



## Participating Scholars

### Audrey Kobayashi

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**Dr.** Audrey Kobayashi is the Director of the Institute of Women's Studies and a full professor at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada. She teaches courses in racism and gender and is well known for her publications on issues of human rights, immigration, gender, racism, and on the history of Japanese Canadians. She is a National Director of the National

Association of Japanese Canadians, a member of the team that negotiated Japanese Canadian redress, and a member of the Advisory Committee of the Japanese Canadian National Museum and Archives.

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### Research Proposal Abstract

#### *A Demographic Analysis of the Japanese-Canadian Population with a Focus on Immigrant Women*

Dr. Audrey Kobayashi's research has two major objectives: (1) to analyze the Japanese-Canadian population based on recent census surveys (1991-1996) and establish contemporary trends in population growth, distribution and make-up; (2) to focus on recent women immigrants from Japan, to examine their integration within Japanese Canadian society. In 1996, the contemporary population 61,000 Japanese Canadians exhibited the following major trends: (a) concentration in major cities (especially Toronto and Vancouver), and de-population of the rural areas; (b) increased secularization and professionalism; (c) intermarriage rate of over 90 percent; and (d) immigration rate of approximately 1:60 per year, maintaining the shin-ijusha (new migrant) population at about 16 percent. Each of these major demographic trends has significant implications for community organization, provision of services, cultural and social development, and changing Japanese Canadian identity. This research project will explore these trends with a specific focus on recent immigrants. The study will build upon previous work to explore their role in community formation, their integration within the workplace, and the social/cultural issues they face as a group of new Canadians.

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#### Migration as a Negotiation of Gender: Recent Japanese Immigrant Women in Canada

The migrant stream of Japan has a decided gender imbalance, as nearly 2/3 of the migrants are women. This research focuses on single women recently immigrated into Canada, called shin-ijuusha women.

Most of them live in the large cities of Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. They are highly educated and the largest proportion is employed in the arts or the human service professions. Many originally came to Canada as students, but after completion of their degrees, discouraged by the weak prospects of finding fulfilling jobs in Japan, which

has the exceptionally high level of patriarchy, stayed on in Canada as permanent residents. Their average age on immigration is approximately 30 years. The majority marry in Canada.

This paper examines whether their choice to move to Canada has the desired effects. The analysis has two parts. The first is to present a demographic overview of the characteristics of Japanese immigrant women in Canada, in order to gain a larger picture of who and where the women are, and what are their major characteristics. The second, to be presented in a subsequent paper, is based on focus group meetings with Japanese immigrant women in Toronto, Ontario, to examine in more detail and in a qualitative manner the experiences behind the migration statistics.

Intermarriage is a way of life for most Shin-Ijuusha women. Some women find that the degree of patriarchy in marriage is not significantly less than it would have been in Japan. The rate of divorce among Japanese immigrant women is higher than that among Canadian-born women of Japanese descent. There is a significant network of single mothers, who have serious needs for social services.

Education: The educational level of Shin-Ijuusha women is very high. There are some distinct patterns by age groups. The older women, most of whom are pre-War immigrants, did not have the opportunity to pursue further education, and came to Canada for reasons other than those of education and career opportunities. During the 1970s and 1980s, wealthier women came to Canada to receive international education. Recently, a larger number of women have immigrated in order to find work directly, especially in the service industries such as restaurants and stores catering to Japanese tourists.

Family Issues: Intermarried women face issues of cultural identity for both themselves and their children, and a range of issues that arise in an intercultural household, including racism from the larger Canadian society. Another major question concerns the children's relationships with their grandparents and other relatives in Japan. Mothers often try to take them for summer holidays. In Japan, too, however, children of intermarriage often face discrimination. The relationship between Japanese immigrant women and their parents is another significant family issue. Those who do not have siblings to care for parents face the very difficult situation of having to make arrangements for parental care.