiko and Motoyama arguably showed more characteristics of an *ittaikan* experience of *ikigai* in their romantic relationship, particularly in their duet performances, our conversation later revealed that their feelings were not fully based on the kind of commitment to each other that would characterize a relationship in which *ittaikan* was the predominant focus. For example, Motoyama seemed to place more importance on fulfilling his role as a husband and father at home, by insisting to return home for dinner on time, and Akiko did not seem to mind Motoyama's lack of total commitment to her and their relationship. These actions and comments revealed again the predominance of *jiko jitsugen* for Motoyama and Akiko, as the main kind of fulfillment desired and derived from getting into a romantic partnership.

We can plausibly see the focus on such desires for *jiko jitsugen* as a reaction towards the heavy emphasis of *ittaikan* that have been placed upon these men and women in earlier periods in their lives, as workers and mothers, and husbands and wives. It is because of the familial and social responsibilities, obligations and censures (encapsulated in the concept of *sekentei*) entailed by *ittaikan,* that men and women like

Tsuru, Miki, Mura, Akiko and Motoyama quietly endured the loneliness brought about by the death of beloved spouses, or the suppression and erasure of romantic and sexual desires in mature marriages. While these burdens of *sekentei* still hung heavily upon the karaoke participants in other social spaces, the karaoke *kissa*, with the kinds of romantic atmosphere promoted both in the *enka* and *kayōkyoku* sung and their intimate and closed-off spaces, provided them with a sanctuary to engage with their heavily suppressed desires to enjoy romantic love in all its individually felt elements. This was perhaps why the romantic relationships nurtured at karaoke *kissas* like Ami and Sachi were very much contained within these places, and focused on attaining the most individual fulfillment possible out of the limited time there by emphasizing the playful and sensuous enjoyment of the moment. Having endured in their earlier life stages the burdens of maintaining face and proper appearances of marriage within the wider *sekentei*, these karaoke participants saw old age and widowhood as a period where they now deserved to indulge, at least a little bit, in their long-suppressed desires for individual fulfillment, *jiko jitsugen*, in love.

These developments were greatly influenced by the spatial and musical settings of the karaoke *kissa.* Indeed, they would not have happened had the participants not met through their regular visits, and the environment and activities of the *kissa* were essential in their maintenance. These points suggest that Bildtgård & Öberg's (2017) call for more contextually situated understandings of elderly intimacy should be heeded in future research. However, the relationships in this chapter also show that perhaps more attention should be paid to the actual settings and spaces in which elderly couples meet and interact: for example, the karaoke *kissa*'s spatial, social and musical characteristics allow its participants unique resources and tools through which they can express affection and communicate with each other. In this sense, Gagne's (2014) detailed attention to the spatial, social and sensory characteristics of Tokyo salsa clubs

provide a highly relevant reference for how to conduct such locally attentive fieldwork. Her notion of parasexuality also promises a fruitful conceptual tool through which we can understand ideologies of sexuality as experienced and practiced at musical leisure spaces such as the karaoke *kissa*. The singing and socializing practices at the *kissa* involve different kinds of sensations and bodily comportments from the salsa clubs, a result of the different aesthetic preferences of the various participants that are in turn governed by life histories and socioeconomic statuses. As such, future studies of parasexuality in leisure spaces, particularly from a comparative approach, will do well to incorporate these larger structural factors in their analyses, not unlike the kind provided in Bildtgård & Öberg (2017). In any case, the area of sexuality and intimacy promises more important insights into an increasingly important aspect of Japanese elderly life, and I hope that these methodological and conceptual discussions will eventually result in useful and relevant knowledge for older Japanese to draw upon in their attempts to attain well-being and *ikigai*.

Chapter 3: Teach Me to Sing Like the Stars!

The continuous strain of voices singing *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs on this balmy Saturday night in mid-summer suggested that business was booming at Chou's *kissa* operation. I had arrived at around eight in the evening, to find that my usual seat at the bar counter had already been taken by Saka (63), Tate (71) and Ogi (70), the three female students of Sensei (64) I had come to know intimately, as well as Matsu (72) and Hashi (70), two male regulars of the *kissa* who were on equally friendly terms with the other three ladies and myself.

Nishi (72), who was manning the *kissa* operation tonight, ushered me to share the big table near the front with Yoshi and Kinu. Yoshi, who appeared younger than her age of 67 due to her vivacity and stylish appearance, was very excited to welcome me to the table, having taken a liking to my singing at my previous visits in spring. However, I was meeting Kinu only for the second time, and we had not conversed much previously. She was a few years younger and possessed the same sense of style as her friend. After briefly explaining to her how I came to visit Chou regularly, Kinu and Yoshi started chatting about their own visits here.

"I don't really come here on any fixed day of the week," Kinu explained to her friend Yoshi, while they both sipped at their cups of *shōchu* diluted with hot water. "But I do like to come here on Saturday nights like tonight, because there are more people and I get to hear more songs."

"I didn't know you had 'woken up' to singing! I've never really been able to get you to come here to sing with me," Yoshi replied, smiling and widening her eyes as she could not hide her surprise at her friend's recently developed interest.

"Well, I've always been fond of music, but I thought I might sing karaoke more now. In fact, I've just joined Sensei's class here! I'll attend my first lesson on Thursday afternoon," Kinu explained.

Yoshi showed her astonishment and happiness for her, and said, "Wow! I think that's wonderful that you've found something new to pursue! I think it'll be great to learn new songs all the time in the class, even though it's also nice to listen to and sing my old favorites in the *kissa*."

Having both taken their turns at the microphone, they passed me the karaoke remote control, and urged me to select a song to sing.

Kinu's revelation intrigued me, as I began to wonder why and how many, if not all, regular customers here at Chou's *kissa* operation joined the karaoke class. In this chapter, I investigate the experience of being a student at Chou's classes within the engagement mode of "lifelong learning", which Stebbins (2015), Ian Jones and Graham Symon (2001) highlight as one way in which the serious leisure approach is manifested in leisure practice.[275] I examine this mode of serious leisure by focusing on the effects of students' learning journey and outcomes on the bodily, social, and identity aspects of life in their advanced years. In other words, I study how approaching karaoke seriously as a learning experience allowed these elderly students to experience senses of well-being and *ikigai*.

I had previously asked Sensei if I could join her classes at Chou as a student, but she politely refused, saying that I was already a good enough singer. However, having gotten to know more about my research through our chats over the months since, Sensei had taken me under her wing, and even helped me by telling her students about my

---

[275]   Stebbins uses the term "adult education", but his arguments are based on the same discussions for the term "lifelong learning". Stebbins, Serious Leisure, 87-89; Ian Jones and Graham Symon, "Lifelong Learning as Serious Leisure: Policy, Practice and Potential", Leisure Studies 20(4) (2001), 269-83.

interest in talking to and learning more about them and their activities. That night, I decided to ask Sensei for permission to attend her classes again, and she happily agreed this time.

Over the course of the next few months, my questions amused the class students greatly. They wondered why a young male foreigner would be interested in their music preferences and everyday life, and even joining them in their karaoke learning activities. But perhaps they also recognized my effort in trying to understand them by going through these activities together, and many of them opened up to me to give valuable anecdotes and comments. One such student, Saka, was particularly generous with her time and words. Although relatively soft-spoken among her friends, during her participation in class activities and our interviews Saka's words and actions showed great clarity in answering the questions I had about learning to sing in a karaoke class like Chou. As such, the narrative of karaoke learning in this chapter is centered upon her experience, although other students also appear in and out of this story.

The karaoke class as a form of "lifelong learning"

Just like Chou's *kissa* operation, the age demographic of the class students was exclusive to older men and women above 60, and many regular customers were also Sensei's students. However, Chou's class operation differed crucially from its *kissa* operation in its gender makeup. Compared to the more equal and fluctuating proportions of male and female customers for the *kissa*, there were 17 female and only three male students who regularly attended classes. When I asked for the reasons for this trend later during Chou's *kissa* operation, the two male regular customers who were not registered students, Ike (70) and Matsu, discussed some possible answers with the females who were also present, Saka, Ogi and Tate.

"I think we just like to drink more than to sing," Ike chuckled.

"I think men and women just have different ways of spending time together. We (men) wouldn't go to karaoke together or to meet up, but I'd come here on my own," Matsu added.

When I asked the females if they felt they had to learn to sing properly because they were female, and that males were not obliged to do so, they disagreed. "I think we definitely have fewer male students, but sometimes men go secretly to various places to practice, and in that they work harder than us female students," Ogi added. Her comments seemed founded, as I also heard Ike and Matsu talk on separate occasions about their visits to other karaoke *kissas* and bars, particularly before they became regulars at Chou, from which they developed a sizable repertoire that they were still often looking to add to.

These comments from both sides seemed to allude to the general discourse of older men being more socially reclusive and isolated than their female counterparts, and lacking the know-how to socialize outside of work environments that females had honed.[276] Thus, while older males like Ike and Matsu enjoyed singing karaoke greatly, and possessed enough skill to earn invitations by Sensei to participate in karaoke competitions around Osaka, they did not proactively seek to join Chou's classes.[277]

 Chou's class activities can also be situated within a wider phenomenon of learning outside of the state education environment. In urban centers such as Tokyo and Osaka, many classes providing such learning activities can be found, offering classes for sometimes hefty fees of tens of thousands of Japanese yen per course in English conversation, flower arrangement, cooking, sports, and many more.[278] The learning of

---

[276]   Kimio Itō, "An Introduction to Men's Studies", 152.

[277]   Matsu eventually joined as a student in January 2017, after Sensei had invited him to join on several occasions in the preceding year. However, he only undertook individual lessons, and did not attend the group lessons.

[278]   For example, a tennis school in the southern areas of Osaka City offers coaching at prices beginning from 8,000 yen (about 100 Australian dollars) per lesson, with additional entry fees and yearly

such cultural activities is popularly termed *"narai-goto"* (learning activities), and a

sizable industry has developed around it.

A 2005 survey conducted by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry

highlighted that about 80 percent of attendees at "culture centers" (*karuchā sentā*)

providing such *narai-goto* lessons were female, many of them housewives.[279] One

major sector of this *narai-goto* industry consists of music classes: According to a

nationwide research conducted by GF, a research service focusing on the elderly

demographic, more than 40 percent of older Japanese participated in some form of

narai-goto, of which over 20 percent took part in music lessons.[280] In 2016, these music

classes accounted for approximately five percent of all tuition income earned by *narai-*

goto classes.[281] The gender and age demographics of Chou's classes pointed out earlier

reflect these statistics.

Hideo Watanabe (2005) and Akihiro Ogawa (2015) suggest that *narai-goto* can

be understood within a "lifelong learning" framework. Both scholars note that the

concept of lifelong learning, particularly in the post-war period, has developed with a

more holistic approach to the overall cultivation of individuals over the lifespan, which

is different from the more vocational and employability focus seen in other developed

countries.[282] Lifelong learning is one mode of serious engagement with leisure, as

Stebbins (2015), Jones and Symon (2001) posit.[283] Particularly, Jones and Symon list

---

subscriptions. Tennis School Noah, *Ryōkin* (Prices), https://noah-tengachaya.com/price/. Accessed on 10 April 2017.

[279]   Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, *Heisei 17 Nendo Tokutei Sābisu Sangyō Chōsa* (Survey on Specific Service Industries for the Year Heisei 17) (Tokyo: METI, 2005).

[280]   GF Ltd., *Shiniā/Kōreisha no Naraigoto ni Kan suru Chōsa* (Survey on *Naraigoto* of Seniors/Elderly) (2011), http://www.senior-promo.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/senior_lesson.pdf. Accessed on 10 February 2017. Sample size was n=516.

[281]   Yano Research Institute, *Okeiko/Naraigoto Ichiba ni Kan suru Chōsa wo Jisshi* (Survey on the *Okeiko/Naraigoto* Market) (6 July 2016), https://www.yano.co.jp/press/pdf/1551.pdf, Accessed on 10 February 2017.

[282]   Hideo Watanabe, "Changing Adult Learning in Japan: The Shift from Traditional Singing to Karaoke", International Journal of Lifelong Education 24(3) (2005), 257-67; Ogawa, Lifelong Learning in Neoliberal Japan, 29-52.

[283]   Stebbins, Serious Leisure, 87-89; Jones and Symon, "Lifelong Learning as Serious Leisure", 269-83.

several benefits for participants that engage in lifelong learning as a serious leisure activity, such as providing sustained activity, goals, opportunities to share experiences and express oneself, and building status and social identities.[284] Watanabe's (2005) case study of karaoke *narai-goto* as a lifelong learning activity also looks at these possible benefits for its participants.[285] I will be discussing students' learning experiences at Chou with reference to these possible benefits later in this chapter.

Sonoda Sekiya and Utagawa Kōichi (2015) describe the history of musical *narai-goto*, and their most outwardly visible manifestation, the recital presentation, as originating from the imitation of Western concert and recital culture. Specifically, recital performances were regarded as a glamorous venue for "showing off" one's proficiency at learning Western cultural practices, during Japan's push to Westernize both economically and culturally in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Satō Umi (2015) also explains the social and economic functions of holding recitals for such *narai-goto*, as both a regular goal at the end of a period of learning, and a source of income to sustain the class's operations when students pay for their own entry fees for the recitals.[286] However, they also note that musical *narai-goto* were intermeshed with pre-modern Japanese social structures of cultural learning, and that they gradually encompassed other traditionally Japanese cultural forms, resulting in a practice that cannot be neatly defined as Japanese or Western.[287] The pedagogical philosophy of such *narai-goto* is dominated by the *iemoto* system of teaching and apprenticeship, derived from the traditional Japanese concept of the household, or *ie*. Robert Smith (1998) succinctly describes the *iemoto* system of learning as encompassing the following characteristics:

---

284   Jones and Symon, "Lifelong Learning as Serious Leisure", 274-5.
285   Watanabe, "Changing Adult Learning in Japan", 261-4.
286   Satō Umi, *"Naraigoto Sangyō to Happyōkai"* (The *Naraigoto* Industry and Recitals), Miyairi (ed.), <u>*Happyōkai Bunkaron,*</u> 40-66.
287   Sonoda Sekiya and Utagawa Kōichi, *"Happyōkai no Rekishi"* (The History of Recitals), Miyairi (ed.), <u>*Happyōkai Bunkaron*</u>, 18-37.

1. Emphasis on the master-disciple relationship

2. Hierarchical ordering of linked subgroups

3. Unquestioned authority of the *iemoto* (whose authority is like that of a household head)

4. Emphasis on exclusivity

5. Organizational style modeled after the household (*ie*)[288]

Besides these, Gary DeCoker (1998) adds a few other characteristics regarding the pedagogical approach towards the learning experience:

6. Copying the model: Mastery of the model is prioritized greatly over expressions of creativity, especially below the advanced level.

7. Discipline: Students are encouraged to endure physical and psychological hardship in their learning, in order to maximize their personal growth. Teachers stress the need for tough training.

8. A hierarchy of study: Teachers impart skills or techniques based on the perceived progress of the student, marked by the granting of certificates, titles and ranks. Such progress usually means widening the repertoire of skills/techniques, rather than deeper honing of learned material.

9. Non-verbal communication: Learning is mainly conducted in terms of imitation of the model, with some explanation from the teacher. Oral communication is often through metaphors or parables.

---

[288] Robert J. Smith, "Transmitting Tradition by the Rules: An Anthropological Interpretation of the *Iemoto* System", John Singleton (ed.), <u>Learning in Likely Places: Varieties of Apprenticeship in Japan</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 24-25.

10. Art as a spiritual quest: The ultimate goal of study is mastery of the self, not the art form.[289]

Karaoke lessons at Chou were roughly structured according to the characteristics listed above, as the ensuing sections will detail. To describe briefly, lessons were conducted under the auspices of *Crown Kayō Gakuin* (singing academy), the *narai-goto* organization headed by the Crown Records label. Sensei traces her *iemoto* lineage specifically to a famous *enka* and *kayōkyoku* composer and singer, who trained her own teacher and has provided advice and assistance to her own music activities. In terms of lesson activities, Sensei held two group lessons each month that were two hours long, on the second Thursday and fourth Friday. Besides these, students attended individual 30-minute lessons, for which they could plan their own schedule. The lessons were conducted in a teacher-disciple setting, with many of her teaching methods corresponding with those listed by DeCoker (1998), as I will describe later. The class also held a yearly recital on Marine Day (July 17), in which all students entered as performers for a fee.[290] Sensei and the students engaged in the planning and running of the recital by themselves, with minimal help from outside parties. Besides the class recital, Sensei circulated information about karaoke recitals and competitions elsewhere, and handpicked students to participate in these outside events. In the following parts of this chapter, I will focus on the participation in these class activities of Saka, a female student, and her friends.

Paths to "learning" karaoke

---

[289] Gary DeCoker, "Seven Characteristics of a Traditional Japanese Approach to Learning", Singleton, <u>Learning in Likely Places</u>, 69-70.
[290] The entry fee was 10,000 yen for 2016 (about 115 Australian dollars), but has fluctuated depending on the event venue and program for each year.

With her wide eyes, small stature, polite demeanor and relative youth compared to other students, Saka often came across as a keen listener and foil for her friends, rather than the focus of attention. I got to know her at Chou's karaoke class in February 2016, when she had turned 63. She had been widowed for seven years by then, and was living on her pensions away from her offspring. Because her home was nearby in Sumiyoshi Ward, she commuted to Chou by bicycle. Her late husband was a major link in her coming to Chou, as he was previously also a student. Saka joined Chou's classes when she took up Sensei's invitation to join Chou, as the latter paid her respects at his funeral.

Saka was born in Nara Prefecture, next to Osaka. She moved here upon graduating from high school, as part of the mass urban employment phenomenon of the high economic growth period of the 1960s and early 1970s. In her youth, she used to listen to NHK Radio exclusively, as it was the only network she could receive at home. In the 1960s, NHK had a playlist heavily based on *kayōkyoku* and what would eventually be recognized as *enka*. She also used to excel in music in school, even joining the school choir. However, she fell out of touch with music after graduating (in her words), as she became busy with work and then family. Saka's only interactions with music in this period, until joining Chou's classes, was through viewing and listening to music programs; she had never sung karaoke, which was invented in the 1970s after she had started working. Saka's account of her musical and personal biography somewhat differs from the image of regular female customers of karaoke *kissa* provided by Oku Shinobu (1998), who depicts them as "women who are negative about school music".[291]

Many of her classmates, and even Sensei herself, share similar social and musical biographies. They told me individually about their fondness for singing their favorite *kayōkyoku* (the genre term *enka* was not established until 1969, when the

---

[291] Oku, "Karaoke and Middle-Aged and Older Women", 58.

women had already come of age) in rural spaces at an early age, but not going on to pursue their musical interests seriously after finishing their education despite their continued love for the music that they had listened to in their youth.[292] Indeed, a few common social experiences mark the life course of this age-gender-class cohort of women born outside of the main cities of Tokyo and Osaka, who made up the vast majority of the student group at Chou.[293] They first suffered through an impoverished childhood in the rural countryside during the immediate post-war period. They then migrated, along with their male counterparts, to the cities for work after graduating from middle or high school, as part of the phenomenon of "mass employment" in the high economic growth period of the late 1950s to early 1970s. However, after a few years most of these women then got married, and in the process resigned from full-time work to focus on family and childrearing. In effect, these women followed the life script of the idealized *ryōsai kenbo*, whose area of contribution to the family was strictly confined to the home. Many would eventually return to work as their children started school, but they were mostly employed in part-time positions, or small companies run by family and acquaintances. They started to see their children come of age and have their own families from the 1990s, and began a move afterward into "retirement" from family labor.[294] The participation of Saka and her classmates at Chou's classes should thus be understood from the perspective of such a life course.

---

[292]   See Fujii, *Bōkyō Kayōkyoku Kō*, for a music-centered account of the sentiments of urban migrants during Japan's high economic growth period.

[293]   See also Chapter 1.

[294]   Hachiro Iwai, "Shrinking of the Japanese Uniqueness: A Quantitative Analysis of Life Course Changes", Emiko Ochiai and Leo Aoi Hosoya (eds.), Transformation of the Intimate and the Public in Asian Modernity (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2014), 123-4. It should be noted, however, that regional variations in life courses exist, and more research is still needed to investigate this hitherto under-studied arena of Japanese life course research. I hope that this chapter will provide the first steps in looking at the life course of rural-born female baby-boomers in Osaka. See also Takahashi Jun, *"Sengo Nihon ni okeru Josei no Raifu Kōsu no Henka to Rōdō, Seikatsu ni Tai suru Ishiki: Fukushima Kenritsu A Kōkō Sotsugyōsei he no Kikitori Chōsa kara"* (Changes to Female Life Course and Attitudes to Work and Life in Postwar Japan: From Interviews of Alumni of Fukushima Prefectural A High School), Gyōsei Shakaironshū (Policy Journal of Society) 21(4) (2009), 159.

Indeed, when on a cold winter afternoon in late November we sat down and chatted about their motivations for joining Chou's classes, Saka and a couple of her classmates referred to their individual histories to explain why they felt a need to especially "learn" how to sing karaoke. Saka first noted that she wished to make new friends through Chou's classes, after losing her husband. Naka (72) and Ogi (70), who overheard our conversation, agreed that for many students the loss of spouses was a big factor in joining Chou's classes. "It's just so lonely to be home alone all the time, if you don't have anything to go outside for!" Naka said as Saka nodded. Their comments suggest that for these widows free time at home was lonely, as they had lost their partners and lived away from their offspring.

Ideologies of vocal training and song selection

Saka also explained her wish to sing better in front of others, especially during class alumni gatherings (*dōsōkai*), as another important reason to enroll in karaoke classes. She noted that they tended to sing songs that they all knew, mostly *kayōkyoku* from their youth. Saka's desire here can be restated in Bourdieuan terms to mean that she wished to gain cultural capital, in terms of the knowledge and skill expressed in her singing, to win over friends at karaoke sessions during these alumni gatherings.[295] But she did not feel that she could improve on her own. Using "young people" as a contrast, she described her inability to discern pitch properly:

> Young people have a better sense of pitch. I'm trying my best to pick up melodies and pitches, but I find it hard to do so on my own. I always think I'm in tune but I'm actually not!

---

[295]   Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital", John G. Richardson (ed.), <u>Handbook of Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education</u> (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 241-58.

I then asked why staying on pitch was so important for her, noting that many people enjoyed singing karaoke even if they could not hold a tune properly. Saka replied, "Young people can sing their songs however they want, but for 'our' songs we have to sing them properly."

Saka thus clearly enunciated the importance of "singing properly" for the kinds of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* that she wanted to sing at karaoke, even though she did not consciously acknowledge the musical ideology that underpins these genres. As explained previously in Chapter 1, *kata,* the "stylized formulas" and "patterned forms" of musical composition and performance that show a highly structured approach to musical production, performance and consumption, circumscribe the use of vocal techniques in the genre.[296] Wajima (2010) notes that these *kata* were explicitly codified by a faction of established song producers and critics in the late 1960s, in the face of the increasing popularity of newer genres like electric rock and political folk that threatened to destabilize existing song production methods and musical soundscapes. As a result, *enka* and *kayōkyoku* musical discourse emphasizes the hierarchical apprenticeship approach to musical learning, and the musical characteristics produced through this system, that dominated the popular music industry before the 1960s.[297] Thus, distinctive vocal *kata* such as *kobushi* and *yuri* need to be employed in accordance to the sensuality portrayed by the original singer, as Yano (2002) describes of her own observations of karaoke lessons for an *enka* song.[298] Such sensuality is in turn based upon formulaic conventions of gender ideals constructed through *enka*'s *kata*, which can be mastered through paying close attention to teachers' advice and repetitive training.[299] In other

---

[296] Yano, Tears of Longing, 24-25.

[297] Wajima, *Tsukurareta*, 30-37, 186-219, 252-70.

[298] Yano, Tears of Longing, 66-69.

[299] Christine R. Yano, "Covering Disclosures: Practices of Intimacy, Hierarchy, and Authenticity in a Japanese Popular Music Genre", Popular Music and Society 28(2) (2005), 196-8.

words, in learning karaoke for *enka* (and *kayōkyoku*), students like Saka should always aspire to sound like the original, through guidance and repeated practice.

I also asked Saka if she had favorite songs or singers. Saka replied, "I don't really have a favorite song. I can't think of one specific song or singer that I really like and keep going back to. I guess that's because we keep learning new songs here, and I forget the ones I've learned before. But I like music and singing." Upon hearing Saka's answer, her friend Tate (71) laughed, and added that she did not have any favorites for herself either, for the same reason. Indeed, over the year that I spent with Saka and the other students at Chou, I noticed that in her non-lesson karaoke engagements, Saka and her classmates tended to sing songs that Sensei was working on with them at the time, or had just introduced in previous lessons. The songs were also "new" in that they had mostly been recently released by record companies in the past year.

Saka's comments and song choice here are particularly intriguing. Much scholarship on Japanese musical genres most popular in the 1960s and 1970s focus on notions of "nostalgia". For example, Yano emphasizes that the appeal of *enka* as a traditionally "Japanese" genre rests on its potency as a "forum for collective nostalgia".[300] Meanwhile, Koizumi's (2013) monograph explores how personal and cultural memories of music and sound intersect to provide musical meaning, in participating in various other genres of the period.[301] As such, nostalgia, in terms of repertoire, lyrical and aural song content and a general longing for past times, have figured greatly in Yano's and Koizumi's explanations of the motivation for the continued engagement with these "nostalgic" genres by fans. However, it seems that nostalgia does not occupy a prominent position in Saka's karaoke activities. Instead, her approach in learning and forgetting new songs suggests a more forward-looking

---

[300] Yano, Tears of Longing, 14-17.
[301] Koizumi, *Memoriisukēpu*, 7.

disposition in engaging with *enka* and *kayōkyoku* music. Saka's approach is complexly intermeshed with the nostalgic discourse of these genres' sound, content and repertoire, and problematizes the concepts of "old" and "new" in elderly musical engagement.

Group lessons: identifying "new songs" to learn, mutual support in learning

I first look at Saka's learning experience at Chou through her involvement in group lessons. As mentioned previously, group lessons were held every fortnight for two hours each. For group lessons, the students gathered at the premises to practice songs that Sensei had set out for each session. These were all songs from *enka*, *kayōkyoku* and related genres. Not once during my time at Chou's classes did I listen to songs from more contemporary J-pop and J-rock repertoires. Sensei explained her choice of songs in the following manner:

> The students all want to learn new songs. But for their age, it must be *enka* or *enka pops* (Sensei's term for *kayōkyoku* and related genres). Otherwise, they can't follow. The 'completely pop' songs (Sensei was referring to the latest J-pop and J-rock songs) are out of the question. They can't keep up with those rhythms anymore, because they've all finished their child-raising, and now have very little opportunity to raise their voice and use their vocal cords in general. That's how the vocal cords deteriorate, and how people start to really drift away from music.

It is hard to empirically verify her reasoning without further research on the everyday home activities of these women. But I was intrigued by Sensei's identification of rhythm as a central issue in identifying songs, and a group lesson in late October 2016 provided highly illuminating insights about Sensei's explanation. In this session,

150

Saka and her classmates were given the song *"Koi Hitoha"* (The Lone Leaf of Love) by the male singer Teramoto Keisuke to learn. Recently released in September, this song was a *kayōkyoku* ballad that incorporated a rather complex beat structure more akin to contemporary J-pop songs, and not heard in most other songs I encountered at Chou.

Figure 16: Score for "*Koi Hitoha*" (The Lone Leaf of Love).[302]

The complex beat structure befuddled many students, despite Sensei's detailed explanations on whether to pause for breathing, and other practical singing advice. After the group session, I asked about their thoughts on learning the song.

"The song's timing was so difficult to grasp!" Saka said.

---

[302] "*Koi Hitoha*" (The Lone Leaf of Love), *Gekkan Uta no Techō* (Monthly Handbook of Songs 9 (2016), 60.

"Yes, the beat is very complicated," Kai (69) added.

"I really like the song because it's so melancholic and dramatic, but it's so hard to learn because of the timing," Ogi (70) explained.

"It is, isn't it? The melody is very typical of Oda Junpei, all his songs are complicated like that," Sensei said as she passed by us, referring to the composer for the song.

The students' difficulties with *Koi Hitoha* vividly illustrated Sensei's emphasis on rhythm as an explanation for the repertoire of new songs for her lessons. These observations suggest that rhythm is one important marker for these elderly participants in identifying their kind of "common music".[303] Songs with rhythms that differed from those usually heard in the *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs that had made up their repertoire thus far were less approachable for them to learn to sing. As such, while students desired to learn "new" songs, their attempts at expanding their repertoire were very much anchored in musical understandings built by years of listening to "old" and familiar tunes.

Figure 17: Sensei conducting a group lesson at Chou.

---

[303] Koizumi, *Memoriisukēpu*, 5-6.

Based on this understanding of their "common music", students learned songs at group lessons in a communal manner, even though they took turns at the microphone individually. In another group lesson in October 2016, Sensei had us learn *"Kaze no Oka"* (Windy Hill) by the female singer Ōsawa Momoko (released in 2010). To see how far we had progressed in learning the song, Sensei got all of us to take turns at the microphone to sing the first verse.

Ame ni nureteru, Na mo naki hana ga	The nameless flower drenched in rain
Nazeka itoshii, kaze no oka	Unknowingly lovely, this windy hill
Kumo ga chigirete, hi ga saseba	As the clouds part, the sun shines through
Tooi mukashi ga, yomigaeru	The distant past comes back to me
Chichi mo ita, Haha mo ita	Father is there, Mother too
Minna ga ita koro wo	The times when everybody was still around
Kaze ga omoide, tsuretekuru	The wind brings back these memories
Haayai, haayai	*Haayai, haayai*

First verse of *"Kaze no Oka"* by Ōsawa Momoko. Released by Tokuma Japan Communications, 2010.

Okayama (80), one of the only three male students who regularly attended classes here, was asked to go first, as he sat closest to the microphone and mini-stage.

As he sang, some of the other ladies exchanged comments about how cute and adorable Okayama looked with his doe-eyed earnestness, as he tried hard to keep in tune. "I wish I could remain that bubbly when I get to 80!" Koba (73) said. I was slightly amused, since I felt that she looked lively herself, with her short hair and blond streak across her fringe.

Meanwhile, I noticed Saka and other students softly singing along to Okayama's rendition, while following the musical score they had received from Sensei, on which they had made detailed markings to aid in their learning. Sensei also helped us to keep time by having us clap together to the three-beat structure of the melody. This continued as others took their turns to sing, and we applauded each other at the end of each turn.

The students looked visibly nervous and excited as their turns loomed. Sensei tried to instill some level of competition when encouraging students, by referring to Okayama's attempt: "Do your best! Okayama's done well, so don't let him beat you!" Coupled with their understanding that the classroom was not a place to fool around, the students took their turns seriously, focusing on the video screen showing the karaoke lyrics, and listening intently for their cue to start singing. Nevertheless, mistakes were met with good-natured laughter, often by the offending student herself/himself. For example, when Koba mistakenly sang *"ame ga"* (the rain) instead of *"ame ni"* (in the rain) at the start of *Kaze no Oka*, she burst out laughing louder than everyone else, and humorously admitted her lapse in concentration. Sensei seemed to take it in good stride too, and rewound the track to allow Koba to try the phrase again properly.

The learning experience at group lessons was highly communal and collaborative, as students not only took notes during others' turns at the microphone, but also provided each other with support and encouragement through applause. They brought out the best in each other by focusing hard on their own singing during their turns, following along during each other's turns, and humorously recognizing the

154

mistakes they made. These positive experiences have facilitated the development of a strong communal bond and identification within Chou, as I witnessed in their many extra-curricular activities such as common meals, parties and volunteering work. The group lessons also gave students chances to bolster their self-image through mutual encouragement and praise, as well as the good-natured humor in which individual mistakes and deficiencies were acknowledged and received.

Individual lessons: methods and practices for learning karaoke in old age

Besides group lessons, students at Chou also receive individual instruction. Students plan their own schedule for these half-hour sessions. Saka, for example, usually has them fortnightly on Mondays, in weeks when there are no group lessons. Students are free to bring their own selection of songs to practice, but Saka and most students leave the choice up to Sensei. The songs that are practiced here are also almost exclusively *enka/kayōkyoku.*

During individual lessons, Sensei emphasized the importance of "diaphragm breathing" as the "correct" singing technique. According to her, this approach derived from a curriculum developed by a famous male *enka* composer, and Sensei herself had learned under one of his disciples. The most distinctive teaching method at individual classes was the repeated practice of verses and songs with a belt tied tightly around the stomach. Sensei maintained that the belt was to aid in learning to use the stomach muscles when singing/breathing. As a result, each student brought their own belt to each individual lesson.

Over the course of a few afternoons in June and early July 2016, I had the chance to observe Saka go through a series of individual lessons, in preparation for her stage performance at Chou's yearly recital. Her closest friends in the class, Ogi, Tate and Nishi, were also in attendance, as they usually arranged their individual lessons to

be in consecutive slots on the same afternoon so they could chat while waiting for one another to finish their session. Other closely-knit groups of friends in the class, such as Kai and Hayashi (73), and Koba, Asai (70), Naka and Suna (72), had a similar practice, and they made sure not to impinge upon each other's scheduling.

During the first session in June, Saka was dressed casually in a pair of black trousers and a loose frilled purple blouse over the top of an inner shirt. When it was her turn for the individual lesson, Saka tightened her leather belt around her stomach, on top of the inner shirt but allowing the purple blouse to hang loosely over. She got up from her seat and went to the mini-stage, placing her musical score and white voice recorder (the same model as many other students, which necessitated the marking of ownership with stickers or marker writing) on the rostrum. Turning on the voice recorder, Saka then uttered, *"Sensei, yoroshiku onegaishimasu"* (Sensei, I look forward to our lesson today), before taking the microphone.

Sensei then confirmed with Saka that for today's individual session, they would be working on her song for the upcoming recital, *"Amore Mio"* (My Love). After Saka agreed, Sensei played the karaoke backing track. Saka was well-prepared and familiar with the song's lyrics, melody and tango-influenced beat, singing without hesitation or apprehension. However, it was also a somewhat stiff performance, both vocally and visually.

Ai wa inochi yo, anata ga subete yo	Love is life, you are my everything
Aishitemo, aishitemo, aishitarinai	Though I love you, I love you, its never enough
Anata ga inai to, kono yo ga yami ni naru	When you're not here, this world turns dark
Namida no umi ni, shizundeshimau	I drown under a sea of tears

Watashi hitori ja, ikiteyukenai wa	I cannot live on by my own

*Amore, amore, amore, amore mio	*Amore, amore, amore mio*
Towa ni tsuzuku koi yo, inochi wa barairo	A love that never ends, painting my life the colour of a rose
Amore, amore, amore mio,	*Amore, amore, amore mio*
Shinu hodo aishite	Love me till you die

Amai kuchizuke, yasashii sasayaki	Sweet kisses, gentle whispers
Yume no naka, yowasarete, toiki midarete	In my dreams, intoxicated, my flustered sighs
Futatsu no kokoro ga, hitotsu ni tokeaeba	When our hearts melt into one
Hoho yoseaeru, toki ga aru nara	If we can but come cheek to cheek
Nanimo iranai, nanimo nozomanai	I don't need anything else, I won't wish for anything

Amore, amore, amore, amore mio	*Amore, amore, amore, amore mio*
Atsuku koi ni ochite, inochi wa barairo	To fall fiercely in love, life is rose-colored
Amore, amore, amore mio,	*Amore, amore, amore mio,*
Shinu hodo aishite	Love me till you die

Repeat *

"*Amore Mio*", a *kayōkyoku* song by female singer Yamaguchi Kaoru. Released by Crown Records, 2015.

Noticing the stiffness of Saka's singing, Sensei first provided some vocal pointers. Over the sound of Saka's singing, Sensei provided constant reminders to use her stomach. "Bring it out from the stomach! From the stomach (*onaka kara*)!" Sensei repeatedly said. "You won't be able to project your voice enough if you don't use your stomach properly." Sensei also sang along with Saka in the chorus. Through her facial expressions and bobs and sways of her head, Sensei visibly demonstrated the kinds of accents and emphasis appropriate for portraying the required sensuality at certain points, such as for the phrase *"amore, amore, amore, amore mio"*. Sensei then went through those parts again after the rendition to highlight her points. Saka nodded and replied with a respectful "*hai*" (yes), and studiously wrote down notes on her copy of the song's score.

Sensei also suggested that Saka incorporate certain dance steps and poses to make the stage performance livelier. Saka listened with intent as Sensei demonstrated the simple steps she had in mind, beginning from the intro melody.

"After you bow when you reach the middle of the stage, you should stretch out your left hand to your side, and then your right hand. Then slowly bring your hands together again like this. Try doing it with me," Sensei explained the choreography. She also demonstrated the moves herself. Saka complied and tried out the moves, but she looked much stiffer than the very graceful Sensei.

"Oh no, you have to be more careful about your fingers when you do it. Your fingers should be slightly bent like this. Particularly, pay attention to the middle finger, like this," Sensei went into more detail. She moved to stand beside Saka, and gently moved her arms and fingers to the desired positions, for the choreography matching the chorus.

"You should try to move your arms and fingers to just about this position."

"You have to keep your forearm straight as you move it downward. But the wrist has to turn and be loose."

Sensei gave very detailed directions. Saka nodded with each piece of advice, even if she had difficulty executing the choreography to Sensei's satisfaction. Sensei played the song again and again over the karaoke system, each time stopping after the intro, so that Saka could practice the choreography. Sensei's direction took up the remaining fifteen minutes of the individual session, while Saka's friends and I watched on and gave sporadic advice to help Saka.

Figure 18: A female student undergoes an individual lesson with Sensei, while her friends wait for their turn. The stage costumes hung behind the student might have provided visual reminders of their upcoming recital performances.

At the end of the session, Sensei encouraged Saka to continue to think about and practice the choreography until the recital event. Bowing, Saka thanked Sensei, before collecting her things and returning to her seat among her friends. She looked thoroughly exhausted after her session. Sensei turned to me, and said with a smile, "We're working

really hard here, aren't we? I always say it's like doing gymnastics. These singing lessons help people to keep fit." Saka, Ogi, Tate and Nishi laughed and nodded. "It's true! Look at all of us in the class here, we're all really healthy for our age. A lot of people we know at this age go to the hospital all the time, they seem to have a lot of problems and need many check-ups. But none of us here go to the hospital that often at all," Ogi and Tate said with pride.

By this time, I had noticed that Sensei's teaching methods placed great importance on how students' used their bodies; they were constantly given reminders, often through Sensei adjusting their bodies physically, to control their throats, diaphragm, and other body parts in their singing and choreography. When I asked Saka and Sensei about this aspect of the individual lessons, they both explained that unlike younger people, for elderly students like those at Chou's classes, "if it's only in our heads our bodies won't be able to keep up" (*kangaetemo karada ga tsuitekonai*). Instead, they must "absorb the technique through the body" (*karada ni oboekomaseru*) in Sensei's words; "they cannot keep up with the song if they have to think too much (about singing techniques)" (*kangaenagara utau to ma ni awanai*). Her rationale for having students repeatedly sing song verses and phrases, as well as her personal adjustment of students' body postures and gestures, was part of this "absorbing through the body" technique. Her students did not seem to mind this bodily approach, judging from their positive reception of the physical exertion required during individual classes.

However, Sensei adopted a different approach toward lyrics. She explained to me:

It's important to learn the rhythm through the body, but for the lyrics I tell my students that it's important to understand them properly. But they won't be able to sing in time if they have to think through everything.

Sensei's emphasis on understanding and thinking through the lyrics was not strictly followed by all her students. Saka's friends, Tate and Nishi, frequently remarked to me that they sang with a vague idea of the kind of emotionality needed for certain scenes and situations depicted by the lyrics, but only as they flashed across the screen in the karaoke videos. However, interestingly Ogi commented on how she felt about song lyrics, with reference to her advanced years. She explained her changing approach towards familiar lyrical topics, and actual lyrics in many cases.

It's my feelings, more so than my thoughts, about lyrics that have changed as I've grown older. For example, I used to sing about romance and loss in a very light manner. But having lived 70 years, lost my husband, and been through a lot in my life, I know much more about the intricacies of romance now than I did before. That sensuality comes through when I sing lyrics about love, longing and loss. I would never have achieved this kind of nuance when I was younger.

In the class, students thus exercised their physical, mental and sensory faculties during karaoke lessons. Some of these exertions were deliberately planned and executed under Sensei's instruction, like the practicing of diaphragm breathing. Others, such as the recognition of "preferred" new songs and Ogi's comments about her change in emotional responses and sensitivity over her lifetime, involved more agency from students who drew upon their own life experience and knowledge, sometimes subconsciously.

The fact that the exercising of these different faculties showcased different approaches in the learning activity also suggests that Sensei and her students imagined the aging of each faculty differently. For example, Sensei and Saka's comments about

learning singing techniques "bodily" suggest that students have internalized, to a certain extent, mainstream discourse about the physical and mental deteriorations that characterize the process of growing old. On the other hand, Ogi's comment suggests that aging and regular singing practice has honed her emotional faculties, enabling her to sing with more empathy than before. This draws attention to another less examined aspect of growing old: that the wealth of experience accrued over time allows for an enriching experience of life at this later stage of life too. As such, learning karaoke at Chou provided opportunities for students to re-negotiate, through Sensei's instruction and practice, their bodily, mental and emotional images, both imposed upon by others and self-conceived.

Singing like a star: performing on stage at a karaoke recital

The mid-summer sun shone mercilessly on the concrete pavement as I headed to the Sumiyoshi Ward community center concert hall on the morning of the recital. Already, many visitors, mainly elderly men and women, had formed a line waiting to get tickets to enter. I joined in the queue, and after having my ticket inspected entered the hall's concourse.

I finally caught a glimpse of Sensei after about ten minutes of wandering around and taking in the atmosphere. She was dressed in a short-sleeved loose white blouse with a swallow motif, coupled with simple black trousers and medium-heeled sandals. Tying her hair in a top bun, with tastefully refined make-up and a simple set of pearl earrings and necklace, Sensei exuded a graceful and elegant aura. She seemed very busy, as she gave out some instructions over her mobile phone while clutching on to her designer handbag.

"Benny! You're here! It's amazing isn't it?" She greeted me with her usual wide smile. "It's amazing, there's so many people!" I replied. "I hope you enjoy the day,"

Sensei said. She then turned around to various directions, and began repeatedly announcing, "It's almost 10:30 now, so we will be starting soon! Please head into the concert hall!" Most of the people mingling around in the concourse took heed, and shuffled towards the concert hall entrances.

I took my seat near the back of the concert hall to get a good overview of the hall and stage. The hall was rather large, with a seating capacity of around 850, containing 600 permanent seats with 250 more foldable chairs set up on the arena area in front. The stage was also spacious enough to fit a sizable symphonic band. However, today it was only simply adorned with a couple of balloon bouquets near the center. Two flags were hung from above: a red one representing Sensei's registered company for her karaoke classes on the right, and a blue one on the left representing *Crown Kayō Gakuin*. The musical backing today was provided by a professional sound mixer system, hooked up to a karaoke console. This was set up on the arena floor behind the foldable seats. Two sound crew members, one operating the sound mixer system and the other the karaoke console, oversaw the sound arrangements in the hall. A small karaoke video screen was placed at the center of the foot of the stage, so that performers could refer to the lyrics on the screen. A photography and film crew was also camped out at the foot of the permanent seating, documenting the proceedings for the upcoming DVD and photobook. All in all, the setup for today's event felt highly professional.[304]

Sensei appeared on stage to welcome everybody to the event. She wished us a good time, and hoped that the performers would enjoy their experience on stage too. Sensei kept her address succinct, and handed the microphone over to the female MC she had employed for today. The MC then introduced the first performer for the day, and we applauded as she made her way on stage. This was the first of over 100 performances

---

[304] My observations of other karaoke class recitals and competitions, as well as Sensei's anecdotes, revealed that this recital was grander in scale than most others.

for today's recital, which would continue until 7:30pm. Of these, only 27 were by male

performers. Also, all but three of the songs performed were from *enka* and

kayōkyoku.[305] Meanwhile, around 700 people had come to watch the event. Unlike

shorter concerts, audience members streamed in and out of the hall throughout the day

(a practice that can also be seen at other Japanese cultural events, such as *kabuki* plays).

I later learned that most of them (particularly the few young adult attendees) had come

to support segments in which their friends and/or family were performing.

Sensei also invited guests of honor to perform on stage. These included *enka* and

kayōkyoku singers of considerable popularity, such as Kitagawa Daisuke, and

performers of various traditional cultural forms such as *buyō* dance and folksongs

(*min'yō*). I was also asked to perform the *enka* song *"Ōsaka Suzume"* (Osaka Sparrow,

originally by Nagai Miyuki, released in 1992 by Sony Records) in one of these guest

segments. The grand scale and professional setup of today's event made me nervous as

my turn to perform approached. I also wondered how Saka must have been feeling, as

she waited for her turn on stage in the afternoon.

Saka had previously told me about her initial thoughts on performing on stage,

before becoming a student of Sensei's. "I had always loved music, but before Sensei

invited me to join this class I had never sung karaoke. I only listened. So I never even

imagined myself singing on stage," she confided.

I left the concert hall about fifteen minutes before Saka's turn, and headed to the

waiting room to the side of the stage. Saka walked into the waiting room, wearing an

elaborate long pink dress with encrusted jewels and frilly sleeves and hem. She was

flanked by Ogi and Tate, who helped hold up the hem of her dress as she walked. I later

---

[305]   The three songs were: "Piece of My Wish", a J-pop song by female singer Imai Miki, released by For
Life Records in 1991; *"Amairo no Kami no Otome"* (The Pure Girl with the Straw-Colored Hair), a
Group Sounds (1960s pop-rock) song by the male band Village Singers, released by Nippon Columbia in
1968; and "Take Me Home Country Roads", an American country folk song by the male singer John
Denver, released by RCA Records in 1971.

learned from Saka that it was Sensei who suggested this dress, as it would make Saka appear more youthful. Saka was very happy to agree, as she had loved performing in it in the class recital two years ago. Besides the pink dress, Saka wore a pink hairband with a flower attached, and a jewel earrings and necklace set. These accessories matched her dress beautifully. Her makeup was also more radiant than usual, as the stylist in the dressing room had made sure to accentuate her eyes with an appropriate amount of eye-shadow, and she had a bright shade of red lipstick on.

Saka's glamorous look did not go unnoticed by her peers who were still outside the concert hall overseeing other event operations.[306] They reacted with "*kirei!*" (beautiful!)*, "kawaii!*" (cute!) and "*beppin!*" (beauty!).[307] The look of admiration that the other students had on their faces, as they saw Saka make her way backstage to prepare for her turn, showed that their praise was heartfelt. The students encouraged and gushed about one another throughout the day, as they emerged from the dressing room in their elaborate dresses and kimonos and prepared for their turns on stage. Ike (70), whom Sensei had asked to act as an event photographer, took a few photos while Saka waited. She looked very pleased with her appearance today, as seen from her gleaming smile. I wished her good luck, before returning to my seat in the concert hall to watch her performance.

It was soon Saka's turn to go on stage. Upon the MC's introduction, she entered the stage from the audience's left, as the intro strains of her song, *"Amore Mio"*, played. As she took her position at the center of the stage, I saw hints of nervousness in her uptight facial expression. She then started singing the first notes of the song tentatively, while referring to the lyrics on the karaoke video screen at the foot of the stage. Soon,

---

[306]   I discuss their activities in running the event by themselves in the next subsection.
[307]   The term "*Beppin*(*-san*)" is in Osakan dialect.

the chorus began, where she had major problems with the choreography during her practices at with Sensei.

"Amore, amore, amore, amore mio…"

Saka sang in tune, although still audibly nervous with a somewhat shaky voice. However, her focus seemed to be more on her hand movements, which Sensei had corrected repeatedly during practices. Although they were still not as elegant and sensual as Sensei's example back in Chou, nevertheless Saka's movements seemed more fluid than before. As she completed the first chorus with all the hand movements that Sensei suggested, the audience applauded loudly. This seemed to embolden Saka for the second verse. She sang with more vocal conviction, and her voice sounded more stable. She also performed the same hand gestures for the chorus in this verse, this time looking more visibly confident, comfortable and flamboyant.

"Shinu hodo aishite…"

After singing the last notes of the song, she let out what seemed to be a satisfied smile as she bowed to the audience. She then exited the stage to our left, walking with more confidence than when she entered. I applauded loudly. It was very uplifting to see that Saka had performed better than in practice, and was so pleased with her own performance today.

Figure 19: A female participant, clad in a kimono, performs on stage at the yearly class recital.

Afterward Saka reflected upon her experience on stage. She explained with a smile, "I was very nervous at first, but upon hearing the applause after I sang the first verse, I began to enjoy my time on stage. As the song ended, I felt a little sad that it was ending, and wanted to sing more."

Saka then excused herself to return to the dressing room, and change back into her work clothes for the event so that she could return to her duties. As she passed by her peers in the concourse, they congratulated her on a successful performance.

"You did really well! You managed to do all the choreography and use the vocal pointers that Sensei worked on in the lessons!"

"And you looked so gorgeous in that dress!"

As Saka basked in the plentiful praise, I reflected on how she grew into her song performance, not just over the course of her lessons and practice, but also over the course of the recital performance itself. Through the journey of lessons and practices leading up to the recital, students like Saka palpably felt a sense of achievement and

167

development (especially at this moment after the stage performance) that boosted confidence in their potential for growth even in old age. The way that karaoke learning was structured also provided an exciting "goal" that stimulated their elderly lives, and gave an impetus for sustained involvement with an activity. These lessons, and more importantly the recital, gave class students like Saka opportunities to express themselves, and demonstrate the skills and abilities they had learned. This self-expression enhanced students' self-image, too, as they could present themselves glamorously on stage in front of friends and family. The ways in which Saka attained a sense of fulfillment from her participation in lessons and the recital have also been suggested by Stebbins (2015), Jones and Symon (2001) as some possible individual benefits of a lifelong learning mode of pursuing serious leisure.[308]

Making the show possible: group effort in running the recital

During the weeks leading up to the recital, Saka and her friends regularly visited Chou for its *kissa* operation, but they did not practice their songs too much for fear of tiring out their vocal cords. Instead, they busied themselves with helping in the final preparations for the recital, such as moving stage costumes between Chou's classroom and their rented storehouse, so that students could try on possible outfits to wear on stage.

Although the few weeks before the recital saw a flurry of preparation activities, notably the concentration of individual lessons aimed at refining students' performances, the planning for the event had started in January. In a lengthy conversation we had in November 2016, Sensei explained that she had to place bids to book the concert hall in Sumiyoshi Ward's community center then, as these were decided very far in advance. She had been successful for 2016, but had previously also previously held the annual

---

[308]   Stebbins, Serious Leisure, 14; Jones and Symon, "Lifelong Learning as Serious Leisure", 274-5.

recital at event halls in hotels.[309] In addition to reserving the recital venue, Sensei began

approaching friends who were professional singers and other cultural practitioners to

perform as guests-of-honor, to provide the audience with interesting segments in

between the students' stage performances. But she knew that the audience were mainly

there to support their family and friends who were performing, and her focus for the

recital was always on providing the best stage for her students to perform on.

> Basically, I start preparing right after the New Year, and I think about
>
> everybody's song and fashion choices. I choose their songs, and for the next six
>
> months we practice the song. I think about these song selections naturally, as I
>
> go through the lessons with the students. If an idea comes up, I write them down
>
> on a memo pad. Even when I'm sleeping, I dream of the students' possible
>
> performances at the recital. I even think about the participants not from my
>
> classes, and how they would be able to perform in a way that everybody in
>
> attendance would be happy. That's all I think about.

Because she thought long and hard about her students' possible performances,

based on her appraisal of their characters and singing styles, Sensei was often able to

eloquently explain her choices and intended artistic direction for students. Although

students could make suggestions about what they wanted to sing on the recital stage,

they almost always deferred to Sensei's picks because of her persuasion and authority.

This was the case with Saka and her friends, who went along with Sensei's plans for

their performances, even if they sometimes secretly wanted to sing other songs

---

[309]   Indeed, for the 2017 recital, Sensei discussed the plans with her students during the first group lesson after the New Year, and they eventually agreed to hold it at a hotel venue for this year. This was because they realized it would be more economical after considering the exorbitant expenses for the after-party if they had to do it at the community center concert hall. This was the first time that Sensei had openly discussed the choice of venue and cost for the recital, as she felt that it was increasingly impossible for her to continue funding the budget deficits for the recital out of her own pocket, as she had done thus far.

conveying different moods and sensualities (as I found out in our conversations away from Sensei).

At the recital event, Sensei's students from Chou and other classes, identifiable by their black t-shirts emblazoned on the back with the name of Sensei's registered company, had their hands full overseeing many aspects of running a recital. Two registration tables, one for performers and one for the general audience, had been set up at the front, where Saka, Ogi, Tate, Nishi and other students from Chou inspected tickets. Walk-in attendees could also buy tickets from the general registration table. Adjoining the performers' registration table was a booth for pre-orders for the event photobook and DVD, which Kai and Hayashi were manning. The items appeared to be popular keepsakes, as a steady stream of people stopped by and made reservations. Further down the concourse, a small area was set aside for guests to leave flower bouquets and congratulatory wreaths. Beyond that, a small table was set up underneath the staircase for the distribution of lunch boxes starting from 11am, and a large area was set aside with tables and chairs as a dining space. Sensei's students from other classes attended to these spaces.

Figure 20: Students handling registration matters at the recital.

Throughout the day, Sensei and the students rarely entered the concert hall outside of their own performance slots, and quickly returned to their event duties after they had changed out of their stage costumes back into the black t-shirts. I noticed that Sensei seemed harsher to her students than usual, as she delivered instructions to move equipment and check on the inventory with hints of frustration in her voice. Sensei would later tell me about her guilt at her tone for the day, saying that she always found the recital the most stressful day of the year because of the immensity of the event operation.

I decided to join the Chou students at the concourse after Saka's performance, and for the rest of the afternoon I helped in providing directions and moving equipment whenever needed. I asked Ogi, who was working alongside Saka, about what kept them motivated in the arduous work of running the recital. Ogi explained, "The recital is a major goal and something to look forward to during the year. Performing on stage shows what we have learned for the past year. Sure, doing reception duties and moving all these tables, chairs and equipment is tiring. But I'm also reminded that I have all this energy, and these friends working with me, even at my age."

Sensei noticed me having a little chat with Saka, Ogi, Nishi and Tate after the event, and asked if I had learned much from the recital. Hearing about my earlier conversations with Saka and Ogi, she told me and her students about one of her main goals for activities at her classes. "I always tell my students that through our class activities, they should also learn to be independent and not rely on their children."

Ogi's and Sensei's comments highlighted two values that were central for them: community and autonomy. While Sensei's ideas on staying independent from offspring were already deeply held by most of the students at Chou, as seen from their living

arrangements away from their children, through their common participation in class activities, the students developed on top of their sense of autonomy strong communal bonds centered outside of the family. These values of community and autonomy guided their continued interactions with each other outside of the class setting, which usually manifested as frequent visits to Chou's *kissa* operation as regular customers.

Finding companionship through and beyond the karaoke class

In my time with Saka and her friends, I was fascinated at how often they visited Chou, even outside of lessons. In addition to her coming for group and individual lessons, Saka visited Chou as a regular customer of the *kissa* operation three times a week, for a total of four visits per week. In her visits, Saka interacted the most with her closest friends in the class, Tate, Nishi and Ogi. Sensei, who owned the *kissa* besides being the teacher for the class, was also an integral member of their group. The five ladies tended to congregate at the bar counter, because of Sensei, Tate and Nishi's work in preparing snacks and drinks for other *kissa* customers.

During their visits to Chou, the ladies of course sang some songs. In Sensei's presence, however, they were usually reluctant to sing much, because they felt as if their singing was going to be judged by her. When they did sing, the songs they selected were almost always those they had learned in class recently. Saka, in particular, frequently sang with her leather belt on when Sensei was around. However, when Sensei was away from the premises for other engagements, the four students, especially Ogi and Tate, sometimes branched out into other *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs that they had known from earlier in their lives. Ogi particularly favored songs by Misora Hibari, the most popular songstress of the Showa era that occupied most of her (and her friends') lifespan. She explained her different choice of songs here:

These are the songs that I sing when I'm tipsy and feel good. I won't sing these songs in front of Sensei, since she doesn't like it when we sing with little regard for technique while we're drunk. She thinks we might hurt our voices like that. On the other hand, I don't sing the songs from lessons in this state, only when I'm sober.

Rather than singing, however, perhaps they spent more time chatting with each other, when visiting Chou outside of classes. The conversation dealt with songs and karaoke lessons at times, and other non-class/non-music-related issues at others. Sometimes, the five ladies also went out together for meals or shopping, and they had even traveled to South Korea together.

On a Saturday afternoon in December, before the *kissa* operation started for the day, I asked about how they came to know each other so intimately. Nishi first described how she met Sensei:

I was actually the first to get to know Sensei. That was about 30 years ago, when Sensei had yet to even start out as a student! We knew each other at a bathhouse that we both regularly went to. Many years later, when Sensei had been learning karaoke for about eight years, and had gotten so good that she was asked to start her own karaoke class and singing career, I joined her class as a student. It was initially weird to call her Sensei like everyone else, but I eventually got used to it. And when we moved to this current location, Sensei decided to use it as a *kissa* also. Since I had previous experience managing karaoke *kissas,* Sensei asked if I would like to help out, and I accepted.

Nishi continued to describe how the other students coalesced into their current group. "The four of us got closer really only after our class had moved to this location one-and-a-half years ago."

"Yes, yes. Before that, we didn't really get involved with each other much," Tate, who was cleaning some glasses behind the bar counter, turned to us and joined in the conversation.

"I think we just got closer together because we were the few who would be here almost every day, be it for lessons or the *kissa.* So we started talking to each other more, and then invited each other out for meals and all that. That's the way we started off," Nishi explained.

"I'd come to know Saka rather well by that point, but not everyone else. So moving here was a key point," Tate said. Saka nodded in agreement.

"I'd also just quit my part-time job at the nearby supermarket, so I had even more free time than before, since my husband passed away and I live alone. So I was spending a lot of time here, especially because I live just a few minutes' walk from here," Nishi added.

I asked the other ladies why they decided to spend so much of their free time at Chou. Saka replied, "It's boring to stay home all the time, so I come here four times a week. This is just about the right frequency for me."

Tate added with a chuckle, "I still live with my husband, but we both want to do our own things. I don't want to be around him all the time. That's why we have our own interests, and for me it's coming here for karaoke. I'd also had some experience working in a karaoke *kissa*, so I also took up Sensei's invitation to help run this place."

The other women teased Tate for talking about her husband in such acidic terms, and wished that their husbands were still around for them to pour scorn on. As Saka said, "Husbands can be annoying when they're around and you have to spend much time

with them. But when they're gone, you get really lonely, and wish to have them back!" The widows thus expressed again a sense of loneliness that they felt in living alone, that they sought to fill through their karaoke pursuits.

Yet, based on their behavior and other conversations throughout their visits to Chou, the ladies' karaoke pursuits also seemed to be providing them with opportunities to move away from their previous role of being housewives, within the life-course context that they shared as rural-born women of their *dankai sedai* generation (see Introduction and Chapter 1). I asked them if they found this departure more achievable at their advanced age.

"I feel more comfortable to come here often because I don't have to look after the kids and the house much anymore, and I now have more free time," Nishi said. Tate and Saka nodded their heads in agreement. However, Ogi chuckled enviously, and lamented that she had much less free time than her friends, because she still had to regularly help out at her son's ramen restaurant in the neighborhood. In fact, she was scheduled for a shift right after our chat. But Ogi also agreed after this interjection that she did feel that she now had more free time than before.

Tate further explained her thoughts on coming to Chou frequently, and eventually deciding to work as one of Sensei's helpers for the *kissa* operation:

I grew up with little after the war, since I was born in rural Kochi in Shikoku. And then we had to go work and get married. It's wonderful that we now have this free time. And in such prosperous times too! That's why I really want to enjoy life as much as I can now.

Nishi, Ogi and Saka concurred, saying that they shared similar life trajectories and desires despite hailing from different parts of Western Japan, and considered the

current social and material conditions much better than in the past. I found their appraisal of their current conditions intriguing in the face of an increasing body of literature about the precarious political economy of contemporary Japan's "lost decades".[310]

Figure 21: Sensei and her students enjoying a communal meal after a group lesson.

Although I have mainly focused on Saka's group in this account of sociality at Chou's classes, smaller groups of closely-knit friends were not totally shut off from one another. Instead, they often participated together in activities outside of singing classes. For example, Sensei set aside time after the second group lesson of each month for a class meal, to which students often contributed their homemade dishes to complement Sensei's offerings. These were sumptuous feasts, which students enjoyed greatly, and they facilitated the exchange of jovial conversation across multiple smaller groups of friends. Sensei also organized lunch and dinner parties to mark special occasions, such

---

[310] For example, see Anne Allison, Precarious Japan (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013); and Ogawa, Lifelong Learning in Neoliberal Japan.

as the end and start of each year, which everybody enthusiastically attended, even though it was not compulsory and they had to pay for their own share. Chou's classes were thus a highly inclusive communal space, even if students became closer to some peers than others.

These observations and comments by Saka and her classmates resonate closely with Watanabe's (2005) suggestion that these women are "relieved of responsibilities and obligations" to the family, and are thus free to fulfill long-held desires, particularly in the social realm outside of the family.[311] In fact, Nishi and Tate have even taken up actual paid roles, as Sensei's helpers for the *kissa* operation. Ogi and Saka offer much help with these tasks too, perhaps because of their close friendship. Students' activities thus further contribute to the maintenance of the class and *kissa.* They also show a communal solidarity and identity formed through karaoke, outside of the family sphere that has dominated their lives until now.

Ho (2018) notes that existing research on female friendships around the world has tended to be situated within discourses of domesticity, in which women are portrayed as "passive beings who acquiesce to their subjugated gender roles socializing in their roles as wives or mothers, or forming emotional or emotional ties as feminine entities or in a sisterly fashion".[312] Moving beyond such research, Ho argues, through her study of female managers in Tokyo, that female friendships are not an entrenchment of hegemonic gender ideologies (including Japanese) that reinforce women's domestic place, but rather provide opportunities for the reflexive project of constructing individual and group identities that allow its members to negotiate their desires in life within the social, cultural and historical contexts.[313] Particularly important for Ho is the

---

[311] Watanabe, "Changing Adult Learning in Japan", 266.
[312] Swee-Lin Ho, Friendship and Work Culture of Women Managers in Japan: Tokyo After Ten (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 15.
[313] Ibid., 193.

milieu of bubble-era Japan in the late 1980s and early 1990s: she situates her informants'

coming-of-age and employment experiences during this period as crucially formative in

their outlook on work, family and life. The examples of Saka and the students at Chou

largely agree with Ho's point, but they also complicate her analysis: these are women

who grew up adhering largely to the *ryōsai kenbo* ideal, yet they also found themselves

wanting and taking action to move beyond the prescribed gender roles that they had

performed earlier in their lives. Taking the findings from Ho's research and the

examples at the karaoke class together, perhaps a frutiful avenue of further research on

female friendships would be to investigate the role played by life stage in influencing

the nature and content of women's friendship networks. In other words, how does age

determine how friendships are formed, what women do when they come together, and

why they seek each other for companionship and support in this milieu? A comparative

approach across different age groups of women may possibly shed more light on the

socio-cultural situation for women in this current time, and how they seek ways to cope

and flourish within it.

Achieving well-being and *ikigai* through karaoke class participation

To conclude this chapter, I want to re-examine the points from these karaoke examples,

and consider how the lifelong learning mode of serious leisure enabled elderly women

like Saka to achieve well-being and *ikigai.* In a private conversation with Sensei, she

told me that she generally welcomed anybody who was interested in joining her class.

However, she explained one basic condition:

      Students need to show that they are working towards a certain goal in attending

      my karaoke classes. Otherwise, I don't think there's any meaning in coming, and

      I won't admit them. The goal can be to be a champion at a karaoke competition,

or to appear at a recital, or to be a better singer, or to become fitter and healthier. And I will tailor my teaching content and methods to their goals in the individual lessons. But there has to be some kind of goal.

Furthermore, the musical ideology underpinning the genres of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* which the students grew up listening to, and wanted to sing at Chou, also stress the learning and mastering of rigidly formalized vocal techniques and expression. Particularly, this was to be achieved through a system of apprenticeship and "learning from the original", as explained in the discussion about *enka* and *kayōkyoku* ideology earlier in this chapter. As such, while the students at Chou's classes sometimes seemed laid-back in their chattering even during group lessons, they became serious when the time came for them to engage in the actual karaoke singing during group and individual sessions, and especially when performing in public at the class recital and other events. The setting of Chou's classes thus enabled students to engage in their karaoke interest in a way that presents them with an appropriate level of challenge for their singing abilities, and a possible sense of satisfaction promised at the end of the learning activities. In this way, learning to sing at the class allowed students to experience a few of the seven components of flow proposed by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), such as a sense of competence, the merging of action and awareness in concentration, working with clear goals, receiving positive feedback, and a deep and focused involvement.[314] However, as Saka's learning experiences during her lessons show, such components of flow were not easily attained nor guaranteed.

Further comments about the karaoke lessons by Sensei, Saka and other students of Chou's classes also reveal the following ways in which the flow experience encourages a sense of bodily well-being in old age. Firstly, this mode of learning

---

[314] Csikszentmihalyi, Flow, 49-67.

allowed them to gain the bodily techniques to present themselves with poise and elegance in public, especially during stage performances. For example, Saka and Sensei described their learning activities during individual lessons as being highly bodily affairs through which Saka tried to learn to be more "sensual" and "elegant" by mastering vocal techniques and choreographies. On the other hand, Sensei and Ogi also talked about the ability of karaoke singing to engage with mental and emotional states, particularly through lyrics. These explanations reveal that singing karaoke as a student was experienced in multiple ways, such as sensual, emotional and physical. Saka's journey from karaoke classes to the recital performance best encapsulates such benefits to the public presentation of bodily disposition in old age. Students thus exercised different kinds of sensitivities (physical, emotional, and so on) in mastering song performances, and in the process gained techniques to present themselves in a positive and even glamorous manner.[315] In other words, through the skills learned through classes, students were able to develop a sense of increasing control of their bodily disposition and the singing performance at least by the time of their recital performances, another aspect of Csikszentmihalyi's ideas of flow experience.

Furthermore, the flow experience in learning karaoke at Chou purportedly allowed students to maintain a better standard of health in old age, at least relative to other peers of the same generation that they knew. Particularly, Sensei and the students' highlighting of the physical and mental concentration and exertion, through "working hard" during lessons, suggests a concern about ideas such as "keeping fit" and "revitalization". In explaining how their karaoke learning activities kept their physical fitness at a much better state than their non-learner friends, they thus seem to have internalized wider Japanese discourses of the ideals and perceived deteriorations of

---

[315] It will be interesting to compare these to existing discussions about younger audiences' reception of rhythms and lyrics, given how Saka, Sensei, Ogi and others have commented about how they see their own sensitivities to be different from younger listeners.

growing old. In this discursive context, we can thus understand karaoke learning as providing these students with the tools to achieve a feeling of bodily superiority over their non-learner peers, as another way in which the aspect of control in flow is experienced.

The sense of competence, control, heightened awareness and focus in the flow experiences of learning karaoke and performing at the recital were mostly felt as *jiko jitsugen* (self-realization), to refer back to Mathews (1996) and Traphagan's (2004) ideas of *ikigai* and well-being. However, attaining singing prowess through karaoke lessons also provided for social fulfillment, or a sense of *ittaikan.* Indeed, in explaining their motivations for frequently coming for karaoke at Chou, Saka and her friends revealed much about the struggles and turning points in their lives as rural-born working-class women of the *dankai sedai* generation. Based on their life histories, they also expressed their temporally specific desires to enjoy life healthily and in a fulfilling manner in old age, by remaining both autonomous and socially connected. In terms of attaining *ittaikan*, karaoke learning provided sites and opportunities for its female participants to become more socially connected outside of the family, through the friendships borne out of repeated meetings and conversations both inside and outside of the lessons. The teamwork that students showed in putting together the yearly recital was the crystallization of this sense of *ittaikan,* and it heightened their sense of interpersonal connection (another aspect of the flow experience). Thus, participation at Chou's classes, both in the core activity of singing practice and associated activities such as running the recital, allowed students to achieve both *jiko jitsugen* and *ittaikan* senses of *ikigai*, as the pursuit personal growth and fulfillment also encouraged the

development of the class as a whole, in a way similar to that suggested by Traphagan (2004).[316]

Particularly, through karaoke these ladies seemed to be moving away from their previous social role as "housewives", due to the reduction of their family duties in their advanced years, and constructing new forms of *ittaikan* outside the family. As discussed earlier, many of these ladies were working full-time before getting married, but resigned from their work to focus on homemaking and child rearing. This has given rise to what is commonly referred to as the "M-curve" in female employment rates, and Japan is often cited as one of the most prominent examples of this trend. Ochiai Emiko (1997) has argued that this trend developed mainly in the high economic growth period that Chou's students matured in, as married couples were unable to find surrogate care-givers for their children in nuclear family units that gradually became the norm.[317] However, from the explanations of why they frequented Chou so often provided by Saka, Tate and others, bonds to the family for these urban working-class ladies of the *dankai sedai* generation seem to have loosened considerably; they had reached a stage of life where they felt freer to pursue their desires for a more active role outside the family. In joining Chou's classes, this meant rekindling long-repressed desires to engage deeper with music, as it did for Saka, or trying out a new form of self-expression and activity, as it did for self-professed "musically challenged persons" (*onchi*), as Saka's classmate Hayashi revealed. Activities within Chou's classes have provided opportunities for these women to create new kinds of social connections and *ittaikan* outside the family that challenge popular conceptions of Japanese elderly life as dependent and passive, particularly for older Japanese who still retain a certain level of health and financial security.

---

[316] See the Introduction for my discussion on Traphagan's (2004) model of alignment between self-actualization and community development.

[317] Ochiai Emiko, *21 Seki no Kazoku e (Towards the 21st Century Family)* (Tokyo: Yūkaikaku, 1997).

Learning karaoke also reveals a deeper complexity into how flow experiences transform participants' sense of time. While Csikszentmihalyi (1990) focuses on descriptions of the experience of the passage of time during the activity, I suggest that the case of karaoke classes provide new insights into ideas of "old" and "new", or how the past is related to the present.[318] I particularly highlight the notion of "common music" as it relates to aged audiences.[319] Nostalgia is a common explanation for the motivation for continued engagement with "common music" considered "passe".[320] Perhaps this reflects a preconception about the repertoire of these genres being "stuck in the past". But Saka's constant learning and forgetting of new songs, albeit conducted within familiar genres, depicts another more forward-looking mode of elderly musical engagement. This is true on a communal level also, as students like Ogi and Tate tended to sing the songs that they have recently learned even outside of the class setting, apart from a few favorites from their youth. Saka and her fellow classmates' engagement with *enka* and *kayōkyoku* at Chou's classes thus suggests a more forward-looking alternative attitude towards engaging these music genres, upon which perhaps an entire genre industry is dependent for new demand today. For karaoke learners like Saka, musical nostalgia did not completely explain the way in which they chose and enjoyed songs. Instead, concepts of old and new were highly blurred; "new" understandings of "old" songs from their youth were made possible through physical and mental aging (as seen in Ogi and her appreciation of lyrics), while the constant learning of new *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs suggested that steps into "new" repertoire were crucially grounded in "old" and familiar musical sounds. Learning karaoke thus involved a complex negotiation of concepts of old and new, often at a subconscious level. As such, considerations of well-being and *ikigai* in old age should bear in mind the intricate

---

[318] Csikszentmihalyi, Flow, 66-67.
[319] Koizumi, *Memoriisukēpu*, 5-6.
[320] For scholarly examples, see Koizumi, *Memoriisukēpu*; and Yano, Tears of Longing.

relationship between old and new, and the past and the present, that operates in creating experiences of fulfillment. This is a task that I take on in the next chapter.

I want to end this chapter by considering, through some of the comments offered by Saka and her friends, why these women decided to seriously pursue karaoke as a learning activity. Saka first explained that she had first entered Chou to become a better singer in front of others. In Bourdieuan terms, she wanted to gain cultural capital among her older friends, particularly outside of the class, by showing her mastery at singing a commonly-known repertoire. Students like Tate and Saka found that the current stage of their lives allowed them many opportunities to gain the skills they could not attain previously, due to the demands of being a Japanese housewife in their milieu. Saka also talked about now wanting to fill in the free time she had at this stage in her life. Her agreement with Naka about being lonely at home showed that widows like her regarded free time as lonely, unless occupied with social activities outside home. Finally, although she did not say so explicitly, Saka hinted at the re-kindling of her youth interest in music and singing that had been long-suppressed due to work and family obligations. In many ways, the narrative of fulfillment in old age provided through learning karaoke was also only part of a tale of redemption for the sacrifices that women like Saka have had to endure, as part of the corporatist and male-dominated approach toward family gender roles taken in Japan's post-war economic growth.

Chapter 4: Creating Rhythms of Elderly Life

Sweat trickled down my cheeks, as I briskly walked across the large public park that separated the karaoke *kissa* Ami from the Nagai subway station in Osaka. It was a quarter past two on this Monday afternoon in July 2017, and the sun blazed down from between the few clouds in the summer sky. A couple of weeks earlier, I had sent Master, Ami's operator, a text message promising to visit on a Monday afternoon on this short trip back to Osaka. "Could you please tell Shima too that I will be visiting soon?" I added in my message. Shima (76) was a female regular who had taken me under her wing during my main period of fieldwork at Ami in 2016. Although I did not specify exactly what time I planned to arrive, I still hurried to Ami, because my best chance of meeting her was during this time period.

I soon arrived at Ami, and entered through the double doors to the sound of composed conversation between a man and a woman. As I appeared through the doors, Master looked up and welcomed me with a warm smile. "Ah, Benny! Welcome back! We were just wondering if you would come now, because you sent me that text message." He pointed to Shima, who had indeed come today and taken her seat at the table nearest to the entrance. I heaved a huge sigh of relief, and bowed to greet both of them.

"Yes, I was thinking that it would be a pity if I couldn't get to meet you today, since I'll be going on a short holiday trip next week," Shima said as I sat down at the table next to hers. "But it's wonderful that you still remembered to come on a Monday afternoon, even if you couldn't contact me beforehand because I don't have a mobile phone."

"Yes, I clearly remembered that from last year," I replied. "I'm really happy to be able to meet again, as the three of us."

"Indeed, just like we did last year!" Shima laughed and agreed.

We spent the rest of the afternoon filling each other in on developments in our lives since we had last met in winter, our thin short-sleeved t-shirts today greatly contrasting with the thick down jackets and muffler scarves that we had worn when I previously bid farewell. "I still come here every Monday afternoon from two to four o'clock, unless I have a short trip planned beforehand. I've just brought this new bottle of whiskey for Master to keep here; I finished the previous bottle that I had been drinking from when we last met," she explained. However, there was also turbulence in another part of her life:

> Well, about a month after you had gone back to Australia, my daughter-in-law was diagnosed with depression. We had to hold a funeral for our relative then, and we had to deal with our other relatives. She couldn't handle the many requests for her to do things, or the questions about her plans in life, and had a panic attack. [She briefly explained how she had been worried about her daughter-in-law's mental health before this episode] So to help her recover, I had to take over her housework duties, cooking breakfast for everybody at five in the morning, cleaning up, and all that. I was really busy with that for a month, until she was well enough to start helping out again. But I still came here every week on Monday, although I shortened my visits to about one hour. The doctor said that I shouldn't burn myself out taking care of her.

This meeting with Shima revealed that concepts of time planning and management were crucial in visiting the karaoke *kissa* regularly, even if they rarely came up as a central topic of discussion among regulars. Coming to Ami seemed an important way for her to mark the passage of time through the practice of routine habits.

186

Her daughter-in-law's doctor clearly recognized such a function, by advising Shima not to give up entirely on coming here as she used to. In addition, this way of regularly visiting the *kissa* also meant that other regulars besides myself interacted with Shima in a way that heavily foregrounded issues of temporality and life rhythm. For the few of us who were her "karaoke friends", it was only possible to spend time with her on Monday afternoons. In other words, talking and singing with Shima became a specific marker of time, and thus was also a highly temporal experience for us.

Karaoke participation at classes, as seen in the previous chapter through the learning experience of Saka and her friends, can also be understood as a temporal experience. For them, coming to classes and spending time together beyond lesson hours helped to mark the passing of time in an enjoyable manner. The class recital and participation in other karaoke competition events equally marked time, but as extraordinary events that broke from mundane routines.

The temporality of participation in karaoke classes and *kissas* was not only confined to concerns over the experience of old age in the present. As I showed in Chapter 2, Tsuru and Miki's charming of one another through song performances and musical discussion may have focused on the momentary enjoyment of the emotional and sensual pleasures of romantic passion, but it also involved song choices and conversation topics that reflected back upon earlier stages of life. The students at Chou's classes, on the other hand, not only engaged with familiar musical sounds from their past in their karaoke pursuits, but also constructed new forms of social connections and identities that helped provide direction and meaning for their lives moving forward.

It is clear that issues of temporality are central to regularly participating in karaoke classes and *kissas,* and underlaid the themes of sexuality and learning I analyzed earlier. Yet, the temporality of Japanese elderly life has not been studied at any great length so far, although scholars such as Jason Danely (2014) have discussed

attitudes towards death, mourning and loss.[321] How do elderly Japanese establish temporal meaning in a stage of life where they have largely retired from the activities and values of work and family labor, and possess large amounts of free time to pursue leisure? This chapter focuses on temporal themes that appeared in the karaoke experiences of regular participants, even if they did not always explicitly acknowledge this concern over marking time in their conversations with each other and me. Particularly, it investigates how karaoke provided ways for them, as elderly urban Japanese, to think about life and time in individually and socially meaningful ways.

I do so by firstly examining dominant ideas of temporality in contemporary Japanese society, noting that these discussions have thus far left out considerations of older Japanese. In doing so, I also argue for the importance of studying temporality as a way to understand how societal and individual value is attributed to different groups of Japanese, through normative notions of the "correct" use of time in one's life. I then examine aesthetic expressions of temporality in the *enka* and *kayōkyoku* that participants sang. Next, I investigate how these social and aesthetic discourses of temporality operate in conversations and actions at karaoke classes and *kissas*, by considering four temporal aspects of karaoke experience: nostalgia, attitudes toward the moment, routine, and the extraordinary. Through these temporal themes of karaoke participation, I examine how karaoke participants constructed narrative flows of time, thought about physical, social and identity aspects of their lives, and attributed social and individual meaning to their past, present and future. I conclude this chapter by thinking about the kinds of fulfillment and *ikigai* that karaoke regulars attained through such temporal themes of participation, and why karaoke was able to provide such a mode of enjoyment.

---

[321] Jason Danely, <u>Aging and Loss: Mourning and Maturity in Contemporary Japan</u> (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014).

Contemporary consciousness of time in Japan

From the perspective of everyday life, perhaps the most important change that the late 19th century modernization and industrialization brought about was that in the consciousness of time, or temporality. There was certainly a system of time-keeping in earlier pre-modern periods, such as the 30,000 to 50,000 time-announcing bells and drums at temples, clock towers and castles all around Japan in the Edo period, which established a sort of temporal order.[322] But this system of time-announcing relied on the visual recognition of the paths of the sun and the moon across the sky, a very different way of marking time from the standardized time-keeping that would later be introduced from the West. This visual system of time recognition, termed *futeijihō* by Japanese researchers, meant that the hour of the day and the length of an hour changed according to different seasons, which affected the length of days and nights over the course of the year.[323] Time was also understood cyclically: the return of moon phases marked a lunar month, the return of certain daytime and nighttime lengths marked the seasons and years, and the return of Chinese zodiac signs marked every passage of 12 years. This previous system of time-keeping was changed by the Meiji government in 1872 to the 24-hour system (*teijihō*, or "standardized time") and Gregorian calendar used in most Western countries of the era, as part of its *bunmei kaika* (civilization and enlightenment) drive to Westernize and modernize. In this new system, seconds, minutes, hours, days, months and years ticked forward unendingly, and time was understood progressively. This new system of standardized time was gradually entrenched in Japanese everyday life over the next few years, most notably through the education system, factories,

---

[322] Tsunoyama Sakae, *Tokei no Shakaishi* (Social History of the Clock) (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1984), 66-67.

[323] Nakamura Naofumi, "*Kindai Nihon ni Okeru Tetsudō to Jikan Ishiki*" (Time Consciousness and the Railway System in Modern Japan), Hashimoto Takehiko and Kuriyama Shigehisa (eds.), *Chikoku no Tanjō: Kindai Nihon ni Okeru Jikan Ishiki no Keisei* (The Birth of Lateness: The Formation of Time Consciousness in Modern Japan) (Tokyo: Sangensha, 2001), 18-19.

railways and state institutions, which were most profoundly changed by the rhetoric of *bunmei kaika*.

Bunmei kaika* also introduced the importance of punctuality, as new ways of learning, working and moving around, particularly in urban areas, involved large groups of people at the same time. However, attitudes towards being punctual were very loose prior to the Meiji period. For example, at the end of the Edo period, foreign specialists invited to teach Western modern science and production techniques to kick-start Japan's modern industry, such as Willem van Kattendijke at the Nagasaki Naval Training Center, complained about the "extreme laziness" of the Japanese workers of this time, who often did not fulfill inventory orders, took unannounced leave on a whim, and so on.[324] The various contributors to Hashimoto Takehiko's and Kuriyama Shigehisa's (2001) Japanese edited volume on "The Birth of Lateness" (*Chikoku no Tanjō*) detail how government officials and industrial owners attempted to address these lazy attitudes, and introduce a time consciousness prioritizing punctuality and speed. Focusing on the case of the railway system, Nakamura Naofumi describes how railway companies gradually moved to address early problems of trains and employees being late through a system of penalties and schedule readjustments. Particularly with the increasing demand for rail transport for both passengers and cargo from the onset of the Sino-Japanese War in 1894, which brought about an increase in industrial production and trade, railway companies faced greater pressures to be faster and more punctual.[325] Takemura Tamio adds that initiatives to increase speed and punctuality continued well into the early 20th century, as these problems had not been fully solved while industrial growth continued. These involved not only the expansion of the railroad network itself, but also streamlining work practices undertaken by employees, based on the "scientific

---

[324] Willem van Kattendijke, *Nagasaki Kaigun Denshūjō no Hibi* (Days at the Nagasaki Naval Training Center), Mizuta Nobutoshi (trans.) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1964). Cited in Hashimoto Takehiko, "*Jobun*" (Introduction), Hashimoto and Kuriyama (eds.), *Chikoku no Tanjō*, 5-6.

[325] Nakamura, "*Kindai Nihon ni Okeru Tetsudō to Jikan Ishiki*", 17-45.

management" approach promoted by Frederick Taylor in the early 20th century which had gained traction in Japan.[326]

Scientific management, also known as Taylorism, stretched to other areas of Japanese work and life, albeit unevenly. For example, Suzuki Jun details how the enforcement of standardized time and work practices through systems of punishments and rewards managed to instill into urban factory workers a modern temporality that increasingly divided time into smaller units to be used as efficiently and productively (*nōritsuteki*) as possible.[327] However, he also notes that rural farmers and factory workers, as well as upper and middle class office workers and bureaucrats, were much slower and less willing to fully accept this kind of temporality, and their work practices remained relatively less productive, especially from a financial standpoint.[328] Meanwhile, Nishimoto Ikuko describes how in the newly established compulsory national education system of the late 19th century, the daily structuring of classes into set time periods and the indoctrination of discourses of efficiency and productivity (such as the saying "*toki wa kane nari*", or "time is money") worked to inculcate into students (and future citizens) a modern temporality.[329] Finally, Itō Midori traces the development of productivity discourses in the realm of housework, through a historical content analysis of women's magazines from the 1900s. She notes the important role played by Hani Motoko (1873-1957), who was not only the founder of the popular magazine "*Fujin no Tomo*" (Companion of the Ladies), but also a convert to Protestantism and believed strongly in its ethics of hard work and discipline.

---

[326] Takemura Tamio, "*1920 Nendai ni Okeru Tetsudō no Jikan Kakumei: Jidō Renketsuki Torikae ni Kanren shite*" (The Railways' Time Revolution in the 1920s: In Association with the Automatic Coupling System), Hashimoto and Kuriyama (eds.), <u>Chikoku no Tanjō</u>, 47-75.
[327] Suzuki Jun, "*Futatsu no Jikoku, Mittsu no Rōdō Jikan*" (Two Units of Time Measurement, Three Kinds of Labor Time), Hashimoto and Kuriyama, <u>Chikoku no Tanjō</u>, 99-107.
[328] Ibid., 108-21.
[329] Nishimoto Ikuko, "*Kodomo ni Jikan Genshū wo Oshieru: Shōgakkō no Uchi to Soto*" (Teaching Children to Strictly Keep to Time: The Inside and Outside of Elementary Schools), Hashimoto and Kuriyama (eds.), <u>Chikoku no Tanjō</u>, 157-87.

Contributors to and readers of these women's magazines developed highly detailed systems of time and labor division down to the second, centered on Hani's frequent discussions on how to handle household chores and caregiving activities more efficiently.[330] In these ways, a crucial part of living life as a Japanese citizen involved learning to use one's time punctually, efficiently and productively, whether as a factory worker, student or housewife. However, as Suzuki's examples show, this modern temporality had yet to fully take root in all corners of Japanese society, even up to the World War II period.

As Japan rebuilt itself after defeat in the war, and then began its spectacular economic progress, the concepts of punctuality, efficiency and productivity again came to the fore in the cultivation of contemporary senses of temporality. Pointing out that the Meiji Revolution, while ostensibly abolishing the legality of class differences, still kept social power in the hands of wealthy oligarchs, Oda Ichirō (1997) argues that it was the postwar constitution, with its proclamation of the equality of individual rights for all being actually enforced, that truly ushered in an era in which ethics of hard work and progress finally took hold of the vast majority of the populace.[331] Oda lists several ways in which punctuality, efficiency and productivity became truly entrenched in work and everyday life, and promulgated a hastening of the Japanese pace of life: further entrenchment and expansion of scientific management processes in Japanese industrial and corporate workplaces; specific timeslots for television programs; the spread of personalized and increasingly accurate time-keeping artifacts such as watches and telephone time-telling services; the invention and resulting popularity of instant noodles and fast-food stands; use of the newly built *shinkansen* bullet trains to shorten business

---

[330] Itō Midori, "*Katei Ryōiki eno Kiritsu Jikan Shisō no Shintō: Hani Motoko wo Jirei toshite*" (The Spread of Ideas of Productive Time into the Realm of the Family: Hani Motoko as a Case Study), Hashimoto and Kuriyama (eds.), <u>Chikoku no Tanjō</u>, 189-209.
[331] Oda Ichirō, <u>Nihonjin wa Itsu kara 'Sekkachi' ni Natta ka (When did Japanese Become Impatient?)</u> (Tokyo: PHP Shinsho, 1997), 105.

trips; and the quick spread of 24-hour convenience stores and services.[332] Oda argues

that this speeding up of Japanese temporality in the postwar era lay in the widespread

desire for quick individual material wealth; "time is money" came to mean "putting in

time (at work, in school, etc.) brings forth money" (*toki wa kane wo umu*).[333] On the

other hand, despite some governmental attempts at introducing more relaxed (*yutori*)

attitudes to work and education from the late 1980s, the focus on individual material

desires, particularly in the small nuclear families that became the postwar norm, led to a

glaring decrease in feelings of family togetherness and spiritual fulfillment in this

period, as reported in the government's yearly surveys on lifestyle trends (*Kokumin*

Seikatsu ni Kan suru Yoron Chōsa).[334]

Oda's narrative is fairly intuitive on a macro level. However, his generalized

approach fails to pick up on much of the nuance with which different groups of

Japanese have wrestled with issues of spending time meaningfully, assuming for the

most part that Japanese society on a whole came to think of time in a "monochronic"

manner strictly adhering to schedules and standardized clocks.[335] In a special edition of

the "Time and Society" journal (2006, Volume 15, Numbers 2 and 3), three contributors

investigate some of the more nuanced conceptualizations and uses of time by different

groups of Japanese. They highlight the intersection of monochronic time with

"polychronic" time, which emphasizes the collaborative nature of social events and

flexibility in scheduling.[336] For example, Yohko Tsuji argues that many junior Japanese

workers often finish work much later than stipulated despite arriving earlier, because

their attitudes towards the length of the work day is not only decided monochronically

---

[332] Ibid., 106-43.
[333] Ibid., 110.
[334] Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, *Yoron Chōsa (Indekkusu)* (Survey on Societal Trends (Index)) (2017). http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/y-index.html#nendobetsu2. Accessed on 30 October 2017. Cited in Oda, *Nihonjin wa Itsu kara 'Sekkachi' ni Natta ka*, 135-6.
[335] Edward T. Hall, The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time (New York: Anchor Books, 1983), 44-58.
[336] Ibid.

by the clock, but also polychronically by the hierarchical social relationships that demand appropriate expressions of obligation (*giri*) and commitment to one's superiors and company/organization.[337] Tsuji thus notes that "when two parties of different social statuses have an appointment, those with higher status have the freedom to change it but those with lower status do not".[338] Time is "never conceptualized in a vacuum, but only in close connection to other facets of life: work, family, social status, and gender differences, to name a few".[339]

This point is driven home by Masae Yuasa, who describes how the internalization of gendered postwar discourses of women's "appropriate" role as the main caregiver of the family prevents them from attaining monetary and career success, even when they actively engage in monetary work. Yuasa investigates the engagement of women in multi-level marketing networks, which is a supposedly time-flexible form of work that can potentially bring in much income. Nevertheless, she notes that getting ahead in multi-level marketing requires a highly monochronic modern sense of temporality, such as meeting sales targets through efficient time-use. However, the women in her study mainly sought recognition for caregiving work which they felt they excelled in, such as socializing and looking after their peers, and approached their work and targets with a polychronic temporality.[340] In other words, these women reproduced gendered discourses of work and family labor, and their associated norms of male and female temporality.

Not all nuances in temporality work to further subjugate certain Japanese, however. Sachiko Kaneko's account of *hikikomori*, or people who stay home and avoid direct social activities for extended periods of time, illustrates how this group of

---

[337] Yohko Tsuji, "Railway Time and Rubber Time: The Paradox in the Japanese Conception of Time", Time and Society 15 (2-3) (2006), 182-6.

[338] Ibid., 187.

[339] Ibid., 191.

[340] Masae Yuasa, "Time for Housework and Time for '*Oshigoto*': Japanese Housewives in a Network Business, Time and Society 15 (2-3) (2006), 215-32.

Japanese create in their reclusion a sense of time that includes staying up at night while sleeping in the day, not making appointments with others, spending time in "non-productive" pursuits such as playing video games. Their sense of time refutes the temporal norms and constraints expected in proper *shakaijin*, or socially functioning adults, and thus itself marks a particular phase of life.[341] Tsuji notes how even working *shakaijin* seek to circumvent these temporal norms: for example, businessmen may go to cafes (*kissas*) with their customers ostensibly for business meetings, but in reality for a leisurely chat.[342]

The three contributions in "Time and Society" provide valuable suggestions on how we can move beyond culturally essentialist and modernist explanations, and understand contemporary Japanese senses of temporality from a more grounded approach. Nevertheless, there is still room for further investigation, as the issue of temporality for elderly urban Japanese has thus far been sorely overlooked, not only in "Time and Society" but also the other studies surveyed here. It is tempting to simply posit elderly temporality as another form of resistance to mainstream conceptualizations of time, similar to the *hikikomori*. However, the life situation of older urban Japanese differs markedly from the *hikikomori*. Rather than directly refuting hegemonic ideas of temporality held by their generational peers, I suggest that older urban Japanese are graduating from discourses of punctuality, efficiency and productivity, having lived past the stage of life where work and family labor form the main activities of everyday living. This point is especially true for many elderly karaoke regulars I spent time with, who have not only retired from full-time work, but also live away from their offspring and the entailing caregiving responsibilities. This chapter thus investigates how older urban

---

[341]   Sachiko Kaneko, "Japan's 'Socially Withdrawn Youths' and Time Constraints in Japanese Society: Management and Conceptualization of Time in a Support Group for '*Hikikomori*'", <u>Time and Society</u> 15 (2-3) (2006), 233-49.
[342]   Tsuji, "Railway Time and Rubber Time", 186.

Japanese construct temporal meaning in the vast amounts of free time that they now possess, having retired from the temporal norms of being *shakaijin*.

Temporal concepts in *enka* and *kayōkyoku*

The codification of the genres of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* was intricately tied to the increasing spread in postwar Japanese society of the kind of modern temporality described by Oda. The influx of new musical styles and influences, most of which came from Euro-American scenes, can be understood as part of the wider disposition towards progress that ultimately held the West (and particularly the United States) as its model. For example, songs heavily influenced by boogie-woogie rhythms, such as those sung by the effervescent female singer Kasagi Shizuko (1914-1985), were among the most popular in the immediate aftermath of the war.[343] But, as explained in Chapter 1, not all record producers and audiences received these new sounds favorably. Those who could not identify with such "progressive" sounds and rhetoric stuck with the musical idioms developed before the war that they were more familiar with, and came to think about such music in terms of national tradition, eventually attributing to them the genre terms of *enka* and *kayōkyoku*. As such, the two genres can be understood as a reaction against the mainstream consciousness of modern temporality in contemporary Japan.

Such difference is expressed through various musical and lyrical conventions in *enka* and *kayōkyoku*. As highlighted by Christine Yano, most prominent among these conventions is the expression of nostalgia and longing, which I have also introduced previously in Chapter 1 when discussing the major musical aesthetics of these genres. Musically, *enka* and *kayōkyoku* provide signifiers of nostalgia through the use of *yonanuki* minor scales; the featuring of pre-modern vocal techniques, such as *kobushi*

---

[343]   Toru Mitsui, "Interactions of Imported and Indigenous Musics in Japan: A Historical Overview of the Music Industry", Alison J. Ewbank and Fouli T. Papageorgiou (eds.), <u>Whose Master's Voice?: The Development of Popular Music in Thirteen Cultures</u> (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1997), 164-5.

and *yuri;* and the use or imitation of sounds produced by traditional instruments, such as the *shakuhachi* and the *shamisen*, in the musical arrangement. Lyrically, the genres hark back to national tradition through the frequent calls to *furusato*, the abstract generic notion of the "hometown", and the prevalence of the past tense in referring to relationships and events that have created feelings of sorrow and longing.[344]

Nostalgia is heightened by emphasizing the futility of actually returning to the *furusato* once one has left, despite how much he or she longs for it, and did not want to leave in the first place. It is especially hard for women, who are portrayed as faithful, to look at this separation positively, even if it was inevitable. One is left with a longing that can never be satisfied:

Samui hōmu de senaka wo marume	Hunched over the cold train platform
Ressha wo matteta chiisana eki yo	At the small station we waited for the train
Hito mo mabarana Ōito Sen no	The Ōito Line has few on board
Mado ni omoide sōmatō	Peering out of the window, memories flash across
Tochū gessha shite kaeritai kedo	Although I want to get off this train on the way and come back to you
Nido to, nido to anata no	Back, back to you
Mune ni wa modorenai	I can never return back into your embrace

"*Ōito Sen*" (Ōito Line), an *enka* song by female singer Mizumori Kaori. Released by Tokuma Japan Communications, 2017.

---

[344] See Chapter 1 for a detailed discussion of nostalgic conventions.

Futility and transience also form important lyrical characteristics of the romances that are depicted in *enka* and *kayōkyoku*. Even in times of supposed bliss, lovers are fully aware that their meetings are surreptitious, and their duets clearly spell out that the romance is destined not to last. These romances thus do not promise a happy future; they do not operate on temporal notions of progress, being fixated only on the appreciation of the fleeting moment:

Female: *Hoho yoseatte, anata to odoru*	Cheek to cheek, I dance with you
Male: *Wakare ni niai no Shinchi no kurabu*	This Shinchi club really suits breakups
Female: *Nakanai yakusoku shiteta no ni*	Although I promised not to cry!
Male: *Omae no senaka ga shinobinaku*	But your back gives it away
Both: *Nokori wazuka na kono toki wo*	In these last moments we have left together
Both: *Aa, dakishimete, futari no Ōsaka*	Ah, hold me tight, in our Osaka
Both: *Rasuto dansu*	Last dance

"*Futari no Ōsaka*"

Female: *Garasu no machi wa mangekyō*	The glass city shines like a kaleidoscope
Female: *Yume ni sugatta shinkirō nano*	It's a mirage borne from my dreams

Male: *Shinu hodo horetemo sandome no*	Even if I loved you to death
Male: *Fuyu wa konai to wakatteta*	I knew our third winter together would not come
Female: *Anata ni yorisoi dakarete nemuru*	Sleeping by your side, held by you
Male: *Konya kagiri no yume dakara*	It's a dream achieved only for tonight
Female: *Anata no namida ga konna ni setsunai*	Your tears are so heartbreaking
Both: *Aoi gurasu ni shiawase ukabe nomihoshite*	My happiness is in this blue glass and I drink it down
Female: *Towairaito Yokohama*	Twilight Yokohama
Male: *Towairaito Yokohama*	Twilight Yokohama
Both: *Sayonara no toki made*	Until the moment of our parting

"*Towairaito Yokohama*" (Twilight Yokohama), a *kayōkyoku* duet by Katō Ryō and Ōshita Kana. Released by Holiday Japan, 2016.

The most popular of these songs of longing are often paced considerably slower than contemporary hit numbers in other genres such as J-pop and rock. As mentioned in Chapter 1, most *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs average around 70 to 90 beats per minute (BPM), compared to over 120 for other pop songs in the Japanese popular music scene.[345] Considering the popular image of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* being musical symbols of "Japanese tradition" and J-pop being the newer Western-influenced sound of

---

[345] See Chapter 1.

fashionable youth, we can consider the BPM differences as part of the wider "speeding up" of the pace of life over the postwar period. Indeed, among the regular participants at karaoke classes and *kissas*, this difference in speed was a clear marker of a generational divide in thinking about rhythm:

> Sensei: The students want to learn new songs, so I try to pick songs that have been released close to the day of the lesson. But because they're all elderly, it has to be *enka* or *enka pops* (Sensei's term for *kayōkyoku*), otherwise they can't keep up. So the "pure" pop songs don't fit. The elderly students just can't get the pop rhythm.
>
> Benny: So it has to do with rhythm?
>
> Sensei: Yes, rhythm has lots to do with it. I guess it becomes like that after 45, when they're done with child-rearing, and stop having to raise their voice when disciplining their children and stuff. When that happens, the vocal cords start to deteriorate and age, and they start drifting away from music and rhythm…

Besides speed, *enka* and *kayōkyoku* also differ rhythmically from other contemporary Japanese popular genres in terms of the importance of regular beats to the vocal performance. Maki Okada's detailed analysis of rhythm in *enka* and *kayōkyoku* argues that unlike songs more influenced by Western styles, singing rhythm here "often departs from a regular beat, and in extreme cases even ignores that beat entirely".[346] Performances of these songs, especially at live events, also often deviate from the rhythm notations on published scores, which Okada notes are mainly written by "musicians who have received training in Western music, and lay more emphasis on

---

[346] Okada, "Musical Characteristics of Enka", 298. Okada ostensibly only deals with *enka* songs, but some of the songs he analyzes, such as "*Nagasaki wa Kyō mo Ame datta*" (It Rained Again Today in Nagasaki, released in 1969 by the vocal group Uchiyamada Yō and Cool Five), are stylistically closer to *kayōkyoku*.

appearing 'natural' according to the precepts of Western musical common sense, rather than on the actual performance of a song".[347] Instead, lyrics are sung in a way that remains faithful to the natural pronunciation of the spoken Japanese language. *Enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs have text settings that are syllabic, and syllables are accorded with even rhythmic note values.[348] Breaths, accents and elongations that mark the start and ending of a phrase correspond to words and phrases, rather than musical beats (see Figures 22 and 23).[349] Such characteristics of rhythm can be seen as a more polychronic understanding of time which prioritizes flexibility and socially situated understandings, rather than the monochronic approach suggested by other forms of music that organize rhythm around the primacy of the regular beat.
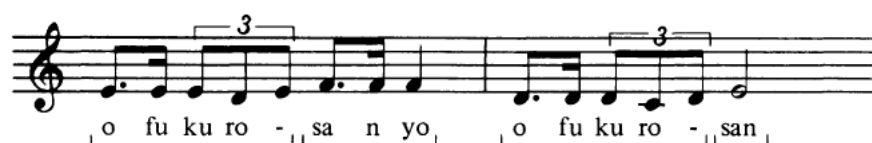
Figure 22: Published score for "*Ofukurosan*" (Mother), an *enka* song by male singer Mori Shinichi. Released by Victor Records, 1971. This score shows a rhythmic division between the syllables "*fu*" and "*ku*", in the word "*ofukuro*" (mother).[350]

Figure 23: Score for "*Ofukurosan*" notating actual vocal delivery. Here, the rhythmic division is not present; "*ofukuro*" is sung as a whole semantic unit, in accordance to natural Japanese speech.[351]

---

347   Ibid., 291.
348   Yano, Tears of Longing, 107-8.
349   Okada, "Musical Characteristics of Enka", 291-4.
350   Ibid., 292.

Finally, the importance of repetition in *enka* and *kayōkyoku* also rejects the contemporary monochronic norms of progress and productivity. Musically, within each phrase the pitch of notes/syllables that have even rhythmic note value are often repeated or occur in a narrow range.[352] While repetitive song structures are not unique to *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, the AAA strophic structure prevalent in these genres, in which the musical structure of the first verse is repeated twice more to make up the song, highlights its repetition more than the ABABB(B) verse-chorus structure most frequently used in other Japanese popular genres.[353] Some of the karaoke class students highlighted this difference when explaining why they did not consider learning songs outside of *enka* and *kayōkyoku,* remarking that these other songs were "too complicated to remember" (*yayakoshii kara oboenikui*).

Besides these musical forms, repetition also figures crucially in the aesthetic practices involving *enka* and *kayōkyoku*. Christine Yano (2005) describes these repetitive practices as acts of covering, arguing that these covers "perform the work of promotion, hierarchy, tribute, instruction, and intimacy."[354] Besides the kind of lyrical, compositional and performative *kata* already discussed in Chapter 1 and preceding paragraphs in this section, Yano lists several other musical practices in which covering and repetition feature centrally. Firstly, Yano takes the example of the karaoke class, for which she claims that the main method of learning is through repetition and imitation.[355]

---

[351] Ibid.

[352] Yano, Tears of Longing, 108.

[353] In notations of song structure, A and B refer to sections that differ musically and lyrically. In AAA songs, there may be a discernible chorus at the end of each section, but because the verse and chorus are repeated in the same manner each time, these verse and chorus parts are grouped together and considered a single section. Judith Ann Herd, "Trends and Taste in Japanese Popular Music: A Case-Study of the 1982 Yamaha World Popular Music Festival", Tony Langlois (ed.), Non-Western Popular Music (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 371-2; Alison McQueen Tokita, Japanese Singers of Tales: Ten Centuries of Performed Narrative (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 18.

[354] Yano, "Covering Disclosures", 193.

[355] Ibid., 196-8.

While Yano emphasizes the aspect of imitation in her account, my own experiences at Chou's classes (discussed in Chapter 3) suggest that the aspect of repetitive practice features more centrally in students' learning experiences, as they slowly learned to internalize techniques and details to be used in performing songs. Finally, there is the covering of older *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, which accords the songs a sense of approval that they are worthy of covering, and also provides a means of evaluating the skill of singers by measuring them up to the original version.[356] Yano explains that these practices of repetition and covering in *enka* and *kayōkyoku* remain highly popular among both producers and consumers because of their preference for familiarity. Yano argues that this provides for them "a preserve of non-change", amid the tumultuous changes in their own life courses.[357] In other words, repetitive aesthetic practices are a way for *enka* and *kayōkyoku* producers and consumers to express a polychronic temporality that is cyclic and comforting, within the unsettling monochronic temporal norms of progress and change that has dominated postwar Japanese society.

Temporal concepts thus figure centrally in listening to and singing *enka* and *kayōkyoku*. In attempting to understand how elderly enthusiasts sought to build meaning into the passage of elderly time through karaoke, it is thus important to consider the role of the temporal aesthetics in these genres. Over the course of the next few sections, I look at how their actions, words and motivations regarding karaoke participation speak to the temporal ideas considered here. However, I also take care to explain these actions, words and motivations on their own basis, rather than as a mere extension of ideas of temporality in *enka* and *kayōkyoku*. Indeed, an important part of what made karaoke participation fulfilling for these participants was how their activities and conversations

---

[356]   Ibid., 200-1.
[357]   Ibid., 195.

developed these temporal aesthetics, beyond what was expressed in the songs and genre discourse of *enka* and *kayōkyoku*.

Relating the past to the present through karaoke nostalgia

In highlighting nostalgia as the main aesthetic logic in *enka* and the many *kayōkyoku* songs also included in her song corpus, Yano states that:

> The enticement of *enka* is that it suggests a forum for collective nostalgia, which actively appropriates and shapes the past, thereby binding the group together. *Enka* encodes within nostalgia a historical moment of self-reflexivity, establishing a particular relationship with the temporal past that distances it from, while also placing it firmly in, the present.[358]

Yano's understanding of the temporal relationship between the past and present in the nostalgia constructed through *enka* and *kayōkyoku* are based on ideas espoused in Fred Davis' seminal work, "Yearning for Yesterday" (1979). In his theory, Davis emphasizes the motivational sources of nostalgic feelings in the present, and the dislocation of the present from the past in such a way of thinking about temporality.[359] One kind of nostalgia Davis describes is what he terms **"simple nostalgia"**, a longing for the past based on the idea that "things were better…then than now."[360] While not explicitly linking her analysis to "simple nostalgia", Yano's understanding of motifs (*kata*) cueing images of "tradition" seems to assume that her research participants understand the past (at both individual and socio-cultural levels) in such a manner, despite acknowledging the possibilities for more self-reflexive modes of remembrance.

---

[358] Yano, Tears of Longing, 15.

[359] Fred Davis, Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia (New York: Free Press, 1979), 9, 15-16.

[360] Ibid., 18.

Simple nostalgia was evident on quite a few occasions during my visits to Sachi, Ami and Chou. The example of Miki (78) and Tsuru's (76) romantic interactions, discussed in Chapter 2, can be understood as an instance of this kind of remembrance, as they talked about how they missed their late spouses through the semiotic chaining set off by song selections. During her time with Tsuru, Yoshiko (late sixties to early seventies) also took part in such simple nostalgia through karaoke. Unlike Miki and Tsuru's use of their late spouses' favorite songs from the 1960s and 1970s, Yoshiko's reminiscence started when Master played the karaoke video for "*Tomariki Jōwa*", which heavily featured images of its female singer Shimizu Mariko (Passionate Story from the Perch, an *enka* number released by Tokuma Japan Communications in 2006). "I'm going to play Yoshiko on the TV screen. Look properly, she resembles Yoshiko, right?" he said as the song's official music video, which prominently featured Shimizu, began playing. As we watched, Tsuru and I came to agree with Master's observation, and Yoshiko was flattered by the praise.

"But even though I look like this now, when I was younger I was even better looking! I had big breasts, and a soft body," she lamented about the fading of her physical beauty over the years.

Pointing to the karaoke screen, Yoshiko continued, "I was probably as good looking, if not better, than Shimizu Mariko in this video!" We laughed and agreed with her.

"But it's nice to hear Master's praise! Thank you Master! Shall I stick by your side from tomorrow onward?" Yoshiko joked, triggering even more laughter from all of us, including her companion Tsuru.

Such simple nostalgia did not stop at the level of personal history. During another karaoke session with Miki and Tsuru at Ami in March 2016, Miki had chosen to sing the 1967 Ishihara Yūjirō classic, "*Yogiri yo, Konya mo Arigatō*" (Thanks for

Tonight Too, Night Mist). Miki shared the microphone with Tsuru, and they enjoyably sang a section each.[361] Right after their turn, I took to the microphone, performing the 1964 Hashi Sachio hit, "*Koi wo Suru nara*" (If You Fall in Love).

After these two songs, Tsuru turned to me. "I'm very surprised that you know songs like '*Koi wo Suru nara*'!"

As I smiled, he continued, "These songs were so popular back in the late 1960s. Everybody back then knew them. I think these songs were a symbol of how good life was getting back then. Or maybe life got better because we had songs like this back then?"

Tsuru's comments here expressed his nostalgic understanding of the wider social and cultural atmosphere of the 1960s. Linking these two flamboyant blues-influenced *kayōkyoku* songs with the energy of the period, he contrasted these subjective opinions to the seeming lethargy and gloom of today's post-bubble economy Japan.

Besides simple nostalgia, Davis discusses two other kinds of nostalgia, which allows a more nuanced understanding of how they relate the past to the present through the semiotic chaining enveloping their singing of *enka* and *kayōkyoku*. Firstly, he talks about "**reflexive nostalgia**", where people ask critical questions about the validity, accuracy and representativeness of nostalgic claims during the act of nostalgic remembrance ("Was it really that way? Am I forgetting some bad experiences and things from the past? Are things as bad as they seem now?").[362] Davis also describes "**interpreted nostalgia**", in which the act of nostalgic remembrance itself is critically analyzed as it is happening ("Why am I feeling nostalgic?").[363] Finally, Davis emphasizes that humans are capable of experiencing all three kinds of nostalgia, despite

---

[361] As I described earlier in Chapter 2, Tsuru would also share the same song with Yoshiko a few months later.
[362] Davis, Yearning for Yesterday, 21-24.
[363] Ibid., 24-26.

the prevalence of simple nostalgia, and indeed can move through the different modes of nostalgic remembrance, often unconsciously.[364] In describing *enka* and *kayōkyoku*'s nostalgic appeals as a "historical moment of self-reflexivity", and a kind of "internal exotic" to contemporary Japanese lifestyles, Yano also acknowledges (at least theoretically) more complex forms of nostalgia.[365] At Ami, further nostalgic comments expressed by Miki, Yoshiko and Tsuru showed characteristics of reflexive nostalgia. They also showed variety in the way they thought about their life experiences not only at the societal and cultural level, but also in terms of family relations, bodily images and individual lifestyles.

Tsuru, who still possessed a sharp mind, provided an interesting example of this kind of complex nostalgic remembrance during another of my afternoon visits to Ami in April 2016. For one of his turns to sing, he had selected the song "*Sazanka no Yado*" (Camellia Inn), a 1982 *enka* song by the male singer Ōkawa Eisaku. As Tsuru sang, Miki, who was accompanying him today, remarked how the rural scenery depicted in the karaoke video reminded her of her rural birthplace in Wakayama Prefecture. "This reminds me of home too, we had cows and fields like this everywhere back in Kagoshima," Tsuru added in between the song's sections. There were no other songs queued after his performance, and Tsuru turned to us to talk more about his thoughts about his life history:

> There were those cows and fields earlier in the video, but back in Kagoshima, our fields were more barren, and the cows were skinnier. We didn't have much at all in those years right after the war. Not much to eat, and we couldn't really study much either. So I didn't have much of an education.

---

[364] Ibid., 27-28.

[365] Yano, Tears of Longing, 15. Interestingly, on the same page Yano criticizes Davis for not considering "different conceptualizations of nostalgia itself or how it is perceived differently by different members of the same group".

Here, Tsuru shifted the experience of reminiscence from the initial simple nostalgia expressed by Miki to a more critical questioning of the visual and musical cues that prompted such remembrance. Although Tsuru provided up to this point a counter-narrative to the *furusato* imagery of the "good old rural traditional Japan" central to *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, the next part of his narrative showed a great shift in his attitude towards "traditional" and "modern" values:

> So I came to Osaka from Kagoshima after I graduated from middle school, as part of the mass recruitment (*shūdan shūshoku*) that happened everywhere from the late 1950s to 1960s. You always had opportunities in those days. So I worked hard, but not too hard (*bochi-bochi*). And eventually I learned enough in furniture making to start my own furniture company.

Tsuru thus spoke well about the economic opportunities of the late 1950s to 1960s, and thought that he had done well in taking advantage of the chances provided by the rush to industrialize and modernize. Tsuru's success was down in no small part to his ability to adapt to the monochronic temporality required by such modernization: by "putting in time" at work, he had learned and applied himself enough to the extent that he was able to set up his own business, and fulfill his own rags-to-riches story.

Tsuru then turned to me specifically. Having taken me under his wing as a "student" ever since my first visits to Ami, he had yet another lesson that he wanted to impart to me:

> I didn't have much of an education, and actually many of my employees were better educated than I was! But there I was, leading them as the owner of the

company. And I succeeded because I worked hard within my means. I've seen so many of my friends try to make it big too desperately, and end up falling flat on their faces when they lose all the big money they had been making early on. You should always work hard, but within your means. The times are different now, compared to back then.

Tsuru did not explicitly refer to a more traditional and polychronic temporality that prioritized the building and maintenance of social relationships. However, here he was clearly warning me against becoming addicted to the trappings of success and overworking myself. In other words, he was critical of being overly immersed in a monochronic way of thinking about and using time, recognizing that what had previously worked for him did not work now.

While Tsuru's nostalgic remembrance here, a semiotic chain started off by a song selection, did not exhibit the kind of interpretive nostalgia suggested by Davis, it clearly shows a kind of nuanced reflexivity that goes beyond Yano's descriptions based mainly on the framework of simple nostalgia. While I agree with Yano's argument that the aesthetic forms in these genres work to both maintain a temporal distance between the past and the present, and sustain a desire to overcome such distance, the songs do not operate simply as a beautified object signifying the "traditional past".[366] Instead, a large part of the bittersweet nature of such nostalgia, as seen with Tsuru's expansion of his recollection of his earlier life experiences, derives from the more complex act of critically reassessing the media cues that trigger nostalgic feelings.[367] In other words, the past is not just a *tsukutta mono* (manufactured product) neatly compartmentalized

---

[366] Yano, Tears of Longing, 16.
[367] Davis, Yearning for Yesterday, 14.

away from the present.[368] It can also be an *ikiteiru mono* (organic living thing) with a complicated and fluid relationship with the present, depending on the attitudes, moods, and histories of the people involved in the act of nostalgic remembrance.

Appreciating the present moment: mortality, indulgence and health consciousness

Visiting the karaoke classes and *kissa* provided opportunities to not only remember the past, but also enjoy the present. The romantic interactions in Chapter 2 and learning journey in Chapter 3 revealed that karaoke regulars often engaged with the aesthetic themes of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* in such creative ways. Besides these activities, food and drink choices during karaoke presented surprising insights into the temporal attitudes they held. Here, two different approaches towards thinking about life in old age were clearly visible: embracing the transience of life and their mortality through indulgence, and working hard to keep their physical and mental faculties strong.

Maki (78), a male regular who still worked as a taxi driver, often spent his afternoons and evenings thoroughly drunk at Chou, during its *kissa* operation. Maki invariably started his day at noon by visiting the restaurant next door. As he ate his lunch, he would be joined by his regular companion, Taka (76). The two men would then share alcohol, ranging from beer to strong Japanese *sake*, as they ate and chatted. According to the owner of the restaurant, Chie (70), "they will never start singing without getting at least a little tipsy first." By the time they went over to Chou at around two o'clock, it would be clear to all the other customers that Maki and Taka were drunk, as they slowly shuffled to their seats. In particular, Maki would laugh heartily, and seek our forgiveness for his stupor.

---

[368]   Yano, <u>Tears of Longing</u>, 16.

Maki was thus very self-aware of his own drunkenness, but this did not stop him from continue to indulge in *sake*. Sensei and her helpers rarely refused Maki's orders for refills. Sensei explained:

Our job is to make sure that our customers spend their time here as happily as they can. So we're not too concerned about watching over his health, unless of course it's clear that he's drunk way too much, and is causing trouble for others and himself.

Maki often happily offered me a serving of the beer or *sake* he was having, which I always turned down because of my allergy to ingested alcohol. He never took offense at my refusals, but also told me with joyful laughter, "You're missing out on so much (*mottainai*)! Drinking while you're here allows you a whole different level of fun (*tanoshisa wa zenzen chigau*)!" Indeed, for Maki drinking was an inextricable part of a joyful karaoke experience; there could be no real fun without alcohol. "There's no point to living if you don't have fun! You can't be too serious (*majimesugi*) all the time," Maki continued, stating his reasoning for drinking heavily at Chou. His focus on achieving as much fun as he could in each moment seemed to be based upon a recognition of his mortality and transient life, judging from a comment he made during one especially cheerful karaoke session:

I'm just really happy today! Today's *sake* is so fun! (*kyō no sake wa tanoshii!*) Yesterday, I earned quite a bit of money from work, so today I'm going to spend that money! Isn't that right, Sensei? You only need your funeral money when you die, the rest isn't necessary! The children will be happier that way too!

Sometimes, Maki's happy-go-lucky approach, summed up by one of his catch-phrases "*wa ga jinsei ni kui wa nai*" (I have no regrets about my life), caused him to get into accidents. On a winter night in 2016, Maki had too many cups of hot *sake*, and became so drunk that he was unable to stand upright for more than a few seconds. Together with the other regulars, I watched with great concern every time he stood up to go to the mini-stage or toilet. Sensei stopped serving him alcoholic drinks, but it was too late, as Maki fell onto his backside with a loud thud, while walking to the mini-stage to sing. As we hurriedly helped him up, Sensei told Maki that he was now too drunk to stay at Chou, and called for the taxi service that she frequently relied on to get Maki home in such situations. Although we helped Maki into the taxi, we later received news from the owner of a nearby karaoke *snack* bar that he had been put into an ambulance, with blood pouring from the back of his head. Contrary to Sensei's instructions to the taxi driver to send him home, Maki had found a way to visit a bar instead, and had slipped and fallen, hitting his head as a result. Maki's injuries were only superficial, but it was a harrowing experience for us.

While Maki's drinking became reckless at times, Shima (76), a female regular at Ami, was able to remain sober despite drinking as frequently. Since I first met Shima at Ami in July 2016, our near-weekly chats were always accompanied by a large bottle of whiskey on her table. Although she took months to finish a bottle, drinking her whiskey diluted with water, I also noticed that she never drank anything else at Ami. I asked about her drinking habits at Ami, particularly since she had previously mentioned to me her attempt at dieting too:

> I would probably be much slimmer if I was able to give up alcohol! But I cannot live without beer at home, and whiskey when I go out. These are the only types of alcohol that I drink now, but it's very important for me to drink so that I can

relax. And I come here specifically, because it's a bit further away from my neighborhood. I don't really like to stay around my neighbors too much, because they like to show off their wealth to each other, and I find them snobbish and obnoxious.

I asked when she started her drinking habit:

I started drinking quite early on in life. My parents did not have sons, so I was supposed to eventually take over the family business as heiress. Drinking alcohol allowed me an escape from my daily responsibilities, both as a wife and head of the household. I had a lot of pent up frustrations towards my family, especially my parents, but I knew that I had to keep at least some of it suppressed to maintain the family harmony. Drinking allowed me to release some of that stress, and I drank much more in my thirties than I do now. That's why my stomach has holes in it, a few of them!

The holes were stomach ulcers that had resulted from her heavy drinking habit, and Shima added that doctors at the hospital she was admitted into had cautioned her that she had been close to losing her life. However, these cautions did not stop her from resuming her regular drinking habits. She continued her explanation with a laugh:

Actually, I really slimmed down when I was in hospital! But then I came out, and I started drinking again because I still need my release. Well, things never go according to plan in life, there's bound to be ups and downs after all.

This last comment suggested that Shima's alcohol indulgence stemmed from a fatalistic and transient view of life. She did not seem to believe that a more cautious approach towards her diet to improve her health was worth giving up the stress release and satisfaction that she got from drinking whiskey. Instead, she accepted that life would throw challenges her way no matter what, and felt that drinking alcohol here at Ami allowed her to cope better with life.

Compared to Shima and Maki's drinking and abandon, the health consciousness of the karaoke students at Chou provided a stark contrast. As I previously described in Chapter 3, students such as Saka, Ogi, Tate and Nishi felt that the bodily-focused teaching methods that Sensei employed helped train their breathing and muscle power. They regarded these health benefits as a major source of motivation for joining and regularly coming to classes, and saw their training as an important way to remain healthy for a longer span of their lives. They spoke with pride about their karaoke learning, and perceived it to be the main difference between themselves and their less healthy peers outside of the classes.

In essence, the two kinds of karaoke venues revealed starkly different views of the present that the regulars held with respect to their impending mortality. One, **shown by Shima and Maki at the karaoke *kissa***, exhibited a sense of resignation about mortality and a concern over enjoying the fleeting moment; **the other, shown by Sensei and her students**, showed a desire to work hard to live healthily for as long as they could. Both Shima and Maki, as well as other regulars of Sachi, also talked about maintaining some semblance of fitness and activity through their regular karaoke, so these two views were not necessarily incompatible for the *kissa* regulars. However, while she did not mind Maki's drunken singing during Chou's *kissa* operation, Sensei disapproved of attempts by her students to do the same, claiming that it would hurt their throats. This sometimes frustrated Ogi, who used to drink and sing before she joined

Chou's classes. It was thus clear that becoming a student entailed shifting to a more health-focused approach towards singing, which excluded the practice of indulging in alcohol to heighten the enjoyment of karaoke.

Establishing routines in elderly life: social class reproduction in karaoke habits

While their karaoke enjoyment emphasized the moment, Maki and Shima's visits to Chou and Ami respectively also occurred regularly. The issue of routine and rhythm in elderly life was crucial particularly in Shima's engagements with karaoke. After Master had explained Shima's weekly visiting hours to me, Shima laid out her weekly routine in greater detail:

> Well it doesn't really matter what day of the week it is. But once you're retired, if you don't build up your own schedule, every day is a holiday! I have something to do with my family on Sundays all the time, since my son will also be home and I view that as quite important. So I come here on Mondays when that's done. And then I have a few days which I leave free, followed by tennis lessons on Friday. It's a nice rhythm; I have Tuesdays to Thursdays when I can go shopping, especially with my daughter-in-law, or do anything I want. It's no good to have your time filled up too much either, so you need to have a balance. But if you don't have any rhythm, then you have the risk of turning senile from the boredom."

Approaching the issue of life rhythm in terms of hours, days, and weeks, Shima emphasized the balance between family time and her own leisure pursuits at Ami. In fact, Shima willingly prioritized the former over the latter on the rare occasions when they clashed. For example, we did not meet on a few Monday afternoons, because she

had accompanied her husband on one of their monthly trips to various castles in other regions of Japan. Shima also did not meet the other regulars at Ami at other times besides her visits. "Between my monthly travels, receptions, and family commitments and errands, my schedule is very much filled up. So I don't really have the time to meet people here, or come here all the time," she explained. Shima thus felt that she had achieved the right balance of activities, or what Robert Stebbins terms an "optimal leisure lifestyle", and did not need to further her physical and emotional involvement with the other regulars at Ami.[369] Her protection of her free time from Tuesdays to Thursdays perhaps stemmed from having had a busy career earlier in her life, first as heiress to a family business, and then quitting and starting her own *kissa* cafe from her forties to her sixties. She may have wished to enjoy to a certain extent the idle time retirement allowed.

Revisiting my interview notes as I concluded my fieldwork stint in early 2017, I realized the contrast between Shima's somewhat reserved involvement at Ami and the close bonding between the karaoke students at Chou's classes. As described in Chapter 3, students at Chou, such as Saka, Ogi, Tate and Nishi often spent time together even outside of classes, visiting Chou as customers of the *kissa* operation, or even going on shopping trips and holidays. While they also sought to prevent the onset of senility through regular karaoke participation, the different frequency and intensity seemed to come down to two crucial differences.

Firstly, while the karaoke class students all lived either alone or with only their spouses, Shima lived in a large family of six. Indeed, the family structure in Shima's home corresponded very closely to the ideals of the traditional Japanese *ie*, in which the

---

[369]   Robert Stebbins, "Optimal Leisure Lifestyle: Combining Serious and Casual Leisure for Personal Well-Being", Manuel Cuenca Cabeza (ed.), <u>Leisure and Human Development: Proposals for the 6th World Leisure Congress</u> (Bilbao, Spain: University of Deusto, 2000), 101-7.

elderly generation lives together with their son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren.[370] In contrast to the loneliness expressed by widows such as Saka, or the frustrations with living solely with an aged husband as expressed by Tate, Shima explained to me the kind of fulfillment she enjoyed from her familial relations, despite some of the tensions it also contained:

> Shima: I think I'm never lonely, because of this big family of six that I have. In fact, sometimes I feel there's too many people!
>
> Benny: Who makes up this family?
>
> Shima: There's me and my husband, and then my second son and his wife, and finally their son and daughter. My son works, while his wife is a full-time housewife, although she also takes part in the choir. My grandson is in his last year of high school, while my granddaughter is in her last year of middle school.
>
> Benny: I see.
>
> Shima: My grandchildren are really close to me (*pettari*), although I don't give them allowances or anything. I spend a lot of time taking care of them, almost like half a mother (*hanbun hahaoya mitai*). For example, I'm quite involved in overseeing their homework and education, and making sure that they are disciplined. I don't necessarily scold them, but I do make sure to teach them how to act rationally and responsibly. They get it that I treat them as an equal family member as much as I can. For example, they don't call me "grandma" (*obaachan*), but by my first name with a *-san* suffix, as I want to respect their individuality. However, they also feel so close to me that they don't have any aversion to using my things, like just taking naps on my bed without telling me!

---

[370] Akitoshi Shimizu, "*Ie* and *Dōzoku*: Family and Descent in Japan", <u>Current Anthropology</u> 28(4) (1987), 85-90.

I hope they'll get a girlfriend or boyfriend soon, so that they can become more independent.

Secondly, Shima and her husband had built up considerable economic wealth during her previous career, compared to the students at Chou. This also partly formed the basis for Shima's ability to live in a traditional *ie* family in an age of nuclear families, as Shima had the money to build extensions to her house as her family expanded. Shima maintained that running her *kissa* was indeed tough work that did not rake in a lot of money:

> It became a 24-hour work commitment, just like having to run the family business previously! I had to also use a lot of the revenue to maintain a good level of operation, like buying good quality and matching utensils befitting the business district the *kissa* was located in. I think I got a head start by building the *kissa* on a plot of land my father owned, so I could save on the land price. But we did have to sacrifice a lot of material comfort to make ends meet, especially my kids. They rarely had new clothes to wear.

Shima then explained her impeccable money management that eventually allowed her to enjoy the lifestyle she had now:

> So we left aside a certain amount for my kids' education, and poured almost everything else into maintaining the *kissa* at a high level. Come to think of it, I also had a stock investment portfolio that allowed me to pay for the erection of the building in cash, and then later provided additional income.

These strategies allowed Shima to eventually put her sons in good stead, as their high level of education allowed them to enter well-paying jobs in renowned companies. Shima's sons, particularly her younger son, were thus able to supplement well the income from her *kissa*, and eventually form a considerable economic foundation upon which an *ie* family lifestyle could be sustained comfortably with the retirement of Shima and her husband.

The difference in the regularity and intensity of karaoke participation and life routines, in other words optimal leisure lifestyles, between Shima and the students at Chou's classes revealed a process of social class reproduction that is important to consider when thinking about the construction of elderly lifestyles. In contrast to Shima, the students were born into rural families with far fewer socio-economic resources, and migrating to urban centers such as Osaka and working hard over decades was not enough to close this gap, as their lower levels of wealth and separation from children showed. This continued difference in socio-economic status did not preclude the less well-off students at Chou from pursuing leisurely fulfillment in their elderly lifestyles, as Chapter 4 clearly shows the enthusiasm with which they participated in karaoke as a learning activity. However, it did engender a great difference in the kinds of tactics they could employ in constructing lifestyles after retiring from their family obligations. Shima's relative wealth and good family relationships meant that she was able to pursue a wider range of leisure activities besides karaoke sessions, such as frequent holidays, shopping trips, and tennis lessons, to achieve fulfillment, while students at Chou could attain the most fulfillment by immersing themselves more fully into the more affordable karaoke visits, and developing communal bonds that made up for their less connected families.

Extraordinary experiences of karaoke: heightened emotional connections at "campaign events"

For urban elderly Japanese like Maki, Shima, and the students at Chou, visiting karaoke classes and *kissas* regularly was a clear way to set a rhythm to elderly life in a fulfilling manner. Their narratives so far have focused on what can be considered an "everyday" level, as seen by the importance of the units of hours, days, weeks and months. However, besides these routine activities that visitors took part in on a regular basis, special events held less regularly also marked the passage of time at these karaoke establishments. How did these extraordinary events mark longer or irregular durations of time, and provide fulfilling experiences that make the passage of time meaningful and fulfilling?

The karaoke recital described in Chapter 3 can be understood in such extraordinary terms, as it was a yearly event that provided participants the opportunity to transform into a glamorous star and perform on stage in front of a large audience. As Ogi (70) explained, it was the major event of the year which students all worked hard toward in their weekly lessons. Running the recital was also a group effort that brought the class together into tighter bonds of communal solidarity.

Another set of extraordinary experiences at the karaoke class and *kissa* were mini-concerts by *enka* and *kayōkyoku* singers, called "campaign events". These were not held at regular intervals, but were instead dependent on the singers' schedules for releasing and promoting songs, and the availability of the class or *kissa* operator. As Sensei was a professional singer herself, and thus had an established network in the *enka* and *kayōkyoku* music industry, Chou held the most number of campaign events. Here, appearances by the male *kayōkyoku* singer Wakahara Ryō were especially noteworthy, in the kinds of temporal ideas made visible through his interactions with Chie particularly.

220

Wakahara appeared at two events at Chou during 2016. The first was for Chie's birthday party in early April, which also doubled as a promotional event for Wakahara's most recent CD single "*Furiko*" (Pendulum), released in September 2015. The promotional aspect of this event was made obvious early on, as one of his road managers distributed to every attendee copies of a promotional flyer containing an image of the CD jacket cover, song lyrics for "*Furiko*" and the B-side song "*Dekiru Koto Nara*" (If It's Possible), and a discography list and summarized profile. Some of Wakahara's fervent fans had also been invited to Chou, although I was not sure if it was by Chie, and they took their seats at the big table at the front. Meanwhile, Chie greeted us over the sound system that the road manager had set up. She thanked us for coming to celebrate her 70th birthday, and informed us that Wakahara would be performing shortly.

After a few minutes, the intro for "*Furiko*" played, and Wakahara appeared through the entrance. He was sharply dressed in an expensive-looking three-piece suit, and had his well-coiffured hair neatly set back just like in the promotional flyer.

"Hello, I'm Wakahara Ryō. Sensei, Chie, how do you do? Please treat me well again tonight (*konya mo yoroshiku onegaishimasu*). Without further ado, please listen to my latest song, '*Furiko*'," he said before starting to sing.

As he sang in his smooth yet powerful voice, he walked around the floor space, and shook everyone's hand while establishing eye contact. This was the first of many audience interactions that built up an interesting balance of spectacle and intimacy.

After finishing his performance to our rousing applause, Wakahara took the opportunity to talk about his relationship with Chie, and explain his presence there that day:

As most of you gathered here already know, I've had the honor of knowing Chie personally for the past 10 years, and have received so much support from her over the years. Most of the time she's really selfish though! Like this morning, I was preparing to come down to Osaka from Tokyo, and I woke up at 5am to do my hair and makeup. And then Chie sent me a text message at 6am! She said she was looking forward to having me here later. Who on earth sends text messages that early? So I tried to ignore the message, but then I figured that since it was her birthday today, I should be nicer to her. So I sent her a reply to thank her for inviting me to be a big part of today's celebration. Now normally, you'd expect the other party to reply with a short 'please treat me well' (*yoroshiku onegaishimasu*). I waited and waited, but Chie's reply never came! You see what I mean now? It's like she's just dumping all of her love onto me unilaterally, and then going off to do other things. But that she's still lively enough to be able to do that for me is also something that I treasure very much. I hope that she will continue to be in good health, and give lots of happiness to all of us here.

Wakahara would also recount another of these humorous episodes with Chie at the time of his other appearance at Chou's year-end party in December, highlighting their intimate connection with each other:

Wakahara: I would also like to thank Chie for being such an important pillar of support in my career so far, especially when it comes to promoting in Osaka. She runs the restaurant next door, and they're very close partners with Chou here. Try knocking on the wall, they'll come in here to take your order. Anyway, Chie's a really important person. She was the first person to really support me

and organize fan activities, when I started to promote my music in Osaka. We're so close to each other now, that she sends me text messages about her private life in the middle of the night! Like how she recently got injured. Or how she recently owed a large debt! How did that go?

Sensei (laughing hysterically): Ah yes, the debt!

Chie (smiling): Oh, the debt? I repaid it in two days.

Wakahara (with an exaggerated expression of relief): Oh you paid it back already? That's great! That's so great isn't it, Sensei?

Sensei (nodding amusedly): Yes it is!

Wakahara (after pausing and composing himself): All joking aside, I think it's fate that has given me the good fortune to know Chie and Sensei. I will continue to work hard in the future, to turn your support into a hit song.

After this humorous talk segment, Wakahara invited a few members of the audience to come to the microphone, and sing one of his songs. Most of those called upon, including Chie, were well-known among the audience as fervent Wakahara fans, although Ogi and I were notable exceptions. Ogi had been invited to sing because word had spread that she had recently been awarded second prize in a city-level karaoke competition, while I was asked because Sensei and many other Chou regulars had told Wakahara about "the foreign boy who sang *enka* and *kayōkyoku* really well". Wakahara would stand beside each of us on stage, gently guiding and encouraging us through his songs, and asking other audience members to applaud at the end of our turns.

Through the incorporation of such bodily contact, monologues, dialogs and common participation, Wakahara's campaign events and appearances at Chou were thus opportunities not only to see a professional singer perform in the flesh, but also to get to create and build intimate connections with these stars, especially over the course of

repeated meetings. These intimate connections usually took on a form in which fans such as Chie played a nurturing role in the development of singers like Wakahara. Both singer and audience foregrounded such a structure in their words and actions. For example, in both of Wakahara's appearances (as well as those by other professional singers), one of his talk segments in between songs was dedicated to introducing his background and career so far. The following monologues in between songs were his self-introduction during the April event:

I have been known as Wakahara Ryō for about 12 years now, but you may also know that I performed as an *enka* singer before that. From a young age I went to a singing class in Asahikawa, Hokkaido. There was another singer, too, whom some of you may also be familiar with, who was in that same class. She's still performing as a singer now, and became more popular than I ever did. That's because she emerged champion in the televised karaoke contest held near our city, while I was runner-up. And that meant a world of difference in the kinds of contracts and professional support we received, when we were invited to be professional singers! I realized that however minuscule the difference was in judgment between champions and runners-up, that difference became insurmountable in the eyes of the record companies. But I've always worked hard at my career, and have been very fortunate to meet all of you along the way.

As you already know, I am from Asahikawa in Hokkaido. There are obviously a lot of songs about the north in *enka*, and I feel that I am able to understand them quite intimately because of where I was born and raised. Lately, I've also started to listen to some of these *enka* songs about the north, and practice singing them. When I became Wakahara Ryō, I was told that I would be moving away from a

traditional *enka* style, and hence would need to tone down on the *kobushi*, *yuri* and other characteristic vocal techniques. It took a lot of getting used to, and I still miss singing in that style sometimes. Today, I'd like to go back to my roots a little, and sing an *enka* song about the north. Recently, Yoshi Ikuzo (a famous male *enka* singer), our great senior, released a really wonderful song like that. It's called '*Hitori Kitaguni*'. It's an amazing song, and I'd like to sing it next.

Through these kinds of monologues, Wakahara presented a biography highlighting his humble beginnings and constant drive to improve, as well as his dependency on fans and event attendees in this endeavor. Such narratives fostered a desire among the audience to assist his continued journey as a professional singer. As he walked around Chou's floor space singing "*Hitori Kitaguni*", many event attendees, especially Wakahara's fervent fans, slipped 10,000-yen notes in between disposable wooden chopsticks that had been slightly split apart.[371] For more formal concerts the money would have been placed in a decorated envelope, but chopsticks sufficed for this low-key campaign event. They then inserted the money into the breast pocket of Wakahara's suit, while quickly encouraging him to continue his hard work (*ganbatte*). Some fans even did this multiple times, and by the end of the song, Wakahara had received around ten pairs of chopsticks, or around 100,000 yen.[372] Wakahara thanked us profusely for our donations, as those who had given him money looked on with approving smiles. For them, such highly visible monetary gifts were a crucial way to express directly to Wakahara their continued support of his singing career.

---

[371]   Roughly equivalent to 120 Australian dollars at the time of my fieldwork in 2016.
[372]   Roughly equivalent to 1,200 Australian dollars.

This kind of behavior between singer and audience has also been discussed by Yano, who describes it as a patterned form of mutual dependency.[373] The patterned or formulaic nature of such singer-audience interactions was clearly visible at campaign events for other singers held at Chou over the fieldwork period, as they also incorporated many of the performance elements described here during their appearances. However, I caution against overstating fans' level of dependence on singers for emotional fulfillment, as Wakahara's humorous description of Chie's messaging habits suggests that he was not the only source of "emotional sustenance" for her.[374] Nevertheless, for fans like Chie, events such as these campaign events at karaoke classes and *kissas* provided extraordinary and intimate occasions that heightened emotional connections with their favorite singers, and attributed joy and fulfillment to their long-term support. Such experiences fueled their continued fandom at least until the next meeting, with singers promising, although not yet scheduling, the same happy experiences in the future with humble requests to "meet again" (*mata oai shimashou*). For Chou's regulars like Chie, these senses of emotional connection and sustenance provided new senses of social solidarity, outside of family, and self-realization that gave them not only fulfillment in the present, but also hope in the future.

---

[373] Yano, Tears of Longing, 128-141.
[374] Ibid., 133.

Figure 24: A photo montage made by Chie to celebrate her close bond with the male singer Wakahara Ryō. The caption reads, "*Watashi ga honki de horeta hito*" (The person I really fell in love with). (2018-01-17 002)

Constructing meaningful time through karaoke

Throughout this chapter, I have described how regulars at karaoke classes and *kissas* have engaged with temporal concepts in constructing optimal experiences of serious musical leisure. To conclude, I want to revisit Turino's (2008) ideas of flow as optimal musical experience, as well as *ikigai*, in analyzing how meaningful and fulfilling time in old age is constructed through karaoke participation.

Turino argues that during a flow experience, people enter a state in which they effectively block out all outside distractions, such that they are "fully in the present".[375] Turino's approach towards explaining musical flow experiences are thus based on phenomenological accounts focusing almost solely on the musical activity itself. This may be a reference to Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) explicit recognition of "what happens in the mind" as a "phenomenological model of consciousness based on information

---

[375] Turino, <u>Music as Social Life</u>, 4.

theory", and the importance of looking at these happenings "directly as it was experienced".[376] In other words, Turino's model of musical flow experience is focused solely on the understanding of the moment of musical engagement.

Turino's model of musical flow is perhaps best encapsulated by Maki and Shima's attitude towards consuming alcohol during karaoke to heighten the momentary experience of visiting Chou and Ami respectively. However, the senses of temporality expressed by many other regulars at karaoke classes and *kissas* suggest a more complex negotiation of various points and lengths of time, in creating enjoyable and fulfilling musical experiences. For example, nostalgic reminiscence through karaoke song choices, as seen with Tsuru, Miki and Yoshiko, brought individual pasts into complex negotiations with the present. Some of these recollections posited the past as an ideal time period when "things were better", to contrast with a present that was understood as bleak. Other times, nostalgic recollections led to a critique of the visual and musical images that promoted such contrasting of the past and the present. It seemed that the experience of nostalgia depended greatly on the attitudes, moods, and histories of the people involved, and there was no guarantee of a set way to remember the past or evaluate the present. Certainly, karaoke enjoyment did not simply give rise to an enjoyable musical experience that was "fully in the present", as Turino proposes, or indeed "fully in the past", according to the model of simple nostalgia documented by Davis (1979).

In fact, Shima's karaoke participation was not simply preoccupied with the momentary aspect of musical experience. The strict regularity with which she came to Ami at the same time revealed a great concern over creating a meaningful progression of time in her old age. In other words, through karaoke Shima sought not only to enjoy the "momentary" present, but also mark the "moving" present in a way that she found

---

[376] Csikszentmihalyi, <u>Flow</u>, 25-26.

fulfilling. Shima's karaoke visits on Monday afternoons provided a weekly marker of time, either as a reward for time well utilized (especially with family over the weekend) or an escape from time poorly spent (with snobbish neighbors). Either way, by emphasizing the set place that karaoke occupied in her life rhythm, Shima optimized her karaoke experiences. Visiting Ami, among other activities, had now come to provide *ikigai* for Shima, by providing markers for living from moment to moment. It was also a source of her sense of overall well-being in old age, as part of what constituted her optimal leisure lifestyle.

This kind of temporal *ikigai* and well-being, however, is greatly dependent again on individual biographies: Shima's positioning of karaoke participation as one of a number of fulfilling leisure activities contrasted considerably with the intensity and dominance of karaoke in the leisure lives of the students at Chou's classes, or other Ami regulars such as Tsuru. These differences were due to the disparity in socio-economic resources that was never made up over their lifetimes. In essence, temporalities of karaoke participation were a mechanism of social reproduction. The different kinds of optimal leisure lifestyles revealed social class differences that had a profound impact on how each of these karaoke regulars were able to create individual and social meaning in elderly life.

Perhaps the most visible way to understand how these elderly karaoke regulars created a meaningful sense of the future were the extraordinary events, which were not part of their daily- or weekly-level routines, but instead marked longer durations of years, or irregular time. For example, the yearly class recital discussed in Chapter 3 created meaning and direction (or *ikigai*) for the curriculum year, by providing a glamorous stage to perform in front of the public. The emphasis on teamwork in running the recital event also provided a heightened momentary experience of the communal solidarity between students. Meanwhile, campaign events for professional

singers, held at karaoke classes and *kissas*, created a space and time that blended both spectacle and intimacy. Through such a mix, these campaign events allowed attendees to witness the awesome singing prowess of professionally trained singers, and at the same time form closer ties with them via the intimate talk and common participation segments. These events thus represented not only the fulfillment of long-term support by providing heightened experiences of connection with singers, but also the marking of unspecified future time as a promise that would again be fulfilled. In this sense, campaign events may be understood as a source of *ikigai*, especially for fervent fans.

The construction of *ikigai* through karaoke flow experiences, as such, reveals a more complex sense of temporality held by elderly regulars than the foregrounding of nostalgia suggested by Yano, or the momentary focus suggested by Turino. In moving beyond Yano's and Turino's frameworks, I want to highlight Csikszentmihalyi's proposed model that flow experiences for listening to music involves three levels of engagement. The first is a sensory experience, in which listeners respond to "the qualities of sound that induce the pleasant physical reactions that are genetically wired into our nervous system".[377] This kind of experience is perhaps what Turino is most focused on in his model of musical meaning. The second is the analogic mode of listening, which involves "the skill to evoke feelings and images based on the patterns of sound…and cuing in the listener with lyrics that spell out what mood or what story the music is supposed to represent, and relies on prior listening experiences and knowledge.[378] Yano's focus on patterned expressions of nostalgia is most reminiscent of such a mode of listening. The third level involves analytical listening, involving the

---

[377] Ibid., 110.
[378] Ibid., 111.

ability to understand and critique structural elements of music such as harmony and arrangement.[379]

In discussing temporality as an issue of genre form or musical practice, Yano and Turino seem to have hemmed themselves into either of the first two modes of listening. However, I believe that it might be more productive to analyze the temporal meanings generated through karaoke by considering musical experience as a fluid movement between these three modes of listening, especially when considering karaoke not only as a form of listening, but also as music-making and performance. Of course, participants may possess different levels of ability to approach music in such a complex manner, but the karaoke engagements discussed in this chapter have shown that they think about time in ways that go beyond Yano's and Turino's models of musical understanding. It is only by consulting a more complex and fluid framework, that we can start to fully grasp how these elderly enthusiasts make sense of their pasts, presents and futures through their serious karaoke participation, in individually and socially fulfilling ways.

Matthew McDonald, Stephen Wearing, and Jess Ponting (2007) argue that leisure "has become an escape from the pressures of the competitive individualized labor market through the process of therapeutic consumption."[380] From a temporal perspective, contemporary leisure can be understood as a departure from the hegemonic lifestyles and sense of time dominated by the neoliberal workplace. Indeed, the elderly karaoke regulars' lifestyles and senses of time differ markedly from those held by younger Japanese immersed in exactly such competitions of productivity and results, especially if descriptions of the fervent dedication to work, as seen in the many cases of *karoshi* (death by overwork), or caregiving, encapsulated in the figure of the *kyōiku*

---

[379] Ibid.

[380] Matthew McDonald, Stephen Wearing, and Jess Ponting, "Narcissism and Neo-Liberalism: Work, Leisure, and Alienation in an Era of Consumption", <u>Society and Leisure</u> 30(2) (2007), 495.

mama obsessed with helping her children achieve top grades in school, are anything to go by. Comments by Shima, who chose Ami as her regular haunt to avoid her "snobby neighbors", and Tate and Akiko, who explained that they came to Chou and Sachi respectively to pursue their own singing interests away from their husbands, certainly lend credence to arguments of leisure being an "escape" and refuge for "me time", even in old age.[381] In this way, karaoke classes and *kissas* can be understood as a sort of "third space" within which individual and social life is lived outside the home ("first space") and workplace ("second space").[382]

Sepp Linhart (1998) has also examined Japanese amusement establishments (*sakariba*), which karaoke *kissas* can be considered a part of and karaoke classes closely linked to, as a form of "third space".[383] Drawing an important distinction between *yasumi* (a holiday, which Linhart considers the Japanese conceptualization of the idea of leisure) and *ikoi* (resting and relaxing), he situates the experiences of regulars at these amusement establishments as the latter.[384] It is important to note, however, that the regulars that make up Linhart's research participants are overwhelmingly males employed in the workforce, and that Linhart situates the *ikoi* function of *sakariba* in terms of revitalizing this workforce for the next working day. For these regulars, the *sakariba* provides *ikoi* through its function as a space of limited "evaporation" (*jōhatsu*), where they can temporarily "disappear" from their families or colleagues and take on other personae, but within the social norms already established there (by the owner and other regulars).[385] Linhart thus situates these establishments also as a kind of liminal space, in between total freedom and the constraints placed by the social role of

---

[381] For Shima's case, see earlier in this chapter. For Tate's case, see Chapter 3. For Akiko's case, see Chapter 2.
[382] Ray Oldenburg, <u>The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community</u> (New York: Marlowe & Co., 1999), 11.
[383] Sepp Linhart, "*Sakariba*", 240.
[384] Ibid.
[385] Ibid., 238-9.

husband/father and worker, and beyond the realms of the home and the workplace. However, *sakariba* are also liminal in the sense that they also shape-shift as regulars' engagement in these places become increasingly intense over time, and they develop social bonds and networks strong enough for them to identify these places as a "second home".[386]

Turning the discussion back to Sachi, Ami and Chou, we can see that despite their dramatically different lifestyles from the male workers in Linhart's study, many of the regulars, with perhaps the notable exception of Shima, have indeed built up stronger identifications and connections to the karaoke establishments over the course of their long-term regular engagements.[387] Indeed, karaoke engagements have come to function as the actual basis of many of their everyday lives, especially for widows like Tsuru and Saka. They may have explained their frequent visits to Ami and Chou respectively as an "escape from loneliness", but these visits have effectively become the foundation upon which their senses of time are now established, especially with regards to living in the present. As such, the aging perspective taken in this thesis provides new questions about the temporal place and importance of leisure, and serious leisure in particular, within contemporary Japanese everyday culture. Such questions are important to consider, given the context of increasingly diverse lifestyles differentiated not least along generational lines.

---

[386] Ibid., 238.

[387] Even so, Shima has talked about the importance of Ami in her lifestyle, and even lent money to Master to keep the establishment afloat during a period of financial difficulty in 2016.

Conclusion: Rethinking Life in Old Age through Karaoke

Maki had come to Chou's *kissa* operation again on this mid-September night, together with his male friend Takahashi (76), and a female friend, Rika, who was in her fifties. When I arrived, Maki was having his turn on the microphone. While the karaoke backing for the song "*Furiko*" was playing, Maki was singing in a slurred voice, and clearly ignored the rhythm of the song. Looking at their jolly dispositions and glazed eyes, it was clear that Maki and Takahashi had gotten considerably drunk by now.

After "*Furiko*" had ended, Maki slowly shuffled and swayed back to his seat at the counter table, but continued singing into the microphone, this time giving a rendition of "*Yogiri yo Konya mo Arigatō*". Takahashi got up and took the other microphone available, and joined his friend in drunkenly singing the song. "Ishihara Yūjirō was such a cool singer!" they spoke of their admiration for the male singer. Sensei and the other customers tonight laughed at the scene, commenting amusedly that "they sing better without music". We continued listening to their acapella performance, and laughed even more when Masuda seemed to forget his lines and hummed his way to the end.

Rika had two important roles tonight, it seemed. Firstly, she was to entertain Maki and Takahashi with her conversation and singing. She humored Takahashi by accompanying him for an *enka* duet, "*Omoroi Fūfu*" (A Funny Married Couple; sung by male singer Kagami Gorō and female singer Shimazu Etsuko, released by King Records in 2014). During the song, they made plenty of eye contact, and Rika was rather proactive in making body contact with Takahashi, patting his shoulders at some of her lines in the song. Maki laughed and cheered aloud as they performed, especially at their spoken lines. The two seemed to be greatly enjoying themselves.

Seeing this, Sensei humorously commented aloud, "Rika, when did you two become real husband-and-wife?"

"You two are indeed interesting (*omoroi*)!" Maki added.

Takahashi seemed happy with the comments, and turned to us. "I'd definitely like to make her my wife (*yome ni shitai*)!" We laughed together with Takahashi and Rika, and Sensei jokingly chided him that he still had a wife at home.

Rika also needed to make sure that Maki and Takahashi stayed out of trouble. For most of the evening, Takahashi had continuously tried to get Sensei to do a duet with him, and provide critique on his singing. However, with Chou being full tonight, Sensei was too busy to converse with any of her customers. Noticing that his cup was empty, she asked how Takahashi wanted his refill of rice wine (*shōchū*).

"Anything's fine," Takahashi replied.

"That's the most difficult answer for Sensei, you know?" Rika said in a slightly chiding tone that was sympathetic to Sensei. Sensei echoed Rika's thoughts with a smile.

"I just want to sing with you Sensei," Takahashi replied.

"But you're also feeling very satisfied singing with Rika aren't you?" Sensei jokingly rebutted.

"Well that's true," Takahashi replied. Maki, who overheard the exchange, laughed loudly.

As Takahashi's attention turned to Maki, Sensei laughed too. "He actually agreed! I managed to shake him off this time!" Sensei heaved a sigh of relief at Takahashi's constant approaches, and smiled to Rika.

After a couple of hours, Maki and Takahashi finally prepared to leave, as they stood up and asked for the bill from Sensei. However, Sensei informed them that they had already paid for their share (as well as Rika's) earlier in the evening, an act which the other customers witnessed and confirmed. "You must have forgotten because it's so

affordable, right?" Sensei said. Maki and Takahashi laughed heartily as they continued holding on to their wallet. Over the next 10 minutes, they continued to ask if they had really paid up. "Yes you have, although you are more than welcome to pay me again!" Sensei teased.

Meanwhile, Rika called for a private taxi to come to Chou, and informed the two men to wait until the taxi had arrived. As they waited, Maki decided that he wanted to dance to a song that another customer was singing. He seemed precariously close to tripping over a bag placed near his seat, so Sensei and Rika told him to be careful. Maki laughed loudly, as he got out of his chair and made his way to the front, with Sensei and Rika carefully watching over him.

Soon, the taxi arrived. Rika helped Maki and Takahashi out of their seats. As the two men joyfully said goodbye to the other customers tonight, Rika ushered them into out of the entrance and into the taxi, while bowing and thanking us for our hospitality. She then got into the taxi with them, and later told Sensei that she had seen them off at their respective homes.

Once the taxi set off, Sensei and the rest of us sighed loudly together, as we relaxed now that Maki and Takahashi had left. We laughed at our perfect timing.

"He doesn't really go back that easily," Yoshi (67) commented, having known about Maki and Takahashi's drunken behavior over her regular visits to Chou. "I guess they must really like it here. They're really enjoying their lives (*jinsei wo tanoshindeiru*), and it's really nice to have places like that where they can feel at home (*kiraku ni irareru*)," she added.

"They're really loved and treasured by (*aisareteiru*) everyone here, and at the other karaoke places they frequent too. But yes, they really still have a lot of energy, even after drinking so much," Sensei added.

Maki and Takahashi encapsulated many of the desires and practices of the elderly customers and students who regularly came for karaoke at Sachi, Ami and Chou. In the previous chapters, I have looked at various ways in which serious karaoke participation at these places has figured to produce senses of well-being and *ikigai* that elderly regulars sought after. Such well-being and *ikigai* developed across various themes that characterized the regulars' participation, such as romance, learning, and attributing meaning to time in elderly life. They also developed through a variety of modes of musical engagements (bodily, emotional, cognitive, individual, and social), encompassing both the core activities of singing, and the associated activities of chatting, drinking, eating, and so on.

To conclude this thesis, I address the central research questions raised at the start of the introduction, keeping in mind the theoretical frameworks of well-being, *ikigai*, musicking and serious leisure I have utilized throughout the preceding chapters, and describe how the main arguments traced out in the preceding chapters address the questions. I do this in two parts. Firstly, I answer the question "how did karaoke, and *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, uniquely facilitate the attainment of well-being and *ikigai* in old age?" In doing so, I also discuss the formation of common musical tastes and practices in the particular socio-historical contexts concerning the regular visits to karaoke classes and *kissas*, and the ideas of musical meaning and authenticity developed from the musicking activities at these places. Secondly, I answer the questions, "what kinds of well-being and *ikigai* in old age did the elderly regulars pursue through serious karaoke?" and "why did elderly regulars pursue well-being and *ikigai* through serious karaoke at classes and *kissas*?" Here, I discuss the kinds of flow experiences attained through regular karaoke sessions, and how these experiences facilitated a sense of well-being and *ikigai*, in both *jiko jitsugen* (self-actualization) and *ittaikan* (oneness with others) terms. I situate this discussion within the context of the regulars' life histories and life

courses to show three things: (i) How they think about their pasts through karaoke, as seen from their nostalgic reminiscences and life narratives; (ii) how they imagine a flourishing life and ideas of well-being and *ikigai* through karaoke, especially within the current Japanese political economy; and (iii) how their karaoke engagements suggest alternative models of aging, and life in old age, that are more positive than the doom and gloom of the mainstream "medical gaze".

I end this thesis by proposing a few avenues of further possible research in studies of elderly musical engagement and serious leisure. Within the case study of Japan, I suggest conducting a prolonged continued study of this group of elderly karaoke regulars. I also suggest research on the serious musical leisure of urban elderly Japanese of a higher socioeconomic class, and younger Japanese music enthusiasts, in order to provide a cross-sectional perspective on Japanese musical engagements. Finally, I suggest placing such research on elderly musical engagements in a wider East and Southeast Asian perspective, especially given that genres highly influenced by and similar to *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, such as *trot* in South Korea, and *Hokkien-kwa* or *Taiyu-ge* in Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan, are enjoyed by a very similar working-class elderly demographic, and thus suggest a trans-Asian insight towards elderly serious musical leisure.

Romance, learning, and appreciating the passage of time: Achieving flow experiences through karaoke experiences

Karaoke, and the genres of *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, facilitated the attainment of well-being and *ikigai* by providing opportunities to experience musical flow, through the establishment of various forms of musical meanings during visits to the *kissa* or class. In the case of Miki, Tsuru, Mura, Akiko and Motoyama, for example, coming to Sachi and Ami to sing *enka* and *kayōkyoku* allowed them to experience **romantic feelings**

and exchanges. Some of these romantic meanings were based on participants' engagements with the songs, through the indexical, symbolic and iconic signs they recognized. For instance, Tsuru's and Miki's fondness for singing *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs like "*Futarizake*" and "*Onna no Michi*" were based on the formulaic compositional and lyrical *kata* of the genres which they both appreciated, and also their shared indexical and iconic understandings based upon the common experience of widowhood and reminiscing late spouses through music. These musical signs provided triggers for starting a process of semiotic chaining that involved, among other things, the creation of romantic music experiences through conversations and interactions between male and female regulars, by generating empathetic interest from and conversation with others sharing similar indexical, symbolic and iconic understandings of romance and longing in the songs. Watching these karaoke performances then led these other participants to perform other songs with similar indexical, symbolic and iconic meanings, which in turn generated even more interest and conversation. Within this process, romantic meanings were attributed to and reinforced for the *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs performed, and romantic feelings between karaoke regulars themselves were nurtured. In this way, these feelings of positive affect built up senses of flow for a number of regulars and heightened the fulfilling experience of singing karaoke, although notably for Mura, they seemed to overwhelm her and hindered her karaoke experience instead. Also, through such karaoke experiences, singing *enka* and *kayōkyoku* recalled old musical meanings developed from past experiences, and these performances also engendered new musical experiences that provided romantic direction for the future. Both processes contributed to a deeply engaging and nuanced affective experiences at the karaoke *kissa*; that is, these processes enabled in the

regulars an increased (or perhaps decreased, in Mura's case) capacity to act, romantically in this case.[388]

For the karaoke class students at Chou, the musical meanings they obtained out of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* centered upon the concept of **learning**. For example, Saka placed importance on the symbolic signs of these genres as a sort of cultural capital among her generational peers, in approaching the songs as objects of learning. Thus, Saka sought to hone her singing technique through the karaoke classes, and gain mastery over the presentation of the vocal *kata* symbols of the *enka* and *kayōkyoku* that she and her friends liked. Meanwhile, the latest *enka* and *kayōkyoku* releases also carried a symbolic meaning of currency and trendiness, despite sounding highly formulaic and familiar to older songs, and drove Saka and her classmates' desire to constantly learn new songs in their karaoke lessons. Here, they problematized the musical meanings of "old" and "new". *Enka* and *kayōkyoku* were not simply songs made up of the representative hits of the 1970s and early 1980s as mainstream Japanese media outlets tend to emphasize in their selection of such songs from these genres as iconic, indexical and symbolic cues for nostalgic reminiscence in major shows such as the year-end NHK *Kōhaku Uta Gassen* (Red-White Song Contest). Instead, for Saka and her classmates, *enka* and *kayōkyoku* were very much genres that still carried much currency, in terms of providing new song material for the attainment of musical flow experiences through successful learning, even if their enjoyment also derived from the presence of familiar musical *kata* symbols in these new songs.

In essence, regular karaoke singing of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* provided opportunities for **the constant negotiation of meanings of time**: through their musicking activities, definitions of old, new, past, present, and future were held fluid

---

[388]   I refer to "affect" here in terms of the definition provided by Brian Massumi. See Brian Massumi, "Notes of the Translation and Acknowledgments", Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, <u>A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia</u> (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), xvii.

240

and complex. These negotiations were encapsulated in the examples detailed in Chapter 4. Tsuru, Miki and Yoshiko's nostalgic reminiscences were complex reflections about their individual, social and musical pasts. Sometimes, they used their favorite *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs from decades past to talk about "the good old days", when "things were better" both on an individual and societal level. Other times, however, they questioned the iconic and symbolic signs, cued by both the music and the accompanying karaoke videos, and raised their objections towards an understanding of the past that attempted to erase the pain and struggles that they often had to endure as well. Regularly visiting Sachi, Ami and Chou also built up musical meanings that heavily foregrounded the passage of time in the elderly present. In addition, karaoke musicking at these classes and *kissas* provided musical meaning of the long-term and/or indeterminate future, mainly through participation in events out of regular visiting schedules, such as the yearly class recital and campaign events.

I have attempted to analyze the musicking of these elderly karaoke regulars in conversation with what I consider a few key ethnomusicological works contributing to understandings of *enka, kayōkyoku*, and other genres considered nostalgic in Japan. Firstly, research by Christine Yano is highly influential in the study of *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, particularly in the English-speaking parts of the academic world. Her main ideas center upon viewing these genres as a culturally structured representation of an essential "traditional Japanese musical identity"; the musicking activities involved in *enka* and *kayōkyoku* are based upon knowledge from a traditional past, and reproduce such knowledge into the present, keeping it locked in a perpetual longing and reminiscence.[389] More recent research by Koizumi Kyōko has moved away from such a culturally structured understanding, preferring to explain the musicking activities

---

[389] Yano, Tears of Longing, 168, 178-9. Such ideas are also found in Japanese research on the genres, such as Koizumi Fumio (1996) and Aikawa Yumi (2002).

surrounding "nostalgic" music as exercises in imagining a collective past.[390] Looking at

public settings of such nostalgic musicking, such as karaoke bus tours, Koizumi

explains these exercises as occasions where personal music preferences, shaped by

one's experiences through the cultural "mediascape" of his or her lifetime, are shared

with others.[391] In these occasions, mediascapes, personal memory and common memory

intersect in complex ways: for example, personal favorites plucked from one's

mediascape throughout his or her life history are collected together at public settings for

musicking; in these settings these songs may then become shared favorites, or the

personal favorites of other participants.[392]

Looking solely at the nostalgic aspects of the karaoke activities at Sachi, Ami

and Chou, the musical meaning of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* for the regulars was constructed

more in the mold of Koizumi's interactionist model. While the structural ideas of

Japanese "nationhood" and "tradition" espoused by Yano provide an important tool to

identify the motifs (*kata*) found in *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs, I argue that the shared

musical nostalgia that karaoke regulars engaged in was based more upon similarities in

life histories and social contexts, which fostered similar musical tastes and empathy for

each other's desires and aims in regular karaoke participation. In other words, the

nostalgic retrospection of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* operated at the smaller units of individual

lives and social groups, rather than the nation. It also involved complex and reflexive

ways of thinking about the past that goes beyond Davis' (1979) "simple nostalgia"

framework that Yano seems to foreground.[393]

However, the karaoke regulars' musicking also goes beyond a sole engagement

with the past, as Yano and Koizumi describe. In approaching the past, present and

---

[390] Koizumi, *Memoriisukēpu*, 229.

[391] Ibid., 11. Koizumi uses "mediascape" to denote the cultural (*bunkateki*) memory of a society built upon images transmitted in mass media.

[392] Ibid., 246-7.

[393] Davis, Yearning for Yesterday, 18.

future in a highly fluid manner, the regulars expressed a concept of musical authenticity that goes beyond the mainstream images of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* as "tradition" or "nostalgia". Instead, these regulars' musicking suggests that at the core of their continued performance of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* lies a passion to live life vicariously, in both the present and the future. For the karaoke regulars, the emotions and sentiments found in the iconic, indexical and symbolic signs of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* were not simply objects of reminiscence, but instead also important resources through which they could not only cope, but even flourish, in old age. This way of experiencing *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, I suggest, was built through the fluid and intersecting ways in which the regulars engaged with the music. Beyond approaching the songs as objects of passive listening, the regulars also sought to provide their own takes on the music through karaoke performances. Furthermore, they built up camaraderie with each other through these performances by expressing their appreciation and/or critique, and by engaging in conversation based on the signs they recognized from the songs. It was the combined experience of listening, performing, critiquing and conversing that provided these karaoke regulars with senses of musical enjoyment.

In this way, these karaoke regulars' theoretical contribution to the concept of musical authenticity for consumers, at least with regards to *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, is to bring to the fore a model of musical experience (especially of flow) that captures a fluid and complex mode of musicking. This model goes beyond a focus on solely nostalgia, as Yano and Koizumi suggest, or the momentary experience, as Thomas Turino argues for.[394] Instead, it combines and moves between the different modes of sensory, analogic and analytical musical engagement that Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi lists in his model of flow experience.[395] Only through this kind of theoretical framework can we uncover a

---

[394] Turino, <u>Music as Social Life</u>, 4.
[395] Csikszentmihalyi, <u>Flow</u>, 110-1.

more grounded understanding of the ideas of musical authenticity for *enka* and *kayōkyoku* constructed by its fans.

Types of musical flow experience in serious karaoke

Having discussed the kinds of musical meanings that the elderly regulars derived from their regular and serious karaoke, let us consider the kinds of musical flow experiences, and the senses of well-being and *ikigai*, that they experienced. To do so, I discuss regulars' karaoke experiences at Sachi, Ami and Chou in terms of the seven components of flow experience listed by Csikszentmihalyi, to see how they expressed or suggested new insights about each component.[396]

Sense of competence in activity: This was particularly strong for the students at Chou's classes, who felt that the lessons allowed them to learn, in a structured manner, the ability to sing with the "proper" techniques. Despite some reservations about whether they could use these techniques well enough during classes and the recital, they felt that this training was the main reason why they were better singers than their peers outside the class. Even the regulars of the *kissas* Sachi and Ami also talked about a sense of competence at the songs that they frequently sang, or those that they were learning to sing. However, some *kissa* regulars, such as Mura, did not expand their singing competency, perhaps due to their lack of structured learning material.

Merging of action and awareness in concentration: The lessons at Chou's classes were the most obvious examples of this kind of experience. With Sensei's detailed explanations about bodily sensations during singing, students like Saka were greatly aware of their actions, postures and dispositions. The individual lessons, in particular, required students to concentrate in learning how to present themselves vocally and physically. These lesson experiences culminated in the performance at the

---

[396] Ibid., 49-67.

yearly recital, where the sense of merging of action and awareness in concentration was most amplified, and students spoke about the sensations they felt on stage. Conversely, some of the *kissa* regulars, like Shima and Maki, felt that loosening up one's inhibitions through alcohol, rather than concentrating, allowed them to enjoy karaoke better. I suggest that research on enjoyable experiences of drunkenness will be an interesting possible avenue of future research. Specifically, can the sense of merging of action and awareness (or getting "in the zone") be achieved via the encouragement of a relaxed state, and if so, for whom would such an approach be appropriate?

Clear goals and feedback: This was a hallmark of Sensei's lessons, as she provided detailed explanations of what was good or bad about the students' vocal projection and stage presentation. Students thus clearly understood their progress in learning and preparing for a song. The regulars at karaoke *kissas* also frequently showed such an aspect of flow experience, by applauding and praising each other after performances. That such appraisals at both the class and *kissa* were both done without demeaning words allowed participants to work on their singing in a positive manner.

Deep, focused involvement in activity: At Chou's classes, this was largely visible in the way students took part in the class recital after having meticulously approached lessons, particularly individual sessions. Students like Saka recorded their lessons with a voice recorder, and reviewed these recordings later to learn from their mistakes and successes, in preparation for their next individual session, or participation at recitals and competitions. Sometimes, I observed even karaoke *kissa* regulars, such as Miki at Ami and Akiko at Sachi, record their own singing during their visits. For these karaoke enthusiasts, their dedication often (but not always) paid off, in terms of allowing them to gain a better mastery of songs and vocal skills that in turn facilitated highly enjoyable experiences of singing, be it at the *kissa* or on stage at the recital. On the other hand, other regulars such as Shima preferred a less invested way to enjoy their

time at karaoke. Instead, she seemed to find flow experiences across a variety of activities in her optimal leisure lifestyle. I believe that more field research across these other leisure activities will provide a greater understanding of how flow may work across different areas of life, and push research beyond focusing on a single activity.

Sense of exercising control, even if situation is not fully under control: Students at Chou's classes experienced this sense of control to varying degrees through their lessons. Although not all students felt full control over their vocal performance of the songs, they felt that the effort they expanded and the skills they learned through the lessons gave them control over their own bodies and health. Performing at recitals was an especially heightened experience of trying to attain such a sense of control within the pressure of performing on stage in front of a large crowd, and students who were able to apply the skills and points learned during their lessons, such as Saka, were able to experience this aspect of flow. The karaoke *kissa* regulars also reported a sense of control over their voices and bodies as part of their enjoyment of karaoke, and showed pride in learning and mastering songs. However, some regulars, such as Shima, seemed to suggest that rather than heightening concentration, entering a more relaxed state, particularly through drinking alcohol, was another good way to enjoy their karaoke visits. Her own attempts to get better at singing always involved the drinking of diluted whiskey as she sang. As with the point on the merging of awareness and action, further research on enjoyable activities while under the influence of alcohol will be interesting in exploring the centrality of concentration in experiencing a sense of control, and in what cases generating a more relaxed state may also achieve this.

Loss of self-consciousness, interpersonal connection: This was highly apparent at both the class and *kissa* settings. For the class, this was encapsulated on the day of the recital. On stage, students like Saka gradually eased into their performances, particularly after receiving applause at the end of their first verses. Off stage, the

students came together strongly as a team as they managed the recital event, and developed a heightened sense of connection with fellow classmates. At the karaoke *kissa*, regulars such as Akiko shed their self-consciousness through the applause and praise of other customers, and developed friendships and even romantic feelings with each other. In particular, duet performances provided opportunities to further these interpersonal connections. However, the shedding of such self-consciousness was not an automatic part of the karaoke experience. As seen from Mura's example, the desire to express her feelings musically overwhelmed her, and she actually felt more self-conscious standing with the microphone during her turn to sing. Shedding one's self-consciousness and achieving interpersonal connections thus perhaps depended on a more outgoing personality, and a certain level of singing ability.

Transformation of sense of time: This was another highly apparent component of the karaoke experience at both the class and *kissa* setting. At Chou's classes, students felt that their lessons allowed them to combat the kinds of physical and mental deterioration that characterized the experience of growing old, and spoke with pride about how they were living healthily for longer than their generational peers had seemed to resign themselves to. The many female students also seemed to see their serious pursuit of karaoke as breaking free of the time and lifestyle constraints of their previous roles as housewives. For the karaoke *kissa* regulars, places like Sachi, Ami and Chou provided opportunities for reminiscing their pasts through songs, and build hope into the immediate and indeterminate future through promises of future meetings. These senses of time were made possible through the bubble of physical and mental engagement that the regulars felt the classes and *kissa* provided, away from the idleness that characterized many of the regulars' everyday elderly lives. Indeed, the enjoyable transformation of the sense of elderly time, as they pursued the musical flow

experiences in singing, led them to become regulars, and shift both their temporal and spatial loci of everyday life to Sachi, Ami and Chou.

Coping and flourishing in old age through serious karaoke: thoughts on Japanese neoliberalism and life course models

The way in which the karaoke regulars experienced this transformation of the sense of time as a reaction to past and current stages of their life course, I argue, points to the importance of understanding the motivations of serious karaoke participation from a life history perspective. Many of the components of musical flow experience I have listed may also be attained in other leisure pursuits; the enormous *narai-goto* industry in Japan attests to the plethora of such serious engagements with leisure activities by older Japanese. The life history perspective, however, allows us to understand why the elderly regulars have chosen the activity of karaoke, the genres of *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, and the venues of the karaoke class and *kissa*, as their pursuit. Taking this approach, I argue that the karaoke singing of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* at these places was most attractive to the regulars for a few reasons. Firstly, the relatively low cost of starting and maintaining participation at karaoke classes and *kissas* meant that this was more affordable, compared to other leisure activities such as the tennis classes I listed in Chapter 3, for many regulars, who have lived modest working-class lifestyles all their lives. Secondly, that *enka* and *kayōkyoku* figure as the musical basis of these karaoke establishments is also crucial in attracting this particularly working-class and urban elderly demographic, who have preferred these musical genres and the themes espoused that speak to their own sensitivities, desires and values as urban migrants of Japan's postwar industrialization. Thirdly, the physical location of these venues is important as well: being situated in working-class urban residential areas, with large populations of elderly

men and women, meant that they could be easily accessed by regular customers and students.

These three points highlight the roles played by class, gender, locale and other factors discussed in Mannheim's (1952) idea of "generational units". Mannheim defines generational units as "groups within the same actual generation which work up the material of their common experiences" in a specific manner, characterized by "an identity of responses, a certain affinity in the way in which all move with and are formed by their common experiences".[397] In this way, we can see the elderly karaoke enthusiasts as a generational unit, in the sense that they share common experiences, and respond to these in a similar manner musically. Mannheim's view of the composition of a generation by various generational units thus brings in other formative social factors besides age; generation is only one social factor among others that can influence socio-cultural practices, and it can itself be differentiated by other factors.[398]

Thus, even if they mostly possessed modest economic and social resources, the regulars at Sachi, Ami and Chou still found means to make their everyday life in old age not only more bearable, but even enjoyable. Regular karaoke here provided them with opportunities to explore and achieve senses of well-being and *ikigai*, at both levels of *jiko jitsugen* (self-realization) and *ittaikan* (attaining oneness with others). For example, serious karaoke has allowed regulars like Miki, Tsuru, Akiko and Motoyama to attain various levels of romantic fulfillment and self-realization. Frequently coming to sing at the karaoke *kissa* provided the space and opportunities to explore the desires for romantic passion and intimacy that they still possessed, despite their old age and widowhood or unfulfilling marriages. Their relationships were often of a playful nature, expressing desires for romantic connections that privileged feelings of *jiko jitsugen* over

---

[397] Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations", 304, 306.
[398] Ibid., 313-14.

those of *ittaikan,* or the desires of the individual over the unity of the couple. In this way, these relationships, fostered in the setting of the karaoke *kissa*, were a criticism of the heavy emphasis on *ittaikan*, and the suppression of individual desires and agency, that they had to endure in their previous stages of life.

Approaching karaoke as a learning journey provided many opportunities for *jiko jitsugen* and *ittaikan*. In terms of the former, students learned to not only to become better singers, but also to gain more mastery over their bodies and emotions. The stage performances at the yearly recital and other competition events heightened their awareness of these improvements, and students such as Saka spoke excitedly about how they felt a great sense of self-achievement after their performances. While the musicking activities of the lessons and recital performances provided these opportunities to attain *jiko jitsugen*, and its senses of individual well-being in terms of physiology, cognition, and emotion, learning to sing karaoke in a class also provided many sources of socially-derived *ittaikan* well-being. Over the course of their pursuits, students often struck up friendships, as they regularly met and started to chat with each other both inside and outside the lessons: Saka's group of close friends was a clear example. These groups coalesced well together, particularly on occasions such as the yearly recital that required much solidarity and teamwork. The achievement of *jiko jitsugen* and *ittaikan* through learning karaoke, again, can be understood best in terms of their life histories. The many female students described their karaoke learning activities as an expression of long-repressed desires to engage deeper with music, or to try a new form of self-expression. They also pointed out that they felt they could only do these in their current elderly life, as earlier roles in their adult lives did not offer the amount of freedom needed. Through their pursuits of new ways to express themselves, the students also built up new forms of social connections and solidarity located outside the family sphere to which they felt they had been limited for so long.

250

The examples in Chapter 4 showed some ways in which karaoke regulars achieved a sense of well-being and *ikigai* in terms of their attitudes towards time. For example, acts of nostalgic reminiscence during karaoke allowed regulars like Tsuru chances to construct a narrative of their lives in social, historical and musical terms, and relive these in a largely positive manner. Coming to the karaoke venues regularly also provided the basis for creating an understanding of how to live in the present. For some regulars such as Maki and Shima, this meant fully indulging in their favorite alcohol to enjoy the moment. On the other hand, for many students at Chou's classes, this meant working hard through their lessons to maintain a good level of physical and mental health. In both cases, regular karaoke played an important role in marking the passage of time and direction in life. The case of campaign events particularly highlighted the issue of direction, and these events provided enjoyable experiences of intimate spectacles that placed hope into the future. All of these modes of experience during karaoke visits provided senses of *jiko jitsugen* and *ittaikan* that were often experienced simultaneously and interconnectedly, as they involved the negotiation of meanings of time in old age, both with respect to the self and to others, through interactions with other karaoke regulars.

The elderly regulars at Sachi, Ami and Chou thus conceptualized a flourishing elderly life in a very complex manner, encompassing both ideas of *jiko jitsugen* and *ittaikan*. Referencing Turino's and Csikszenmihalyi's ideas on musical flow experiences, the regulars' karaoke engagements provided opportunities for the "integration of different parts of the self and…facilitate wholeness", as well as for the experiencing of togetherness with others through common musical taste and activities.[399] These balances of self-realization and group solidarity, or autonomy and social connection, were also different depending on the needs and desires of each

---

[399]   Turino, <u>Music as Social Life</u>, 4.

individual participant. Yet, a common thread among these regulars was their recognition that well-being and *ikigai* were to be achieved by taking charge of their own lives, and pursuing their interests deeply and seriously. Many of them talked about not wanting or being able to rely much on their families to support their everyday living, and hinted at the limited means they lived upon. However, interest in karaoke provided the impetus for them to step outside their often lonely homes, and embrace themselves and other like-minded peers of their generation. In doing so, they were able to both grow individually, and build meaningful support relationships with others. These are crucial strategies for surviving and flourishing as elderly people in the current Japanese political economy, with the neoliberal policies increasingly pursued by the state placing increasing emphasis on *jiko sekinin* (self-responsibility).[400] The karaoke regulars, in other words, practiced self-responsibility in their attempts to achieve senses of well-being and *ikigai*, and to flourish in old age, within the contexts of their own life courses and the socioeconomic resources they possessed. With much media and academic discourse on aging in Japan revolving around the possible ballooning of taxpayer-funded long-term elderly care, the regulars' serious leisure pursuit of karaoke at classes and *kissas* can play a crucial role in changing mainstream understandings of what it means to become old, by providing an alternative model and case study of successful aging that has worked within the structural constraints of *jiko sekinin* despite limited financial and social means.

Further questions and directions for studying serious musical leisure in elderly life

If the attainment of senses of well-being and *ikigai* through serious karaoke should be understood from a life course perspective, then there are many possible avenues of future research that can be undertaken to construct a generalized understanding of how

---

[400]   Ogawa, Lifelong Learning in Neoliberal Japan, 64-69.

musical leisure, or leisure in general, can provide conditions for a flourishing life in old age. For example, can musical leisure encourage re-connections with younger generations? Can it promote the discovery of new selves? And perhaps most importantly, what makes people choose musical leisure, or certain musical genres and practices, over others?

Firstly, spending time with Shima, whose individual background differed greatly from other regulars at Ami, strongly suggested the influence of socioeconomic factors of class in influencing the construction of optimal leisure lifestyles. During my time in Japan, I also spent time sporadically in other karaoke venues and groups. One of these groups, NSK, was a gathering of enthusiasts of other popular genres of the 1970s and 1980s, outside of *enka* and *kayōkyoku*. New members like me joined NSK's monthly karaoke meet-ups through introduction by existing members, and we were then added to the group's mailing list and Internet bulletin board, where members were updated on the next meeting and generally kept in touch with each other. Many of the members were around 60 to 70 years old, greatly overlapping with the age demographic of Sachi, Ami and Chou. Yet, they described themselves as developing a preference for other popular genres, such as idol pop, than *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, during their formative adolescent years. In turn, they attributed the formation of these musical preferences as being due to their upbringing in relatively affluent family and school environments in more cosmopolitan areas of the Tokyo and Osaka regions. Some of NSK's members also told me about their other leisure pursuits, such as participation in choirs and sports clubs, similarly to Shima at Ami. I suggest that closer research on the leisure lifestyles this segment of more well-off elderly Japanese, particularly across the different activities that they may engage in seriously, can form the fruitful basis of a comparative study of how class can affect the role leisure may play in elderly Japanese life.

Secondly, continuing the current research with the regulars at Sachi, Ami and Chou for longer periods of time may also yield interesting insights into the role of serious musical leisure in everyday life, as they continue aging from their current status as "young-old" (65 to 74 years old) and "middle-old" (75 to 84 years old) into the "old-old" (85 years old and above).[401] Many students at Chou's classes suggested the value of such longitudinal research, when they discussed their own concerns about continuing their karaoke pursuits as they continued to grow older. These students participated in a volunteering program at elderly care facilities in the classroom's vicinity that was set up by Sensei a few years ago, in which they facilitated karaoke singing sessions. Although I have not examined these volunteer activities in sufficient depth to make substantially grounded analyses that would have contributed to my discussions in this thesis, the students did note a few interesting points they felt from the volunteering sessions as they encouraged and accompanied the users of the elderly care facilities to sing. The students first talked about how it was difficult for them to keep up with some of the songs sung in these sessions, as they were mainly songs from the wartime or immediate postwar period, which they had little knowledge of. They also spoke about their concerns at the laborious effort, or even inability, for some of the elderly care facility users to sing along, and hoped that they would not end up in such as state when they turned 80 or 90. For me, these two points suggest the importance of continued longitudinal research on the karaoke leisure pursuits of the regulars at Sachi, Ami and Chou, to understand if musical preferences and the ability to partake in the core and associated activities of serious karaoke may change as the physiological effects of aging deepen, despite the regulars' best efforts to remain healthy.

Thirdly, I suggest that the questions in the above paragraph be also directed towards younger music and karaoke enthusiasts. During my time in Japan, I

---

[401] Toshiko Kaneda and James M. Raymo, "Trends in the Quantity and Quality of Life at Older Ages in Japan", Traphagan and Knight (eds.), <u>Demographic Change and the Family in Japan's Aging Society</u>, 150.

254

sporadically participated in another karaoke group, K-club. This group consisted of members between 20 to 40 years old, and our choice of songs were almost exclusively Japanese pop and rock songs from the 1990s and 2000s. Again, these song selections greatly involved notions of temporality, as the members often excitedly gushed over how they found each other's choices nostalgic, and shared a common musical memory. In this kind of excitement, we often then selected, one after another, songs from the same singers, genres and time periods, in the kind of semiotic chaining described by Turino. The case of K-club thus raises questions about the content of musical nostalgia across generations, and particularly the possibility of intergenerational connections through music. Is the kind of sociality and well-being promoted through karaoke strictly differentiated along generational lines? This is an important question to consider, given how the genres of *enka* and *kayōkyoku*, and karaoke venues such as classes and *kissas*, occupy precarious positions in the Japanese music industry. While I have described the marginal status of *enka* and *kayōkyoku* in Chapter 1, the sustainability problems of karaoke classes and *kissas* were revealed to me by Sensei and Master at Chou and Ami respectively. Both places struggled to get enough income, customers and/or students to pay off their rent and utilities, but Sensei and Master were more concerned about their inability to find suitable successors to keep Chou and Ami operating after their departures. They had approached a few younger friends on this issue, but had yet to receive a positive reply. Sensei and Master's concerns, in my opinion, highlight the importance of exploring ways in which music can be a forum for intergenerational connections, such that the practices and benefits surrounding serious karaoke pursuits can be enjoyed in a sustainable manner across generations.

Finally, moving the area of inquiry beyond the Japanese context, I believe that research into other similar-sounding genres in East and Southeast Asian regions, such as South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore, will provide new insights into

understanding the musical experiences of aging on a regional level, and trace out the abstract but commonly felt cultural similarities and linkages between these societies. For example, the sounds and themes that characterize *enka* and *kayōkyoku* in Japan are also commonly found in South Korean *trot*, and the *Hokkien-kwa* (or *Taiyu-ge*) found in Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore.[402] The presence of these similar sounding genres is no coincidence: Japanese colonial expansion before the Second World War provided the setting in which the Japanese recording industry set up the apparatuses and connections to start popular music industries in occupied areas, including all the places I have listed.[403] However, as Michael Bourdaghs describes, within Japan "this history of dense interconnections with Asia disappeared" in the postwar period, when "Japanese popular music came to be understood through an imaginary geopolitical map that included only two poles: America and Japan".[404] On the other side, in the postwar period many Taiwanese songwriters working in the Hokkien language, and Korean songwriters working in the Korean language, set their lyrics, which shared the same kind of tragic melancholy, to Japanese melodies left over from the colonial music industry structure which would eventually crystallize into the genres of *enka* and *kayōkyoku.*[405] These practices carry on even today, with Taiwanese and Korean singers performing covers of Japanese *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs in their home languages, to the adulation of a fanbase that comprises a similar demographic to that in Japan: working-class middle- and old-age men and women.[406] Furthermore, in the case of *Hokkien-kwa*, such music

---

[402]   Seung-Ah Lee, "Decolonizing Korean Popular Music: The 'Japanese Color' Dispute over Trot", Popular Music and Society 40(1) (2017), 102-110; Jeremy E. Taylor, "From Transnationalism to Nativism? The Rise, Decline and Reinvention of a Regional Hokkien Entertainment Industry", Inter-Asia Cultural Studies 9(1) (2008), 62-81; Liew Kai Kiun and Brenda Chan, "Vestigial Pop: Hokkien Popular Music and the Cultural Fossilization of Subalternity in Singapore", Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia 28(2) (2013), 272-98.

[403]   Bourdaghs, *Sayonara*, 75-76.

[404]   Ibid., 76.

[405]   Yu-Jeong Chang, "Trot and Ballad: Popular Genres of Korean Pop", Hyunjoon Shin and Seung-Ah Lee (eds.), Made in Korea: Studies in Popular Music (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 64-65; Taylor, "From Transnationalism to Nativism?", 68-69.

[406]   Chang, "Trot and Ballad", 69; Liew and Chan, "Vestigial Pop", 278-80.

products have flowed out to overseas Chinese diaspora, and captured fans in the same demographic segment. With such trends in musical consumption and taste, as well as increasingly aging populations, being shared across these areas, I believe that the inter- or trans-Asian study of elderly musicking surrounding *enka*, *kayōkyoku*, *trot* and *Hokkien-kwa* promises to yield important models of elderly living, that can be applied across cultures and societies. Certainly, this kind of research will promote a grassroots-level sense of commonality, and initiate more collaborative efforts in achieving flourishing experiences of elderly life in East and Southeast Asia.

Bibliography

"*0 Yu 1 Zhi Jian (Guan Jun Jing Xuan Ji): AKB48*" (Between 0 and 1 (Best Hits): AKB48), <u>Spotontrack</u>, http://www.spotontrack.com/album/01-/580147. Accessed on 10 October 2017.

Sara Ahmed, <u>The Promise of Happiness</u> (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

Aikawa Yumi, <u>*Enka no Susume* (On *Enka*)</u> (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 2002).

Anne Allison, <u>Nightwork: Sexuality, Pleasure, and Corporate Masculinity in a Tokyo Hostess Club</u> (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

Anne Allison, <u>Precarious Japan</u> (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013).

Benedict O.G. Anderson, <u>Imagined Communities</u> (London: Verso, 1991).

Anonymous, "*Guriin no Kami Tēpu*" (Green Paper Tape), Shūkan Bunshun (ed.), <u>*Watashi no Shōwashi* (My Showa History)</u> (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1989).

Anonymous, "*Hajimete no Dēto*" (First Date), Shūkan Bunshun (ed.), <u>*Watashi no Shōwashi* (My Showa History)</u> (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1989).

<u>*Asaka-shi Nenrei (Kakurei)-betsu Danjo-betsu Jinkō* (Age- and Sex-Differentiated Population of Asaka City)</u> (Asaka: City of Asaka Municipal Administration Information Systems Section, 2017), http://www.city.asaka.lg.jp/uploaded/attachment/41541.pdf. Accessed on 30 July 2017.

Peter Bailey, "Parasexuality and Glamour: the Victorian Barmaid as Cultural Prototype", <u>Gender and History</u> 2(2), (1990), 148-72.

Mark Banks, "'Being in the Zone' of Cultural Work", <u>Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research</u> 6, (2014), 241-62.

Gregory Bateson, "Style, Grace, and Information in Primitive Art", Bateson (ed.), <u>Steps to an Ecology of Mind</u> (New York, NY: Ballantine, 1972), 128-52.

Zygmunt Bauman, <u>Liquid Modernity</u> (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 1999).

Andy Bennett, <u>Music, Style, and Aging: Growing Old Disgracefully?</u> (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2012).

Ian Biddle & Marie Thompson, "Introduction: Somewhere Between the Signifying and the Sublime", Ian Biddle & Marie Thompson (eds.), <u>Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience</u> (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 1-24.

Torbjörn Bildtgård and Peter Öberg, Intimacy and Ageing: New Relationships in Later Life (Bristol: Policy Press, 2017).

Deirdre Boden and Denise D. Bielby, "The Way It Was: Topical Organisation in Elderly Conversation", <u>Language and Communication</u> 6 (1986), 73-89.

Bon to Pon, *Bon to Pon Ofisharu Burogu* (Bon and Pon's Official Blog), https://lineblog.me/bon_pon/. Accessed on 26 October 2018.

@bonpon511, bon.pon, Instagram webpage, https://www.instagram.com/bonpon511/. Accessed on 26 October 2018.

Michael K. Bourdaghs, Sayonara Amerika, Sayonara Nippon: A Geopolitical Prehistory of J-Pop (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

Pierre Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste (Richard Nice trans.) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).

Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital", John G. Richardson (ed.), Handbook of Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 241-58.

Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, *Yoron Chōsa (Indekkusu)* (Survey on Societal Trends (Index)) (2017). http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/y-index.html#nendobetsu2. Accessed on 30 October 2017.

Yu-Jeong Chang, "Trot and Ballad: Popular Genres of Korean Pop", Hyunjoon Shin and Seung-Ah Lee (eds.), Made in Korea: Studies in Popular Music (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 63-70.

John Clammer, Contemporary Urban Japan (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997).

Fred Coalter (1997), "Leisure Sciences and Leisure Studies: Different Concepts, Same Crisis?", Leisure Sciences 19 (1997), 255-68.

Ian Condry, Hip-Hop Japan: Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalization (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

Florian Coulmas, Population Decline and Ageing in Japan: The Social Consequences (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).

Nikolas Coupland, Justine Coupland and Howard Giles, "Telling Age in Later Life: Identity and Face Implications", Text 9 (1985), 129-51.

Dorothy A. Counts and David R. Counts, Ageing and Its Transformations: Moving Towards Death in Pacific Societies (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985).

Chas Critcher, "A Touch of Class", Chris Rojek, Susan M. Shaw and A.J. Veal (eds.), A Handbook of Leisure Studies (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 271-87.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, <u>Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience; Steps Toward Enhancing the Quality of Life</u> (New York: HarperPerennial, 1990).

Lori A. Custodero, "The Call to Create: Flow Experience in Music Learning and Teaching", David Hargreaves, Dorothy Miell and Raymond MacDonald (eds.), <u>Musical Imaginations: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Creativity, Performance and Perception</u> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 369-84.

"*Daiichi Shōgyō DAM Tsūshin Karaoke*" (First Enterprise DAM Cable Karaoke), <u>*Karaoke Sōgō Shōsha Kabushiki Gaisha Minijūku Kansai* (General Karaoke Trading Company Limited Company Mini-Juke Kansai)</u>, http://www.minijuke.co.jp/karaoke/index3_dam001.html. Accessed on 30 July 2017.

Jason Danely, <u>Aging and Loss: Mourning and Maturity in Contemporary Japan</u> (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014).

Fred Davis, <u>Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia</u> (New York: Free Press, 1979).

Gary DeCoker, "Seven Characteristics of a Traditional Japanese Approach to Learning", John Singleton (ed.), <u>Learning in Likely Places: Varieties of Apprenticeship in Japan</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 68-84.

Tia DeNora, <u>Music in Everyday Life</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Simone de Beauvoir, <u>The Second Sex</u> (H.M. Parshley trans.) (London: Vintage, 1949 [republished 1997]).

Peter Duus, <u>Modern Japan</u> (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

Simon Frith, <u>Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music</u> (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

Fujii Hidetada, <u>*Bōkyō Kayōkyoku Kō: Kōdō Seichō no Tanima de* (Thoughts On Nostalgic *Kayōkyoku*: In the Cracks of High Economic Growth)</u> (Tokyo: NTT Shuppan, 1997).

Kuniko Fujita and Richard Child Hill, "Together and Equal: Place Stratification in Osaka", Pradyumna P. Karan and Kristin Stapleton (eds.), <u>The Japanese City</u> (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 106-33.

Patrick W. Galbraith and Jason G. Karlin (eds.), <u>Idols and Celebrity in Japanese Media Culture</u> (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

Sheldon Garon, <u>Molding Japanese Minds: The State in Everday Life</u> (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 115-46.

Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture", Clifford Geertz (ed.), <u>The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays</u> (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3-30.

GF Ltd., *Shiniā/Kōreisha no Naraigoto ni Kan suru Chōsa* (Survey on *Naraigoto* of Seniors/Elderly) (2011), http://www.senior-promo.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/senior_lesson.pdf, Accessed on 10 February 2017.

Anthony Giddens, Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 1991).

Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni, Housewives of Japan: An Ethnography of Real Lives and Consumerized Domesticity (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

Andrew Gordon, "Managing the Japanese Household: The New Life Movement in Postwar Japan", Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society 4(2) (1997), 245-83.

Edward T. Hall, The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time (New York: Anchor Books, 1983).

Heidi E. Hamilton (ed.), Language and Communication in Old Age: Multidisciplinary Perspectives (New York: Garland, 1999).

Harada Takashi, Katō Keiko, Oda Yoshiko, Uchida Hatsuyo and Ōno Tomoko, "*Kōreisha no Seikatsu Shūkan ni Kan Suru Chōsa (II): Yoka Katsudō to Ikigaikan ni Tsuite*" (Daily Habits of the Elderly (II): Recreational Activities and Feeling of Life), *Nagoya Bunri Daigaku Kiyō* (Nagoya Bunri University Memoirs) 11, (2011), 27-33.

Judith Ann Herd, "Trends and Taste in Japanese Popular Music: A Case-Study of the 1982 Yamaha World Popular Music Festival", Tony Langlois (ed.), Non-Western Popular Music (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 367-88.

"Hit Hit Melody", *Gekkan Karaoke Fan* (Monthly Karaoke Fan) 410 (Osaka: Muse, 2017), 131-66.

Swee-Lin Ho, Friendship and Work Culture of Women Managers in Japan: Tokyo After Ten (London and New York: Routledge, 2018).

Barbara Holthus and Wolfram Manzenreiter (eds.), Life Course, Happiness and Well-being in Japan (New York and Oxford: Routledge, 2017).

Ishihara Risa, *Fuzakeruna Sengyō Shufu* (Stop Messing Around, Professional Housewives) (Tokyo: Bunkasha, 1998).

Ishihara Risa, *Kutabare Sengyō Shufu* (Go to Hell, Professional Housewives) (Tokyo: Bunkasha, 1999).

Ishihara Risa, *Sayonara Sengyō Shufu* (Good-bye, Professional Housewives) (Tokyo: Bunkasha, 2000).

Kimio Itō, "An Introduction to Men's Studies", Mark McLelland and Romit Dasgupta (eds.), Genders, Transgenders and Sexualities in Japan (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 145-52.

Itō Midori, "*Katei Ryōiki eno Kiritsu Jikan Shisō no Shintō: Hani Motoko wo Jirei toshite*" (The Spread of Ideas of Productive Time into the Realm of the Family: Hani Motoko as a Case Study), *Chikoku no Tanjō: Kindai Nihon ni Okeru Jikan Ishiki no Keisei* (The Birth of Lateness: The Formation of Time Consciousness in Modern Japan) (Tokyo: Sangensha, 2001), 189-209.

Marilyn Ivy, Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

Hachiro Iwai, "Shrinking of the Japanese Uniqueness: A Quantitative Analysis of Life Course Changes", Emiko Ochiai and Leo Aoi Hosoya (eds.), Transformation of the Intimate and the Public in Asian Modernity (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2014), 116-43.

Itō Tatsuya, "*'Daini no Jinsei' 50 Dai de Yume ni Chōsen Shita 3 Nin: 'Nenshū Kawarazu' 5 Ji Mae Kitaku no Seikatsu*" (Three People who Pursued their Dreams in Their Fifties as "Second Lives": Lifestyles of Getting Home Before Five "With the Same Annual Salary"), *Purejidento Online* (President Online) (1 July 2018), https://president.jp/articles/-/25439. Accessed on 30 October 2018.

Japan Productivity Center, *Rejā Hakusho 2010* (Leisure White Paper 2010) (Tokyo: Japan Productivity Center, 2010).

Chris Jenks, Transgression (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

Ian Jones and Graham Symon, "Lifelong Learning as Serious Leisure: Policy, Practice and Potential", Leisure Studies 20(4) (2001), 269-83.

Pradyumna P. Karan, "The City in Japan", Pradyumna P. Karan and Kristin Stapleton (eds.), The Japanese City (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 12-39.

"*Karaoke Shūkan Rankin: Shūkei Kikan: 2017/07/23~2017/07/29*" (Karaoke Weekly Ranking: Data Collected for 2017/07/23 to 2017/07/29), Club DAM.com, http://www.clubdam.com/app/dam/dam/ranking/index.html. Accessed on 2 August 2017.

Toshiko Kaneda and James M. Raymo, "Trends in the Quantity and Quality of Life at Older Ages in Japan", John W. Traphagan and John Knight (eds.), Demographic Change and the Family in Japan's Aging Society, 147-75.

Sachiko Kaneko, "Japan's 'Socially Withdrawn Youths' and Time Constraints in Japanese Society: Management and Conceptualization of Time in a Support Group for '*Hikikomori*'", Time and Society 15 (2-3) (2006), 233-49.

Iza Kavedžija, "The Good Life in Balance: Insights from Aging Japan", HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory 5(3) (2015), 135-56.

Kim Yongyon, "*Kōreisha no Renai/Kekkon*" (The Romance and Marriage of the Elderly), Naitō Tetsuo and Tamai Hiroshi (eds.), *Kurōzuappu: Kōrei Shakai* (Close-up: Elderly Society) (Tokyo: Fukumura Shuppan, 2015), 162-9.

Kobayashi Teruyuki, *Jukunen Renai Kōza: Kōrei Shakai no Sei wo Kangaeru* (Lecture on Mature Romance: Thinking about Sex in an Aged Society) (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 2004).

Koizumi Fumio, *Kayōkyoku no Kōzō* (The Structure of *Kayōkyoku*) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1996).

Koizumi Kyōko, *Memoriisukēpu: "Ano Koro" wo Yobiokosu Ongaku* (Memoryscape: Music that Calls Forth "Those Days") (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobo, 2013).

"*Koi Hitoha*" (The Lone Leaf of Love), *Gekkan Uta no Techō* (Monthly Handbook of Songs) 9 (2016), 60.

Kokusei Chōsa Jinkō no Suii (Population Change in the National Census) (Asaka: City of Asaka Municipal Administration Information Systems Section, 2016), http://www.city.asaka.lg.jp/uploaded/attachment/37344.pdf. Accessed on 30 July 2017.

Seung-Ah Lee, "Decolonizing Korean Popular Music: The 'Japanese Color' Dispute over Trot", Popular Music and Society 40(1) (2017), 102-110.

Liew Kai Kiun and Brenda Chan, "Vestigial Pop: Hokkien Popular Music and the Cultural Fossilization of Subalternity in Singapore", Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia 28(2) (2013), 272-98.

Sepp Linhart, "*Sakariba*: Zone of "Evaporation" between Work and Home?", Joy Hendry (ed.) Interpreting Japanese Society: Anthropological Approaches (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 231-42.

Sepp Linhart, "Social Ageing and the Sociology of Ageing", Florian Coulmas et al. (eds.), The Demographic Challenge: A Handbook about Japan (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 125-44.

Michel Maffesoli, The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society (London: Sage, 1996).

Noriko Manabe, The Revolution Will Not be Televised: Protest Music after Fukushima (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations", Paul Kecskemeti (ed.), Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge: Collected Works, Volume 5 (London: Routledge, 1952 [republished 1972]), 276-322.

Maruyama Keizaburo, *Hito wa Naze Utau noka* (Why Do Humans Sing?) (Tokyo: Asuka-shinsha, 1991).

Brian Massumi, "Notes of the Translation and Acknowledgments", Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), xvii-xx.

Gordon Mathews, <u>What Makes Life Worth Living?: How Japanese and Americans Make Sense of Their Worlds</u> (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1996).

Gordon Mathews, "Finding and Keeping a Purpose in Life: Well-Being and *Ikigai* in Japan and Elsewhere", Gordon Mathews and Carolina Izquierdo (eds.), <u>Pursuits of Happiness: Well-Being in Anthropological Perspective</u> (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2010), 167-85.

Gordon Mathews and Carolina Izquierdo, "Introduction: Anthropology, Happiness, and Well-Being", Gordon Mathews and Carolina Izquierdo (eds.), <u>Pursuits of Happiness: Well-Being in Anthropological Perspective</u> (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2010), 1-19.

Jennifer Milioto Matsue, <u>Making Music in Japan's Underground: The Tokyo Hardcore Scene</u> (Oxford & New York: Routledge, 2008).

Yoshiko Matsumoto, "Introduction", Yoshiko Matsumoto (ed.), <u>Faces of Aging: The Lived Experiences of the Elderly in Japan</u> (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 1-13.

Matthew McDonald, Stephen Wearing, and Jess Ponting, "Narcissism and Neo-Liberalism: Work, Leisure, and Alienation in an Era of Consumption", <u>Society and Leisure</u> 30(2) (2007), 489-510.

Minamida Katsuya, "*Ongaku to Sedai no Raifukōsu*" (Music and Generational Life-course), Fujimura Masayuki (ed.), <u>*Inochi to Raifukōsu no Shakaigaku* (Sociology of Life and Life-course)</u> (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 2012), 140-52.

Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, <u>*Heisei 17 Nendo Tokutei Sābisu Sangyō Chōsa* (Survey on Specific Service Industries for the Year Heisei 17)</u> (Tokyo: METI, 2005).

Mita Munesuke, <u>Social Psychology of Modern Japan</u>, Stephen Suloway (trans.) (London: Kegan Paul International, 1992).

Toru Mitsui, "Interactions of Imported and Indigenous Musics in Japan: A Historical Overview of the Music Industry", Alison J. Ewbank and Fouli T. Papageorgiou (eds.), <u>Whose Master's Voice?: The Development of Popular Music in Thirteen Cultures</u> (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1997), 152-74.

Tōru Mitsui, "The Genesis of Karaoke: How the Combination of Technology and Music Evolved", Tōru Mitsui and Shūhei Hosokawa (eds.), <u>Karaoke Around the World: Global Technology, Local Singing</u> (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 29-41.

Tōru Mitsui and Shūhei Hosokawa, "Introduction", Tōru Mitsui and Shūhei Hosokawa (eds.), <u>Karaoke Around the World: Global Technology, Local Singing</u> (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 1-26.

Miyairi Kyōhei, "*Hajimeni*" (Introduction), Miyairi Kyōhei (ed.), <u>*Happyōkai Bunkaron* (The Cultural Theory of Recitals)</u> (Tokyo: Seikyusha, 2015), 1-15.

Miyake Mitsuei, *Karaoke Kokoroe Chō: Karaoke Enka Bunkaron* (Lessons from Karaoke: Karaoke and *Enka* Culturalism) (Tokyo: Hakushoin, 2004).

Kenichi Miyamoto, "Japan's World Cities: Osaka and Tokyo Compared", Kuniko Fujita and Richard Child Hill (eds.), Japanese Cities in the World Economy (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1993), 53-82.

Nagai Takako, "*'Teinen no Katachi' wa Danjo de Chigau! Onnatachi no Daini no Jinsei to wa?*" ("Retired Lifestyles" Differ between Men and Women! What are Women's Second Lives Like?), Aera Dot (22 February 2018), https://dot.asahi.com/wa/2018022100032.html?page=1. Accessed on 30 October 2018.

Jeanne Nakamura and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "The Concept of Flow", Shane J. Lopez and C.R. Snyder (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 89-105.

Nakamura Naofumi, "*Kindai Nihon ni Okeru Tetsudō to Jikan Ishiki*" (Time Consciousness and the Railway System in Modern Japan), Hashimoto Takehiko and Kuriyama Shigehisa (eds.), *Chikoku no Tanjō: Kindai Nihon ni Okeru Jikan Ishiki no Keisei* (The Birth of Lateness: The Formation of Time Consciousness in Modern Japan) (Tokyo: Sangensha, 2001), 17-45.

Kirin Narayan, Everyday Creativity: Singing Goddesses in the Himalayan Foothills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

Keith Negus, Popular Music in Theory: An Introduction (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).

NHK Hōsō Yoron Chōsasho (NHK Broadcasting Survey Department) (ed.), *Gendaijin to Ongaku* (Modern People and Music) (Tokyo: NHK Shuppan, 1982).

Nishimoto Ikuko, "*Kodomo ni Jikan Genshū wo Oshieru: Shōgakkō no Uchi to Soto*" (Teaching Children to Strictly Keep to Time: The Inside and Outside of Elementary Schools), Hashimoto Takehiko and Kuriyama Shigehisa (eds.), *Chikoku no Tanjō: Kindai Nihon ni Okeru Jikan Ishiki no Keisei* (The Birth of Lateness: The Formation of Time Consciousness in Modern Japan) (Tokyo: Sangensha, 2001), 157-87.

Nishimoto Kunio, *Kareki ni Hana ga Saitara, Meiwaku desu ka? Kōreisha Renai Toraburu Soudanshitsu* (Is It So Troublesome that a Withered Tree Blooms Again?: A Consultation Guide for the Troubles from Elderly Romance) (Tokyo: Gentosha, 2013).

Norioka Yoshiko, *Seijin no Amachua Ongaku Katsudō to Gakkō Ongakuka Kyōiku to no Kanren ni Kan suru Kenkyū* (On the Relation Between Adults' Amateur Music Activity and Their School Music Education) (Otsu: Report for grant-in-aid by Japan Ministry of Education, 1995).

Ochiai Emiko, *21 Seki no Kazoku e* (Towards the 21st Century Family) (Tokyo: Yūkaikaku, 1997).

Akihiro Ogawa, Lifelong Learning in Neoliberal Japan: Risk, Community, and Knowledge (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015).

Hiroshi Ogawa, "The Effects of Karaoke on Music in Japan", Tōru Mitsui and Shūhei Hosokawa (eds.), Karaoke Around the World: Global Technology, Local Singing (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 43-52.

Oda Ichirō, Nihonjin wa Itsu kara 'Sekkachi' ni Natta ka (When did Japanese Become Impatient?) (Tokyo: PHP Shinsho, 1997).

Maki Okada, "Musical Characteristics of Enka", Gerald Groemer (trans.), Popular Music 10(3) (1991), 283-303.

Kohei Okamoto, "Suburbanization of Tokyo and the Daily Lives of Suburban People", Pradyumna P. Karan and Kristin Stapleton (eds.), The Japanese City (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 79-105.

Shinobu Oku, "Karaoke and Middle-aged and Older Women", Tōru Mitsui and Shūhei Hosokawa (eds.), Karaoke Around the World: Global Technology, Local Singing (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 53-77.

Nana Okura Gagne, "Romance and Sexuality in Japanese Latin Dance Clubs", Ethnography 15(4), (2014), 446-68.

Ray Oldenburg, The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community (New York: Marlowe & Co., 1999).

Oricon, Nenkan CD Shinguru Rankingu (Yearly CD Single Ranking), http://www.oricon.co.jp/rank/js/y/2016/. Accessed on 30 July 2017.

Ōyama Masahiko, "Wakamono Sabukaruchā to Popyurā Ongaku" (Youth Subculture and Popular Music), Tōya Mamoru (ed.), Popyurā Ongaku e no Manazashi: Uru, Yomu, Tanoshimu (A Look at Popular Music: Selling, Reading, Enjoying) (Tokyo, Keisō Shobo: 2003), 280-303.

Charles Sanders Peirce, Philosophical Writings of Peirce, Justus Buchler (ed.) (New York: Dover, 1955).

Peirce Edition Project, "What is a Sign?", Peirce Edition Project (eds.), The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Volume 2 (1893-1913) (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 4-10.

David W. Plath, Long Engagements: Maturity in Modern Japan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980).

Jennifer Robertson, "The Culture and Politics of Nostalgia: Furusato Japan", International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society 1(4) (1988), 494-518.

Sonia Ryang, Love in Modern Japan: Its Estrangement from Self, Sex and Society (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

Satō Umi, *"Naraigoto Sangyō to Happyōkai"* (The *Naraigoto* Industry and Recitals), Miyairi Kyōhei (ed.), *Happyōkai Bunkaron (The Cultural Theory of Recitals)* (Tokyo: Seikyusha, 2015), 40-66.

Deborah Shamoon, "Recreating Traditional Music in Postwar Japan: a Prehistory of *Enka*", Japan Forum (2013), 1-26.

Deborah Shamoon, "Misora Hibari and the Girl Star in Postwar Japanese Cinema", Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 35(1) (2009), 131-55.

Akitoshi Shimizu, "*Ie* and *Dōzoku*: Family and Descent in Japan", Current Anthropology 28(4) (1987), 85-90.

Shufu to Seikatsu Sha, *Futari no Oshare (Our Fashion)* (Tokyo: Shufu to Seikatsu Sha, 2014).

Christopher Small, Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

Robert J. Smith, "Transmitting Tradition by the Rules: An Anthropological Interpretation of the Iemoto System", John Singleton (ed.), Learning in Likely Places: Varieties of Apprenticeship in Japan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 23-34.

Sonoda Sekiya and Utagawa Kōichi, *"Happyōkai no Rekishi"* (The History of Recitals), Miyairi Kyōhei (ed.), *Happyōkai Bunkaron (The Cultural Theory of Recitals)* (Tokyo: Seikyusha, 2015), 18-37.

Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2015 Japan Census.

Robert A. Stebbins, "Optimal Leisure Lifestyle: Combining Serious and Casual Leisure for Personal Well-Being", Manuel Cuenca Cabeza (ed.), Leisure and Human Development: Proposals for the 6th World Leisure Congress (Bilbao, Spain: University of Deusto, 2000), 101-7.

Robert A. Stebbins, Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2015, first edition 2007).

Robert A. Stebbins, Leisure and Consumption: Common Ground/Separate Worlds (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

Ruth M. Stone, Theory for Ethnomusicology (Oxford & New York: Routledge, 2016).

Sumiyoshi-ku no Kihonteki na Tōkei (Basic Statistics of Sumiyoshi Ward) (Osaka: City of Osaka, 2016), http://www.city.osaka.lg.jp/sumiyoshi/page/0000161694.html. Accessed on 30 July 2017.

Suzuki Jun, "*Futatsu no Jikoku, Mittsu no Rōdō Jikan*" (Two Units of Time Measurement, Three Kinds of Labor Time), Hashimoto Takehiko and Kuriyama Shigehisa (eds.), *Chikoku no Tanjō: Kindai Nihon ni Okeru Jikan Ishiki no Keisei* (The

Birth of Lateness: The Formation of Time Consciousness in Modern Japan) (Tokyo: Sangensha, 2001), 99-121.

Takahashi Jun, *"Sengo Nihon ni okeru Josei no Raifu Kōsu no Henka to Rōdō, Seikatsu ni Tai suru Ishiki: Fukushima Kenritsu A Kōkō Sotsugyōsei he no Kikitori Chōsa kara"* (Changes to Female Life Course and Attitudes to Work and Life in Postwar Japan: From Interviews of Alumni of Fukushima Prefectural A High School), <u>Gyōsei Shakaironshū</u> (Policy Journal of Society) 21(4) (2009), 158-83.

Takemura Tamio, "*1920 Nendai ni Okeru Tetsudō no Jikan Kakumei: Jidō Renketsuki Torikae ni Kanren shite*" (The Railways' Time Revolution in the 1920s: In Association with the Automatic Coupling System), Hashimoto Takehiko and Kuriyama Shigehisa (eds.), <u>*Chikoku no Tanjō: Kindai Nihon ni Okeru Jikan Ishiki no Keisei*</u> (The Birth of Lateness: The Formation of Time Consciousness in Modern Japan) (Tokyo: Sangensha, 2001), 47-75.

Tanimoto Naho, <u>Renai no Shakaigaku: "Asobi" to Romantiku Rabu no Henyō</u> (The Sociology of Love: Changes in "Play" and Romantic Love) (Tokyo: Seikyusha, 2008).

Jeremy E. Taylor, "From Transnationalism to Nativism? The Rise, Decline and Reinvention of a Regional Hokkien Entertainment Industry", <u>Inter-Asia Cultural Studies</u> 9(1) (2008), 62-81.

Tennis School Noah, <u>Ryōkin</u> (Prices), https://noah-tengachaya.com/price/, accessed on 10 April 2017.

Leng Leng Thang, "Singing to More Good Years: Karaoke as Serious Leisure for Older Persons in Singapore", <u>Indian Journal of Gerontology</u> 20(1&2) (2006), 67-80.

Benny Tong, "A Tale of Two Stars: Understanding the Establishment of Femininity in *Enka* through Misora Hibari and Fuji Keiko", <u>Situations: Cultural Studies in the Asian Context</u> 8(1) (2015), 23-44.

Alison McQueen Tokita, <u>Japanese Singers of Tales: Ten Centuries of Performed Narrative</u> (London and New York: Routledge, 2015).

John W. Traphagan, <u>The Practice of Concern: Ritual, Well-Being, and Aging in Rural Japan</u> (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2004).

John W. Traphagan and John Knight, "The Study of the Family in Japan: Integrating Anthropological and Demographic Approaches", Traphagan and Knight (eds.), <u>Demographic Change and the Family in Japan's Ageing Society</u> (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 3-23.

Thomas Turino, <u>Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation</u> (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Yohko Tsuji, "Railway Time and Rubber Time: The Paradox in the Japanese Conception of Time", <u>Time and Society</u> 15 (2-3) (2006), 177-95.

Tsunoyama Sakae, *Tokei no Shakaishi (Social History of the Clock)* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1984).

Ueno Chizuko (ed.), *Shufu Ronsō o Yomu: Zen Kiroku (Reading the Housewife Debate: All Records)* (Tokyo: Keisei Shobo, 1982).

Ueno Naoki, *Karaoke wo Motto-motto Umaku Miseru Hon (Book for Singing Karaoke Much Better)* (Tokyo: KK Longsellers, 1993).

Jose van Dijck, "Users Like You? Theorizing Agency in User-Generated Content", Media Culture Society 31(1) (2009), 41-58.

Willem van Kattendijke, *Nagasaki Kaigun Denshūjō no Hibi (Days at the Nagasaki Naval Training Center)*, Mizuta Nobutoshi (trans.) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1964).

Wajima Yūsuke, *Tsukurareta "Nihon no Kokoro" Shinwa: "Enka" wo Meguru Sengo Taishū Ongakushi (The Created Mythos of 'The Heart of Japan': A History of Postwar Popular Music Focusing on "Enka")* (Tokyo: Kōbunsha Shinsho, 2010).

Hideo Watanabe, "Changing Adult Learning in Japan: The Shift from Traditional Singing to Karaoke", International Journal of Lifelong Education 24(3) (2005), 257-67.

Mark P. Whitaker, "Ethnography as Learning: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Writing Ethnographic Accounts", Anthropological Quarterly 69(1) (1996), 1-13.

Monika Wilińska & Els-Marie Anbäcken, "In Search of the Everyday Life of Older People in Japan: Reflections Based on Scholarly Literature", Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology 28(4) (2013), 435-51.

Christine R. Yano, "The Marketing of Tears: Consuming Emotions in Japanese Popular Song", Timothy J. Craig (ed.), Japan Pop! Inside the World of Japanese Popular Culture (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 60-74.

Christine R. Yano, Tears of Longing: Nostalgia and the Nation in Japanese Popular Song (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2002).

Christine R. Yano, "Covering Disclosures: Practices of Intimacy, Hierarchy, and Authenticity in a Japanese Popular Music Genre", Popular Music and Society 28(2) (2005), 193-205.

Yano Research Institute, *Okeiko/Naraigoto Ichiba ni Kan suru Chōsa wo Jisshi (Survey on the Okeiko/Naraigoto Market)* (6 July 2016), https://www.yano.co.jp/press/pdf/1551.pdf, Accessed on 10 February 2017.

Yoshikawa Seiichi, *Kanashimi wa Nihonjin: Enka Minzokuron (Grief is Japanese: Enka Ethnology)* (Tokyo, Ongaku no Tomo Sha: 1992).

Masae Yuasa, "Time for Housework and Time for '*Oshigoto*': Japanese Housewives in a Network Business", Time and Society 15 (2-3) (2006), 215-32.

Zaibatsu Hōjin Yamaha Ongaku Fukkyōkai (Yamaha Music Foundation) (ed.), *Ongaku Raifusutairu Web Ankēto Hōkokushō 2006 Shiryohen* (Music Lifestyle Web Survey 2006 Report: Data Section) (2006), http://www.yamaha-mf.or.jp/onken/. Accessed on 1 June 2017.

Zenkoku Karaoke Jigyosha Kyokai, *Karaoke Hakusho* (Karaoke White Paper) (n.d.).