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# Cultural Migrants from Japan: Youth, Media, and Migration in New York and London

*Yuiko Fujita*

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## CULTURAL MIGRANTS FROM JAPAN

YOUTH, MEDIA, AND MIGRATION IN NEW YORK AND LONDON

YUIKO FUJITA



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**Yuiko Fujita : Cultural Migrants from Japan: Youth, Media, and Migration in New York and London** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cultural Migrants from Japan:

## Youth, Media, and Migration in New York and London:

In recent years, a large number of young Japanese have been migrating to New York and London for the purpose of engaging in cultural production in areas such as dance, fashion, DJing, film, and pop arts in the hope of "making it" as artists. In the past, this kind of cultural migration was restricted to relatively small, elite groups, such as American artists in Paris in the 1920's, but *Cultural Migrants from Japan* looks at the phenomenon of tens of thousands of ordinary, middle-class Japanese youths who are moving to these cities for cultural purposes, and it questions how this shift in cultural migration can be explained. Following Appadurai's theory of the relation between electronic media and mass migration, and using ethnographies of twenty-two young migrants over a five year period, Fujita examines how television, film, and the internet influence this mobility. She challenges emerging orthodoxies in the general discussion of transnationalism, demonstrating the disjunction migrants experience between the pre-existing expectations created by media exposure, and the reality of creating and living as a "transnational" artist participating in a global community. Intersecting long-term, multi-sited ethnography with emerging transnational and globalization theory, *Cultural Migrants from Japan* is a timely look at the emerging shift in concepts of national identity and migration.

This elegantly-constructed and methodologically-innovative ethnography which looks at the experiences of young Japanese transient migrants in New York and London comes up with some surprising conclusions. Not least among these is that one of the main effects of their overseas experience is a renegotiation or heightening of their Japanese 'national' identity rather than the development of a sense of transnationalism. (Roger Goodman, University of Oxford) Fujita has undertaken an ingenious study: looking at immigration through the eyes of temporary immigrants. Her lively analysis provides immigration researchers with further evidence of the limits of transnationalism, and media researchers will be reminded that for some young people, the realities of living abroad shatter the initial media and other romantic images that are often created about foreign countries. (Herbert J. Gans, Robert S. Lynd Professor Emeritus of Sociology, Columbia University; author of *Making Sense of America*) This dense academic dissertation from Yuiko Fujita doesn't seem like a typical summer read, but it is a sharp and illuminating account of 'cultural migrants' from Japan, who are defined as 'people who migrate for cultural purposes other than economic or political ones in the globalizing world today.' The result is a smart and concise account of a group of people who re-identify themselves instead of assimilating. The candor of each person interviewed is refreshing, and the interviews conducted in English are deeply personal. It's a satisfying and sympathetic read, scholarly but accessible and interesting to anyone interested in modern Japan... (Sarah Yuen Nichi Bei Times, Nichi Bei Times Contributor, July 30-Aug 5, 2009) Young Japanese migrants in the West are constantly remaking themselves and Japanese cultural identity. With great sensitivity and insight, Yuiko Fujita brings their experiences and visions to life, using an attractive mix of multi-sited ethnography and migrant life histories. (Adrian Favell, Centre dtudes europennes de Sciences Po) This dense academic dissertation from Yuiko Fujita doesn't seem like a typical summer read, but it is a sharp and illuminating account of 'cultural migrants' from Japan, who are defined as 'people who migrate for cultural purposes other than economic or political ones in the globalizing world today.' The result is a smart and concise account of a group of people who re-identify themselves instead of assimilating. The candor of each person interviewed is refreshing, and the interviews conducted in English are deeply personal. It's a satisfying and sympathetic read, scholarly but accessible and interesting to anyone interested in modern Japan. (Sarah Yuen Nichi Bei Times, Nichi Bei Times Contributor, July 30-Aug 5, 2009) Fujita's work significantly contributes to the understanding of a current trend in international migration in which the media play a critical role in constructing a positive image of the West. This case study provides a detailed analysis of Fujita's subjects' perceptions of the West, as well as the shifts in perception produced by their migration experience. (*Journal of Asian Studies*) Fujita's ethnographic description of young Japanese people in both cities successfully recaptures their lived transnational world. Fujita's work should therefore be regarded as one of the starting points of theorizing post-industrialized, individualized, and 'cultural' understandings of contemporary migration. (*International Journal of Japanese Sociology*) This book intriguingly shows how young Japanese sojourners in two global cities develop their sense of being Japanese.... Using detailed content analysis of Japanese transcripts from her interviews, the author vividly describes the process of changing identities.... Fujita's detailed explanation about the changing identities of young Japanese abroad makes us reconsider the relations of contemporary Japanese and the West. How can we really communicate beyond the barriers of ethnicity, gender, and class and, furthermore, beyond the boundaries between the powerful and the powerless? Can a Japanese nonelite individual have a globalized identity and find space to live between national boundaries? Fujita's book is invaluable for beginning to rethink these longstanding but fundamental questions. (*Journal of Japanese Studies*) About the Author Yuiko Fujita is associate professor in the Institute for Media and Communications at Keio University.