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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

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Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Oshima, G. (2023). Societal Envisioning of Biographical AIDS Activism among Gay People Living with HIV in Japan. *Historical Social Research*, 48(4), 304-329. <https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.48.2023.49>

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Societal Envisioning of Biographical AIDS Activism among Gay People Living with HIV in Japan

Gaku Oshima*

Abstract: »Gesellschaftliche Vorstellungen von biografischem AIDS-Aktivismus unter schwulen Menschen mit HIV in Japan«. The purpose of this paper is to examine the hidden history of AIDS activism among the sexual minority of those living with HIV (PLWH) who practiced societal envisioning from the 1990s to 2000s. The concept of “societal envisioning [*shakai-koso*社会構想]” has been developed by sociologists in Japan. Based on research data from the life and oral histories of 22 PLWH, two biographies and related life documents were examined. One biography focused on the founder of a gay-content magazine, the other on the editor of a medical information journal for PLWH. The former aimed to create a gay community through societal envisioning in cooperation with neighbors and visitors. The latter not only collected medical information but also used biographies to cultivate hope for survival and empowerment. By focusing on the concept of societal envisioning, this article contributes to Global Sociology as a way of exploring and discussing how people can confront and enable solidarity to change the lives of those who are colonized, oppressed, and marginalized by prejudice and discrimination.

Keywords: Biography, societal envisioning, sexual minorities, people living with HIV.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Sociology of Societal Envisioning

In the field of Global Sociology, one goal is to criticize the continued hegemony of specific sociological norms in Western sociology and to introduce Southern theory to the Global North in order to correct inequalities in the reproduction of knowledge. While Japan is not considered part of the Global South, sociological theories from Japan are rarely discussed in Western sociology. As Raewyn Connell points out that such as “the language of

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‘North/South’ and ‘East/West’ rightly argues that, through all the ambiguities of terminology, the realities of global division show through. All these expressions refer to the long-lasting pattern of inequality in power, wealth and cultural influence that grew historically out of European and North American imperialism” (Connell 2007, 212). We are at a point where concrete sociological theories and concepts based on various local histories and knowledge that have not been on the surface of Global Sociology need to be addressed.

This paper utilizes one of the key concepts that has been developed in Japan, the “sociology of societal envisioning.”¹ It focuses on the practical theory of people’s conception of society based on their biographies. By doing so, this paper aims to contribute to the production of knowledge to bridge the gaps in Global Sociology.

The sociology of societal envisioning has no absolute definition but has become an umbrella concept in sociology based on how much societal envisioning is embedded in the existential reality of those who live in a particular society. One of Japan’s leading sociologists, Munetsuke Mita, who also writes under the pseudonym Yusuke Maki, has explored and described the concept as follows:

The universal conflict of interests as a manifestation of the existence of civil society can be overcome in principle only through the liberation and abundance of desire, not through its suppression and restriction. The attachment to wealth, power, and glory is not to be seen as an enlargement of desire, but as the poverty of desire. To present liberated and abundant desire concretely as something attractive even in the eyes of these people. To liberate adversaries through the attractiveness of the way of life, and to undermine one after another the self-evident premises of civil society as a system of egoism.² (Maki 1977, 31)

The task of the sociology of the future is twofold. One is to predict the future, and the other is to envision the future. In the age of extremes, predicting the future coincided directly with knowing a better world because it was an era when it was sufficient to pursue a linear course of progress. Today, at a significant turning point in history, foreseeing the future is a prerequisite for choosing and envisioning the future. It requires turning round a system that relies on the insane criterion of the self-purpose of “growth,” just before stepping into the minefield of the risk society. To build a system that returns to the original criteria of human happiness equaling a balanced mind. To build an integrated economic, political, and cultural system based on health, love,

¹ The term “societal envisioning” is an English translation of the Japanese term [shakai-koso 社会構想]. There is no definitive English translation yet. For example, between 1995 and 1997, leading sociologists compiled a collection of contemporary sociological essays in 26 volumes and one separate volume. The final volume was entitled “The Sociology of Societal Envisioning (Shakai-koso no Shakaigaku)” (Inoue et al. 1996).

² The original text is entirely in Japanese and is translated into English. The same applies to other quotations.

and the ability to appreciate the simple bliss of “just living” in nature, in order to open a vista point on a plateau of stable equilibrium where the glorious achievements of “modernity” can be sustained and enjoyed. Sociology as a “place” can be envisioned as a collaborative inquiry that transcends disciplines, borders, and generations to perpetuate such a turn and construction (Mita 2014, 33).

In the aftermath of the period of postcoloniality and rapid economic growth, Mita/Maki was interested in what kind of society to envision. For instance, Mita analyzed the memoir of the anonymous “N.N.,” the 19-year-old youth responsible for the serial shootings that shook Japan from 1968 to 1969, at the end of the period of rapid economic growth.

Mita/Maki’s perspective that the urban space can be viewed as the totality of the interconnectedness of each individual human being with nature provides one direction for integrating sociology and biographical research, as follows:

A city is not, for example, a silent structure composed of two or five classes or regions. A city is the totality of a dense chain of irreducible absolutes of individuality, actions, and relations in myriad crowded multitudes of people trying to “exist without end.” (Mita [1973] 2008, 7)

Mita examined society in Japan during the period of rapid economic growth in the 1960s through 1970s by focusing on the life history of a youth from a poor rural village, including his memoirs about his attempts to “live without end.” According to Mita, rural communities in Japan were stagnant domestic colonies, silently supplying cheap labor for the urban capital. The social climate of remote villages created a fundamental cleavage in the consciousness of those involved, imprinting them with a deep self-hatred and aversion to existence. Although the youth was trying to escape the stagnant life of this dismantled community, he was faced instead with the “logic of the city,” which forced him to lead a different kind of stagnant life as just one of a cheap and replaceable labor force. This concept was paralleled by Paul Willis’s discovery a few years later of a reproductive structure in which school culture is predicated on middle-class culture, and working-class children willingly become working class themselves by proactively seeing its hypocrisy and rebelling against it (Willis 1977). This social structure and change in the colonization of the countryside (the periphery) by the center – that is, the specific aspects and mechanisms of the link between the logic of the city and the perceived subject of countless individual lives, and the location of the ruptures in this structure – propagated research that emphasized the importance of foreseeing the future and conceiving it as a task for sociology (Mita 2014, 33).

Thus, Mita/Maki analyzed the case of N.N., as Eva Bahl and Johannes Becker had shown the “explanatory power of case studies” (Bahl and Becker 2020, 9) based on “the force of example” (Flyvbjerg 2006, 228). Furthermore, he also examined the Native American worldview through the works of

Carlos Castaneda, an American writer who studied anthropology and conducted fieldwork in India, Mexico, Brazil, Peru, and Bolivia between 1973 and 1976. An important role of sociology is to further the understanding of societal envisioning for the future of the late- and post-modern world and ways of life through the lives of people with various health-related, economic, political, and religious conditions, ethnicities, localities, genders, and sexualities.

1.2 Societal Envisioning among People Living with HIV in Sexual Minority Communities in Japan

The purpose of this paper is to introduce and examine the concept of “societal envisioning,” which has been developed in the field of sociology in Japan. It highlights the hidden history of AIDS activism among the sexual minority of people living with HIV (PLWH) who practiced societal envisioning. In particular, biography emerges as a site of struggle for “societal envisioning” in the lives of those who are colonized, oppressed, and marginalized by various prejudices and discrimination. As seen below, individuals engage in societal envisioning as well.

In Japan, the official history of HIV/AIDS (hereafter referred to as “HIV”) ostensibly began with the certification of male homosexuals as “the first patients” in 1985. However, it has been pointed out that behind this recognition was the intention of the Ministry of Health and Welfare and pharmaceutical companies to cover up the medical-related harms of HIV infection caused by the untested blood products that had been used for hemophiliacs up to that point (Kazama and Kawaguchi 2010, 14). After the Matsumoto case was reported in November 1986, the Kobe case in January 1987, and the Kochi case in February of the same year (Ikeda 1993, 21-5), the chairperson of the Ministry of Health and Welfare’s Expert Committee on AIDS Measures announced that Japan was in the “first year of AIDS,” causing an “AIDS panic” throughout the country. Until then, in reporting HIV, the state and media had attempted to portray HIV as not existing among heterosexual Japanese, thus relating HIV to gay people, foreigners, and sex workers (e.g., Miller 1994; Shingae 2013; Ishida 2014). There was no mention of “homosexuals” (gays) in newspaper headlines reporting HIV, only in tabloid magazines where the disease was intensively reported as “homo.” People living with HIV/AIDS (hereafter referred to as “PLWH”) were branded with the stigma of combined discrimination and prejudice related to sexuality, nationality, gender, and occupation that intersected with HIV. This made it extremely difficult for them to come out publicly, and they were forced to remain silent (Oshima 2020b). Indeed, “male homosexuals and foreign sex workers were not the ones to be protected by the measures, but were targeted for exclusion while being stigmatized and made visible” (Kazama and Kawaguchi 2010, 18). This discrimination was based on the perception that PLWH were the most “dangerous” of

all in the context of the spread of HIV. From the beginning of the history of AIDS, PLWH's lives were characterized by exclusion and invisibility by the state, public health care systems, and the media, a stigma that continues to this day (Naikaku-Fu [Cabinet Office] 2018). Especially notable were the denial of medical care, such as hemodialysis, dental treatment, and admission to nursing homes; discrimination in employment; and defamation posts on anonymous electronic bulletin boards that identified individuals. Even now that U=U³ is scientifically evident, the enduring negative effects based on old images persist (e.g., Nihon Keizai Shimbun, July 14, 2018, evening edition).

In academia, details of various social movements, such as direct protest by the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) of the rights-based social movement and the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) to build communities of care in the U.S., have gradually been revealed in many countries around the world. For instance, in East Asia, China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, the *tongzhi* (sameness+comrade) movement of the 1990s enabled queer collaborations across distinctions of gender and sexuality (Chou 2000). Although governments were slow to initiate a national campaign, a modern AIDS campaign gradually took shape through the cooperation of the nonprofit sector in partnership with public institutions (Micollier 2003). For example, in Taipei, the HIV testing and counseling center was established in the LGBTQ district of the Red House area, which had been built during the former Japanese occupation (Hsieh 2019). In Korea, PLWH cannot expect queer-friendly medical care and still face strong stigma and the denial of medical services (Han 2016).

However, new perspectives have been developed in recent years. For instance, while traditional research focuses on biomedical approaches, such as HIV testing, AIDS education, condom distribution, and the provision of anti-HIV therapy (ART), it is significant that research also focuses on spiritual healing, building communities of care and support, fostering gender equality, and changing social structures. In particular, the role of long-term community building played by religion and management of everyday life in African countries interfaces with both state and global forces (Burchardt, Patterson, and Rasmussen 2013). According to another study in Canada in the 1980s and 1990s, "[b]y regarding HIV as a disability, the caregiving activism to meet access needs, to counter stigma, and to connect individual body problems to larger struggles for antiracism, access to health care, and decolonization links ongoing histories of HIV activism to broader transnational movements" (Fink 2020, 3).

In Japan, previous sociological studies have tended to focus on, firstly, the life stories of iatrogenic HIV infection of hemophilia patients (e.g., Yunyū

³ Abbreviation for Undetectable = Untransmittable. Since 2016, the scientific view that HIV cannot be sexually transmitted to others (Untransmittable) from HIV-positive individuals who receive effective anti-HIV treatment and whose blood HIV levels are continuously maintained below the detection limit (Undetectable) has spread globally.

Ketsueki Seizai ni yoru HIV Kansen Mondai Chōsa Kenkyū Iinkai 2009), and, secondly, the rights-based approach, e.g., in gay studies (Vincent, Kazama, and Kawaguchi 1997). Few studies have focused on the lives of the PLWH sexual minority (Inoue 2013).

The concept and sociology of societal envisioning contribute to Global Sociology in order to integrate postcolonial critiques and theory-building through comparative perspectives, especially by focusing outside “the West.” This paper aims to elucidate the hidden history of how people living with illness and disability deal with uncertainty and nurture hope by highlighting another history of the HIV-positive sexual minority, who are actively involved in the fight against AIDS and are practicing societal envisioning.

What is important here is that this conception of societal envisioning is based on the idea that, when confronted with an opportunity to “encounter (or be forced to encounter) an event that cannot be fully explained by one’s own theoretical framework,” as evidenced by earthquakes, nuclear accidents, COVID-19, and the current Russian invasion of Ukraine, “one is forced to fundamentally rethink one’s way of thinking” at the very site where the event takes place. In other words, sociology is required to create or revise “historical social theories that are conditioned by the specificity of the case and the temporal and spatial limitations of the situation” (Miura and Yoshii 2012, 181-2) as a social task.

Until the advent of antiretroviral treatment (ART) in 1997, which was distributed fully in Japan by around 2000, treatment was strongly tinged with life-prolonging therapy due to the lack of effective medicines. In combination with the refusal to accept PLWH, many hospitals did not actively recommend treatment (Ikeda 1993, 23-5, 232-5; Tokyo HIV Litigation Plaintiffs 1995, 228). Even in the early 2000s, it was recommended that ART should not be initiated until a time when further delay in treatment would affect the patient’s life expectancy (HIV Kansenshō oyobi Ketsuyūbyō ni okeru Team Iryō no Kōchiku to Iryō Suijun no Kōjō wo mezashita Kenkyū Han 2023, 9).

Given this situation, some positive patients did not simply give up; instead, they faced the situation by actively seeking and working on hope for their survival. Specific clarification of these aspects through biographies could prove extremely important in illuminating how those living amid various difficulties in life dealt with uncertainty and nurtured hope.

2. Methods

The biographical research and analysis were conducted in two phases. In Phase I, I recruited 22 PLWH and conducted life/oral history interviews and

documentary auto/biographical research of their lives in 2015–16.⁴ In this study, which covers Phase II, the overriding goal of the work was to explain societal envisioning among PLWH. One piece of research focused on Hiroshi Hasegawa⁵/Bearine de Pink, the founder of the gay magazine *G-men*⁶ and the author of the autobiography “Confessions of Mrs Bear” (Hasegawa 2005). The other focused on Mr. A, editor of the medical information magazine for PLWH, the *SHIP Newsletter*⁷ (hereafter, “*SHIP*”). T Memoirs in the *SHIP Newsletter* of Mr. B, C, and D were referenced by Mr. A. I collected all volumes of the magazine *G-men* in the collection of the National Diet Library (from the first issue in May 1995 to Issue No. 126 in September 2006) and *SHIP*, a total of all 23 issues of the medical information newsletter *SHIP* (from the first issue in December 1993 to July 1999) given by Mr. A during an interview with him. These documents of human lives constitute part of their life histories and were analyzed primarily in Phase II. I analyzed these data from the perspective of “critical humanism” (Plummer 2000) as follows. First, how did PLWH cultivate hope amid suffering (*human subjectivity and creativity*)? I listened to practical knowledge and people’s marginal experiences and lessons, which made it difficult for them to share them and be heard (these were concrete human experiences from their perspective on *social and economic organization*). They were challenged by the desire to change the oppressive aspects of life that silence and marginalize some people and privilege others (Tierney 2000, 549). “[I]n all of this, it [critical humanism] espouses an epistemology of radical, pragmatic empiricism which takes seriously the idea that knowing – always limited and partial – should be grounded in experience” (*intimate*

⁴ I complied with the “Code of Conduct for Research Activities at Hitotsubashi University” and the “Graduate Student Research Ethics Code of Conduct, Graduate School of Sociology, Hitotsubashi University.” In addition, I applied for and obtained approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the Open University of Japan (Notice No. 13 in FY 2015). For more on this research, see Oshima (2020a).

⁵ Hiroshi Hasegawa/Bearine de Pink was born in 1951 and died in 2022. After graduating from Keio University, he worked at an advertising agency and publishing company before becoming a freelance magazine editor and planner. He contracted HIV in 1988, was confirmed to be positive in 1992, and began patient group activities and lectures. He worked as an AIDS activist and performed poetry readings as the drag queen “Bearine de Pink.” He produced the gay magazine *Badi* and was editor-in-chief of *G-men*. In addition, he founded the Japan HIV Positive Network Jump Plus (JaNP+) in 2002 and appeared in the movie *Watashi wa Watashi* [I am who I am] in 2017. He passed away on March 7, 2022. Bearine de Pink (a.k.a. Ms. Pink Bear) was a “transvestite poet. Age unknown, the only drag queen in Japan who has disclosed their HIV infection. Pink Bear is a drag queen, but due to the naturally lazy nature, they rarely performed lip-syncing and other technical shows, and instead read ‘transvestite poetry,’ poems expressing sexuality and AIDS issues. She suddenly appeared in the club scene at the end of the 1990s and began to deliver their message about AIDS in a domineering manner in a fun atmosphere. While confusing much of the audience, they were enthusiastically supported by a very limited segment of the population” (Hasegawa 2005, 190).

⁶ For more on *G-men*, see Oshima (2019).

⁷ For more on *SHIP*, See Oshima (2020b).

familiarity; moral and political role) based on historical experiences (Plummer 2000, 14; Plumer 2021).

Finally, *G-men* and *SHIP* are suitable for analyzing the proactive involvement of PLWH because these are magazines in which PLWH were consistently involved from the conception of the first issue to the editing stage. *Badi*, a major gay magazine in Japan from the mid-1990s to late 2010s, was also founded by Hiroshi Hasegawa. Saito (2018) conducted a discourse analysis of *Badi* from the perspective of “the configuration of gay identity.” In addition, it is said that “*G-men*’s media strategy of grasping self-affirmation through eroticism was a great success” (Fushimi 1999, 99), though it has rarely been discussed in any previous studies. *SHIP* is a periodical published by a group of volunteers known as the Stay Healthy Information Project. This magazine was chosen as the main subject of analysis because it was the only nonprofit medical information magazine about the daily lives of HIV-positive people at that time when PLWH were actively involved in its production.

3. Launching a Gay Magazine as AIDS Activism: The Life History of Hiroshi Hasegawa

3.1 Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

The gay HIV activist, Hiroshi Hasegawa, thought he had contracted HIV in 1988. He happened to meet Katsumi Ohira in 1992 at the Institute of Medical Science in the University of Tokyo; Katsumi Ohira later appeared in a class action brought by hemophiliacs with HIV against the pharmaceutical industries and government as a representative of the Habataki Welfare Organization and the Tokyo plaintiffs’ group. In the life-/oral-history interview with Hasegawa, he considered this encounter “inevitable” because there were few other HIV clinics for hemophiliacs at the time. “Hemophilia patients, especially from eastern Japan, and the Tokyo plaintiffs group rallied around their attending physician,” and “people from all over Japan, from Hokkaido to Kagoshima, came to the institute for HIV treatment, traveling by plane.” Under these circumstances, Hasegawa asked Ohira, “When AIDS becomes bad, does it make your legs weak?” Ohira and others told him kindly, “No, we called it hemophilia, and he [Ohira] told us about the problem of arthritis (which causes severe pain).” Hasegawa also captured the state of medical care at that time as follows: “In fact, even the stiff-armed doctors at the University of Tokyo were encountering AIDS as a social disease for the first time. Many hemophiliacs were infected through one medical system’s malpractice with respect to hemophilia. Then they met gay people, a group of people who were

outside the mainstream of society, after which their view of medicine changed. There was nothing they could do at that time, to put it bluntly.”

In those days, doctors could do “nothing” to treat HIV as a disease, as there was no effective treatment. It was impossible to author a story that confronted HIV as a biomedical model. This is precisely the reason for the passage in Hasegawa’s biography where he describes people living with HIV as a “group outside the mainstream of society”; in other words, through “the illness narratives” (Kleinman 1988), the medical profession can understand illness as social suffering and at the same time become aware of the limitations of the biomedical model, in which nothing can be done.

Rather, Hasegawa gained empowerment because hemophiliacs had previously organized patient groups and had access to this resource. This encounter with Ohira, a victim of HIV infection by untreated blood products, marked the starting point of Hasegawa’s “activism.” He was prompted to join a patient group for the first time as a patient with a sexually transmitted infection and eventually to talk about his sexuality in a medical staff study group. Hasegawa’s previous job was as a magazine editor for a major publishing company. Gay adult video sales were exploding, the commercial scale of which was expanding dramatically at this time, as LGBTQ districts, such as Shinjuku Ni-Chome, overflowed with people on weekend nights. During this period, two separate gay video producers and store owners asked him to supervise the launch of the gay magazine *Badi* in September 1994. When an editorial planning meeting was held shortly after the launch, Hasegawa came out as HIV-positive, to the dismay of the management team. He revealed his status because the management told him that “AIDS and ‘lib’(liberation) are not allowed because they don’t sell,” making his involvement in the production of the magazine meaningless. Fortunately, he realized that publication of the magazine would not be possible without him, and he was able to include articles on HIV.

After *Badi* was launched in November 1994, many people stated that “it was very distinct from previous ones,” and artists, including Gengoro Tagame,⁸

⁸ Born in 1961, he is one of the leading gay erotic artists in contemporary Japan. In 1986, he began serializing his manga and novels in the gay magazine *Sabu*. In the same year, he sent his manuscripts to other gay magazines, such as *Barazoku* and *Adon*; however, they did not pay him, and he continued publishing his manuscripts in the *Sabu* series, from which he received a fee. He launched *G-men* with Hasegawa not only as a full-time writer but also with gay capital, with a strong awareness of the need to discover, record, and preserve “past Japanese gay culture” and to incorporate it into cultural and artistic history. One example is the compilation and publication of “Gay Erotic Art in Japan” (Tagame 2003, 2006, 2018). He also serialized “My Brother’s Husband” in the popular manga magazine *Monthly Action* from November 2014 to July 2017, which was made into a National TV drama on NHK’s BS Premium in March 2018. According to Tagame, “I drew the manga for all ages, paying attention to the fact that it could be read by families and children” (Tagame 2017, 191). The work won the Excellence Award in the Manga Division of the 19th Japan Media Arts Festival and the Excellence Award of the 47th Japan Cartoonists Association.

“visited the editorial office, interested in the new gay magazine *Badi* on their way back from delivering *Sabu*.”⁹ At that moment, Hasegawa finally felt relief: “I thought, ‘Now there is enough content.’” Until then, there were no manuscript fees for gay magazines, and even if there were, the relationship was not one where the company would make a request and the creator would write about it. The intention behind launching the new gay magazine was to build an environment where people could do so with “social responsibility.”

However, the management showed reluctance because of the magazine’s strong similarity to *Sabu*, and Hasegawa finally said, “I quit *Badi* because it was too much of a hassle.” This resulted in the positive network being discontinued and a series of memoirs by PLWH, which he had started in the magazine by informing people that he was HIV-positive. Yet, by requesting the assistance of *Badi*, a peer support meeting was launched with 13 patients from IMSUT and the Komagome Tokyo Metropolitan Hospital. After leaving *Badi*, Hasegawa continued cooperating with the editorial department and the publisher, Terra Publishing, in conducting interviews and other activities.

3.2 Societal Envisioning to Create the Sexual Minorities Community and AIDS Activism

Reader participation and the collaborative creation of *G-men*

In April 1995, a year and five months after the first issue of *Badi*, the magazine *G-men* was launched with Hasegawa as Editor-in-Chief. He would serve in this position until the magazine’s 48th issue (March 2000). The magazine’s production centered on hundreds of people from various fields, including artists, novelists, photographers, owners of small businesses in LGBTQ neighborhoods such as Shinjuku Ni-Chome, and medical professionals. Those with expertise in various fields worked on a series of new experiments, including publishing in each issue an article about HIV/AIDS, which was considered a taboo subject at the time. The basic concept of the magazine was “a high-quality sexual fantasy on the theme of ‘masculinity’” (G Project 1995, 217).

The magazine’s general structure consisted of photographs (gravure) and illustrations at the beginning, followed by features with a mixture of photographs, illustrations and textual information, educational and academic content, comics, novels, reviews of illustrations submitted by readers, video guides, photographs submitted by readers, art pieces, correspondence columns, basic information on HIV/AIDS, reviews of novels, advertisements, and editorial postscripts. This implied that the magazine was not intended to

⁹ This was a gay magazine published in Japan by Sun Publishing from November 1974 to February 2002. It was the third oldest commercial gay magazine published in Japan, after *Barazoku* (first published in July 1971) and *Adon* (first published in May 1974). The magazine ceased publication with the February 2002 issue, as circulation decreased in the late 1990s due to the popularity of emerging gay magazines, such as *G-men* and *Badi*.

be merely a book of “erotica,” but reading material that simultaneously provided health information, history, culture, and education. In the “correspondence” section, which parallels today’s dating apps, I also observed cases where PLWH asked for encounters between people with the same status. To encourage future artists, the magazine also reviewed novels submitted to it and held a *manga* (*dōjō*) course. Moreover, it supported existing and emerging businesses and creative activities by featuring photographers, illustrators, novelists, and *manga* and video creators, using undercover interviews at gay bars and other commercial establishments across the country. Finally, most important was the density of interactive communication with readers, which facilitated the administration of surveys and collections of many readers’ stories. The most important feature of the magazine was its status as a “grass-roots” publication whose articles were based on content received from readers. Readers’ strong participation in creating the magazine not only led to them reading it avidly, but also establishing a fandom in which several sub-cultures or cultures could form the basis of the community.

Societal envisioning to decolonize and create urban communities

The protagonists who appear most frequently in *G-men* articles work in gay bars and other local shops in sexual minority communities in Japan, especially in Shinjuku Ni-Chome. For the readers, the atmosphere of the bar and the attractive faces of the staff provide an incentive to visit, while for the bars, the magazine is a PR tool to attract readers as future customers. What is important here is that the closed (closeted) space of Shinjuku Ni-Chome was gradually transformed into an open urban space. The gay magazines *G-men* and *Badi* were distributed nationally and provided an opportunity for readers from all over Japan to visit and assemble. For example, the “G-men Festival” was held in the Shinjuku Ni-chome and Ueno and Asakusa areas during the long weekend from May 3 to 5, 1998, and was sponsored by 61 shops and companies. There was a “readers’ salon” where readers could get together, meet writers and photographic models, and watch live performances, talk shows, a performance show event called the “Safer Sex Show,” and the “Gay Community and AIDS in Japan” symposium (G Project 1998a, 217-21; 1998b, 22-32).

Thus, *G-men* is not an unrealistic fictional space or just a media product; rather, it is an “interface” that facilitates the negotiation between fantasy and the reader’s everyday life by including elements that can be made real (Maeda 1982, 82). In this very sense, “community” is a normative “societal envisioning,” indicating an ideal to be attained (and its attendant exclusions). The magazine is therefore an example of cultural activism (Crimp 1988) that fosters a sense of community through a gaze toward the future, negotiates sexual fantasy with real life in urban spaces, and produces an orientation toward a specific actualization (McLelland 2000, 129). This societal envisioning includes practical and enjoyable shows without losing the element of eroticism,

such as the “Safer Sex Show,” and symposia where Hasegawa and other PLWH appeared as the hosts and speakers working to reduce stigma. It does not set out to change others but rather launches its own societal envisioning, which ultimately aims to “liberate its opponents through the attractiveness of its way of life and to undermine one after another the self-evident premises of civil society as a system of egoism” (Maki 1977, 31).

3.3 Biographical AIDS Activism in Decolonizing the Death of PLWH

AIDS activism in Japan has its roots in the testimonies and life histories of people with Hansen’s disease and Minamata disease, as well as in the literature (e.g., Irokawa 1983; Ohtani 1993; Ishimure 1969). A pioneering example of AIDS activism was the launch of the mini-comics magazine “Letters from Kyoto” in July 1987 by Yoshiaki Ishida, a hemophiliac victim of HIV infection contracted by untested blood products and a representative of the Osaka HIV class lawsuit plaintiffs’ group (Ishida and Konishi 1993). In 1995, 60 families of the Tokyo HIV Litigation Claimants’ Group communicated their thoughts to society through “letters” (Tokyo HIV Litigation Claimants’ Group 1995). Also in 1995, Teiji Furuhashi of the artists’ group “Dumb Type” came out as gay and HIV-positive in their work “S/N” and “Lovers” (Dumb Type 2000).

Remarkably, Furuhashi was one of the first people to introduce drag-queen culture to Japan in 1989 at the “Diamond Night” in Kyoto, before he knew he was HIV-positive (Uozumi 2018, 4). Drag-queen culture has flourished fully in Japan since the 1990s. Hasegawa hosted a party called “Pink Bear Café” from 1997 to 2000, which combined his memoirs with poetry reading performances. Hasegawa, as Madam “Pink Bear,” invited various guests to talk about sex, sexuality, and HIV/AIDS. During the event, drag queens performed poetry readings written by the “oldest drag queen” at the time. Among her various works, here is an example of a biography reading rooted in the traditional view of life and death as a circle, the view of nature religion, as opposed to the Western perspective of death as linear. In contrast to Western religious beliefs that erase the life of PLWH as dead and gone to heaven, in the poems below Hasegawa emphasizes the poetic metaphor that PLWH souls who have passed away remain in this world and return. It decolonizes the inculcation of the fear of death based on the Western religious view that drives the death of PLWH away from this world and isolates them in the afterlife:

Sakura [Cherry blossom], Sakura / Sentimental Journey
Sakura, Sakura, Sakura
Amid a snowstorm of cherry blossoms
I was climbing up a slope to the blue sky

Sakura, Sakura, Sakura
White petals streaming across the blue sky, I am still on my journey

In 1992, spring in full bloom
In the garden of the hospital I had begun to attend, there stood a large cherry tree
Under a glorious canopy of flowers, I patiently awaited the day of my departure

In 1993, under the blazing sun
You, who stayed by your lover's side in the hospital room and nursed him until the very end
Unable to say a last goodbye
Without even a word of complaint to the family who took away his lifeless body
You, who, after a sigh, started walking again only to pass away as if chasing after a lover

In 1994, December
Mr. R, who showed me the scar from the lymphoma operation on his thigh as thanks for visiting him in hospital
Who smiled and, in halting Japanese, said "Thank you for coming to see me"
The reason I did not attend his farewell ceremony, held in a foreign land with few people to see him off, was not because I did not want to see myself in the near future

In 1995, October, the godless month
I heard news of Mr. T's death in Kyoto
Although we had only had a casual conversation, you connected me with precious people
The small seeds of the circle of people you left behind have grown by the day and by the year
And are now in full bloom in the middle of my garden

In 1996, a wintry wind blowing through the trees
When I found a lover, Mr I was as happy as if it had been himself
Laughing, he said, "It's nice to be gay. When I confessed my illness to my girlfriend, she cursed me and ran away"
A once powerful judo player who had run all over Africa, whose eyes were being attacked by an invisible little virus
He missed the advent of protease inhibitors by only six months
"But not all gays are so understanding," I thought to myself

In 1997, dusk falling quickly
K, who struggled up to the end of his life, unable to tell his family about his illness
Who was always calling me in the middle of the night when he felt lonely, passed away

The first time you and your friends gathered at my house was when the cherry blossoms were in full glory along the Meguro River

In 2002, the eleventh year, spring in full bloom
Here I am, living under the cherry trees in full bloom
While drugging my body with 23 capsules a day
Worn out from fighting side effects 365 days a year
I continue to travel in the circle of the seasons, looking up at the blue sky through the snowstorm of cherry blossoms

Sakura, Sakura, Sakura
I hear someone's voice calling me through the snowstorm of cherry blossoms

Sakura, Sakura, Sakura
Someone whispers in my ear of dusk on a distant sunny day

One, two, three, four
I saw you there in the wind

How many tens, how many hundreds, how many thousands and fives
People who were so kind that it made me sad

Five, six, ten, and nine
There you are in my dreams
Tens, hundreds, ten thousands and one
People I loved so much I wanted to cry

Sakura, Sakura, Sakura
Amid a snowstorm of cherry blossoms
Petals streaming across the blue sky
Though they have all scattered somewhere

Sakura, Sakura, Sakura
Amid a snowstorm of cherry blossoms
Petals streaming across the blue sky
Everyone is smiling here

Sakura, Sakura, Sakura
Sakura, Sakura, Sakura
Sakura, Sakura, Sakura
Amid a snowstorm of cherry blossoms

Sakura, Sakura
Amid a snowstorm of cherry blossoms (Hasegawa 2005, 145-9)

The *sakura* (cherry blossom) was already depicted as a tree symbolizing spring in *An Account of Ancient Matters* “Kojiki [古事記]” (712) and “Manyoshu [万葉集]” (late 8th century), and it is still enjoyed by most people today through the custom of viewing the cherry blossom to celebrate the arrival of spring. The short flowering period of about ten days to two weeks and the falling of the petals have been used in many poems (*waka* [和歌] and *haiku* [俳句]) as a metaphor for the transience and beauty of human life and have been a favorite among the Japanese since ancient times. In a *waka* poem, Yorinaga Motoori, a leading researcher of classics who lived during the Edo period (1603–1868), wrote, “If people ask me what the Yamato spirit of Shikishima is, I will answer that it is the spirit of being moved by the beauty of wild cherry blossoms shining in the morning sun.” By situating the lives and deaths of the many HIV-positive people who died before the 1997 combination therapy was available based on the traditional Japanese view of life and death, Hasegawa might encourage a collective “activation of the imagination” so that listeners can see life and death as ours and create a “community of sentiment” (Appadurai 1996, 8).

Furthermore, Motoori’s poems were often selected and quoted in the *Hyakunin Isshu* [百人一首] (One Hundred Poets) of Patriotism during World War II. Therefore, it is possible to read the work as a hymn to the PLWH who lost their lives in the battle against HIV. As the Pink Bear/Hasegawa expresses, “[i]n 1993, under the blazing sun, you were the one who stayed by my lover’s side in the hospital room and nursed him until the very end. I couldn’t even say a last goodbye. Not even a word of complaint to the family who took his remains away from you. Sighing, he started walking again, and passed away as if chasing after a lover.” This might be a queer battle over the care of a dying loved one at a time when there were no same-sex marriages or partnerships, and sexual minorities were not recognized as family members.

Hasegawa mentioned the history of Shinjuku Ni-Chome during a conversation I had with the author on another occasion, as follows:

Originally, there were brothels around here, and many prostitutes who had no one were buried here. We are here today because we have a connection to these places. At the time, there was news of deaths every day, but we must not forget that we were all fighting the same virus, whether it was connected to hemophilia or gayness, and we want to leave it as part of the history of this town. The souls of all the dead in this city will flutter as petals of cherry blossoms, and their own lives will be included in them.

The poem seems to emphasize that Pink Bear/Hasegawa survived by chance. Although the highly active ART spread widely, it still imposed a huge burden in the patients and caused them severe side effects. For instance, Hasegawa had to take more than 24 pills a day every four hours to survive. However, it also seems inevitable that Hasegawa was able to survive in the bio-medical context retrospectively. This ambivalent context of chance and inevitability

seems to emphasize the inheritance and continuity of the lives of those who died from the same virus and represents the will to maintain their existence. At the same time, it also expresses the present state of symbiosis with the souls of the dead who died from the same virus. This evokes not only a sense of historical connection between the lives of the many deceased PLWH and those of PLWH living today, but also a sense of connection with the lives of the majority of HIV-negative people who heard the poetry reading. In other words, the transmission of the sense of connection is much more powerful than the transmission of the virus, and the “words” used for this transmission can be seen as an ethical testimony calling for inheritance and solidarity with the next generation, a challenge as a sentimental journey that passes the baton of the soul.

4. Medical information newsletter *SHIP*

4.1 History and Character of *SHIP*

In 1985, Hiroaki Mitsuya, a researcher at the National Institutes of Health, developed the world’s first anti-HIV drug, AZT. Unfortunately, however, the drug tended to develop resistance to the virus and was often associated with severe side effects that made it impossible for patients to continue treatment. In the 1990s, when drug-development research was taking place globally and the internet was not yet widely available, the pressing issue for HIV-positive people was how to stay informed about the latest developments in drugs and opportunistic infections. *SHIP* was almost the only social resource available to help positive people become health literate. This medical newsletter, which was available at all HIV hospitals nationwide, was also introduced in the *G-men* and *Badi* magazines and could be ordered by anyone, including neighbors and visitors to Shinjuku Ni-chome. One author involved in writing the magazine was A-san, who also wrote the serial article “Basic Knowledge of HIV” for *G-men*. The first issue of *SHIP* contained the following background information. In the original text of the newsletter, the description “Mr. A” was changed to “B-san.” B-san was one of the PLWH who edited *SHIP* alongside A-san:

Why was *SHIP* started?

Our friend, B-san, is HIV-positive. [...] Both B-san and we have many problems and questions: [...] If it progresses to AIDS, will I die? How should I be careful in my life? Should I tell my parents? Can I keep working? [...]

In an attempt to solve these problems, I scoured bookstores and libraries in search of materials. However, I could not find the materials I wanted. There were many materials on prevention, but few materials for those who were

positive. The materials on treatment etc. were for medical professionals and were difficult to understand.

Under these circumstances, I sent a letter to an organization in the United States. A few weeks later, I received the latest issue of their newsletter, along with all back issues. [...]

After several more months, B-san came to the US and visited one of the [abbreviated] information service organizations [...] for people living with HIV. When he told the counselor in the office that he was HIV-positive, he was kindly given consultation for nearly three hours. In fact, this counselor herself was HIV-positive. Having fully accepted the fact that he is infected, he is now making an earnest effort to help other people living with HIV lead a better life. B-san said, "I felt a surge of energy inside me when I saw how positively other people living with HIV were leading their lives." [...] [T]he publication of the book is based on the events I have described above. (Stay Healthy Information Project 1993, 2-3)

After testing positive, B-san searched throughout Japan for information about HIV. However, all he could find at the time was information about infection prevention, and there was little information about living with HIV. As a result, he wrote to the Asian AIDS Project¹⁰ in San Francisco, received a large amount of information, and then visited the organization. The person who counseled him was also positive. Here, B-san was not a recipient of information services, but a positive person actively involved in improving health literacy. He realized that he could live positively and was empowered to use the information and experiences he had gained "to benefit other positive people."

SHIP also introduced readers to the latest medical information in an easy-to-understand manner, as follows:

"The study of long-term survivors: A report from the Berlin Conference"

At the International AIDS Conference in Berlin in June 1993, there was a discussion about why there is such a big difference in survival periods, and the idea is emerging that if we look at long-term survivors who are infected with HIV and are still alive and well, we might find better treatments. [...]

"Common attitudes of long-term survivors"

The lifestyle of each individual is another aspect that deserves attention. Susan Caumartin's group at the University of Michigan has found a close relationship between social cooperation and survival (Poster D20-4008).

Robert Remien reports on his observations of 53 long-term survivors of AIDS (3-9 years after HIV diagnosis) in New York City; Remien notes that this

¹⁰ This project, which was started in 1987 by the Asian & Pacific Islander Wellness Center (known as "API Wellness Center"), is a nonprofit organization headquartered in San Francisco, California. It provides multicultural health services, education, research, and policy organization. Under its former name it initially advocated for Asian & Pacific Islander communities, particularly those in the communities living with HIV. In 2018, the organization was renamed the San Francisco Community Health Center.

group of individuals had the ability to bounce back in the face of adversity and identifies the following as common characteristics of long-term survivors (Workshop D1 5-3):

- 1) [PLWH] realistically recognize that living is worthwhile and that losing it would be sad
- 2) Change the way they look at things and maintain a positive attitude
- 3) Have goal-oriented and active lifestyles
- 4) Recognize the value of social support
- 5) Develop better doctor-patient relationships and fully reflect their own opinions in their treatment. (Stay Healthy Information Project 1993, 14)

For PLWH, learning about the traits of long-term survivors and being given evidence of the benefits of these traits by medical professionals is crucial for self-determination concerning their own treatment and how they conduct themselves in daily life; it is the first step toward gaining basic health literacy and autonomy. The article sends this message to the reader via the following collective biographies of several HIV-positive individuals, “For a Positive First Step.”

“For a Positive First Step”

“Message from several PLWH volunteers”

Are you able to think calmly and objectively about what the fact of HIV infection means to you? It is not easy to think calmly and objectively. Some of you may be deeply troubled by thoughts about your family, your future, who you are, death, and other things that you have never thought about before, without being able to sort them out. Or there may come a day in the future when you will have to think about these things.

But tomorrow and the days to come will not all be hard and painful. We know that ourselves. Many PLWH around the world are also enjoying their lives in surprisingly powerful ways.

Now, let’s take the first positive step. Positive thinking will not only change your spirit for the better, but it will also support your health. Trust in the strength within you, even if it’s just a little.

So, what does a positive life look like? On the next page, we have suggested a few points that we have come up with. These are sources of energy that we, as HIV-positive people just like you, have been able to gain from our experience so far. Please use them as a reference for your life in the future. (Stay Healthy Information Project 1993, 3)

The project also provides a list of specific points that PLWH should remember throughout the day: “(1) look at yourself objectively, (2) take control of your lifestyle, (3) learn about HIV and AIDS, (4) find someone to support you, (5) keep track of your health condition on a regular basis, (6) make your own decisions about your treatment plan after consulting with your doctor, and (7) do not isolate yourself from society.” These messages associate medical information with the biographies of PLWH, allowing individual HIV-positive

readers to not only acquire basic health literacy but also to become empowered in life. In addition, the collaboration between the creators and readers of the medical information magazine means that it is a place that fosters collective knowledge and creates resilience among PLWH.

4.2 Biographical AIDS Activism Nurturing Hope for Survival

Through *SHIP*, the biographies of HIV-positive individuals are connected to the biographies of those living with other chronic illnesses, elevating them into a social movement that supports hope for survival. For example, this can be seen in the following memoir:

I lost my health when I got this disease, but I believe (and I believe, years later, I will get it back) that I gained something even more important. I believe that I have come to know something that is irreplaceable for me.

Many things will happen from now on. Some of them will be brought about by this disease, and some will not. Anyway, this disease is a formidable enemy for me, but it is someone I will live with for a long time to come. It will bring me bad things and good things. I am looking forward to it.

Let's live easy.

Let's live cheerfully.

Life is not so bad.

This is a quotation from a person who passed away from cancer. We all die one day. Death comes equally to us all. It is such a once-in-a-lifetime life. It would be nice if we could live cheerfully, without getting worked up. I know it sounds a bit harsh, but that's what I'm thinking right now.

Anyway, I will do my best. I will contact you again.

Good luck! (Stay Healthy Information Project 1994, 18)

As described above, the lives of PLWH are connected through the biographies of “wounded storytellers” (Frank 1995), stories about people living with other chronic diseases, such as cancer, who weave a meta-narrative as social sufferers.

The following is an example of a collaboration that seeks “hope” and solidarity with other positive people living with shared difficulties and those who support them in their lives. In discussing it, I will focus on the messages to society contained in the memoirs of a person (pseudonym “C-san”) living with HIV, reprinted in the ninth issue of *SHIP*, published in 1995, as a typical example. The memoir first appeared in *The Japanese Journal for the Public Health Nurse*. The original pseudonym “A-san,” to whom C-san refers, has been changed to “D-san” to avoid confusion with a different individual mentioned above in this paper:

“Changing the Image and Being Positive—A Memoir of a Person Living with HIV.”

I have experienced many things in the past year of knowing that I am positive, and I would like to write about two things that I felt during that time.

One is that people may have too much of an “AIDS = special disease” mentality. [...]

People living with HIV themselves have come to believe that they have a special disease. “I am HIV-positive, and I am the hero of a tragedy,” and I am sure that many people are immersed in this belief. [...]

Another is that people have a strong perception that AIDS = a deadly disease.

I wonder if this has resulted in a negative impact on treatment and other services for us positive people. I was visiting a friend of mine, D-san, who is HIV-positive, in hospital.

A nurse asked me, “D-san is close to death. How can I help him accept death?” I was quite surprised by this. It was true that D-san had a weakened immune system and was suffering from opportunistic infections.

But these can be cured if properly treated. Medical science is certainly making progress.

Doctors, nurses, [...] and even those who are supposed to restore people to good health lose energy because they think their patients are going to die, and doctors think it is natural that they will die. I am sure that there must be many people who failed to recover their health and ended up dying in this way. [...]

Having AIDS does not equal death. [...] [W]e need to keep this in mind. (Stay Healthy Information Project 1995, 17-8)

The readers of the first issue of *The Japanese Journal for the Public Health Nurse* are mainly professionals working in the medical field. Hence, the memoir contributes to expanding their basic and communicative health literacy. At the same time, the memoir has a message for PLWH and society. Since PLWH generally have little access to professional journals, it was important to reprint the memoir in a medical information magazine for them. Importantly, people with disabilities, who tend to isolate themselves, may find hope for survival through reading memoirs. Hence, biographies, including memoirs, have become an important resource for fostering hope, the most basic health skill. Overall, nurturing hope for survival might enable the cultivation of societal envisioning and resilience among PLWH.

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this paper is to examine the power of the socially vulnerable, who are forced to face uncertainties and to develop their own societal envisioning through their biographies. This paper highlights the hidden history of sexual minority HIV-positive people who have been actively involved in

the fight against AIDS. In particular, biography emerges as a site of struggle for “societal envisioning” in the lives of those who are colonized and oppressed, being marginalized by various prejudices and discrimination.

In the case of Hiroshi Hasegawa/Pink Bear, they had access to social resources in two areas. One was the patient associations that hemophiliacs had built in and out of hospitals. Later, Hasegawa/Pink Bear was able to organize lectures and peer-support activities which provided the basis for expanding the network of PLWH and cultivating a certain negotiating power with the medical and administrative authorities. The other was the social capital accumulated in a buried form in the postcolonial city of Shinjuku Ni-Chome. Prior to that time, Shinjuku Ni-Chome was a relatively closeted space with only limited networks. Gay-bar owners and workers, producers, and actors in the pornography industry, and many others based in Shinjuku Ni-Chome, have commonly been devalued by their low social status. In fact, the gay magazines that were dominant prior to the launch of *Badi* and *G-men* were operated using heterosexual capital. The novelists, *manga* artists, photographers, and other artists involved in magazine production could not earn an income and were treated as an extension of their hobbies and contributions. Under these oppressive conditions, Hasegawa’s societal envisioning won the approval of many previously oppressed people and enabled them to mobilize to create the magazine. He aimed to realize the attractive city life by disclosing his HIV status and creating a new magazine as a business. In addition, it is believed that the foundation of the community was laid by allowing not only the neighborhood but also the readers to actively participate in the creation of the magazine and in the urban lives of postcolonial districts such as Shinjuku-Nichome. Finally, Pink Bear/Hasegawa expressed themselves to the audience through poetry reading on night club and festival stages. Thus, collaboration not only expanded to numerous readers of gay magazines but also provided opportunities to get together or assemble in the urban spaces and cultivate a sense of community while living with HIV together.

In the other case, Mr. A was the editor of *SHIP*, the medical information journal for PLWH. Mr. A collected medical information in collaboration with healthcare providers but also used biographies, such as memoirs, as a peer practice to cultivate the hope of survival and empowerment. According to Mr. A, up to that point, medical information on HIV had focused on prevention and awareness-raising, and information on survival and daily life had not reached PLWH. Even if such information was available, it would be difficult for the general public to understand due to the technical terms used by medical professionals. Under these circumstances, PLWH were able to cultivate hope for life by accessing the social resources accumulated by AIDS activism in the United States. This biographical AIDS activism that fostered hope for life also fostered collective resilience, as well as leading to the generation of societal envisioning in gay magazines, as discussed in Sections 3 and 4. This

is one of the hidden histories revealed by this study of AIDS activism that is rooted/routed and directed toward societal envisioning through biographies of PLWH.

The great involvement of PLWH in societal envisioning found in this paper can be positioned as “living politics” or informal “life politics,” which aim to directly solve the problems of daily life through small-scale grassroots activities. Morris-Suzuki and Wei (2018) quoted an aphorism of Mahatma Gandhi: “Our greatness as human beings lies not so much in our ability to remake the world—that’s the myth of the ‘atomic age’—as in our ability to remake ourselves” (10). In informal politics, living politics tends to be invisible and self-initiated, and change is sought in conjunction with others. Thus, it is a new politics that can be seen as seemingly “apolitical” behavior according to conventional notions of politics (Morris-Suzuki and Wei 2018, 1-12). Hasegawa and Mr. A were able to launch gay and medical information magazines by utilizing mainly queer historical resources and subcultures in the city, which had created a culture that fostered sexual minorities meeting and congregating in, for example, bars and clubs in Shinjuku Ni-Chome. The foundation for a sense of community was established by working with various stakeholders, including readers and residents of the city, to create these magazines and by having a variety of people come together and meet at events. This was a societal envisioning and practice based on the “pleasure of agency” (Appadurai 1996, 111) and nurturing hope. In particular, biographies such as diaries, memoirs, and poems not only fostered imagination that allowed people of different HIV status, sexuality, class, and gender to read and hear personal fears and hopes as their own, but it also provided the basis for a form of expression in which diverse people could participate to record and socially shape the future.

The proliferation of urban spaces as sites for creating communities as a societal envisioning emerged from the inner space of the text of gay magazine production and the postcolonial city itself. What began in the mid-1990s evolved into living politics based on PLWH.¹¹ While a detailed analysis would

¹¹ Due to limitations of space, I will leave this topic for another article, but gay activism in Japan began with IGA Japan and ILGA Japan, both founded by Teishiro Minami in 1984, and OCCUR, which split off from IGA/ILGA Japan in 1986. In particular, OCCUR was actively involved with gay activism in the media, as a party to the “Fuchu Youth House Incident” in 1990 and as a plaintiff in the subsequent trial. OCCUR was also engaged in AIDS activism and wrote to the Japanese Red Cross Society on September 3, 1992, as follows: “attributing the possibility of AIDS infection to members of a limited group without scientific evidence prevents society from recognizing AIDS as a disease that everyone faces” (Shingae 2013, 97-100). As a result of the momentum for social movements, there were 300 people at the “first lesbian and gay parade” held by Minami Teishiro and others in 1994, and about 1,100 in 1995 (the second parade) and 1996 (the third parade) (Horikawa 2015, 70). In the third event, a dispute occurred over the parade’s “proclamation” as a “protest activity,” and thereafter, the parade by Minami and others was reduced to a few dozen people (Horikawa 2015, 71). After this downsizing, a festive atmosphere based

go beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that since the dawn of social networks in the 2000s, *mixi*, which was an early social network characterized by an invitation-only system, became popular in Japan. *Mixi* was a space where any person could write their biographies, such as daily journals, and post photos on their profile pages. In addition, people could create and participate in various online communities, including those focusing on sexual fantasies, and interact not only online but also in offline meetings in the real world. The peer relationships of PLWH shifted from medical magazines to mailing list services. Peer support from these services can provide information on treatment methods and daily life for survival and foster hope through biographies, all of which can aid in empowering PLWH. A detailed analysis of the above will be presented in a separate study.

As this paper clarified, the hidden history of AIDS enables the exploration of multiple global histories and social possibilities. By focusing on biographies, this article contributes to Global Sociology as a way to explore and discuss how we can confront and enable solidarity for change in lives that are colonized, oppressed, and marginalized by various prejudices and forms of discrimination.

A limitation of this study is that it does not shed enough light on the actors involved (other than PLWH) in various aspects of AIDS activism, especially artists, NGOs, medical professionals, and local governments. This is a methodological limitation of this study, which focused on the life/oral histories of PLWH themselves. I am currently beginning interviews with those involved, and this will be the subject of a future project. Another future historical and current piece of social research could clarify the “societal envisioning” of the lives of the colonized in other countries, areas, and cultures.

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on “pleasure” was the impetus for a reunion at the 1998 G-men Festival, held with the cooperation of about 70 stores in Shinjuku, Ueno, and Asakusa, where a symposium on HIV was also held. This was followed by the 2000 Rainbow Festival and Tokyo Lesbian & Gay Parade (with approximately 2,000 participants) and the 2015 Tokyo Rainbow Pride (with approximately 55,000 participants). Today, cultural activism, including biography and art as a form of personal expression, continues to expand into online expressions such as doujinshi (fanzine) and SNS.

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All articles published in HSR Special Issue 48 (2023) 4:

Doing Global Sociology: Qualitative Methods and Biographical Becoming after the Postcolonial Critique

Introduction

Johannes Becker & Marian Burchardt

Doing Global Sociology: Qualitative Methods and Biographical Becoming after the Postcolonial Critique
- An Introduction.

doi: [10.12759/hsr.48.2023.37](https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.48.2023.37)

Contributions

G erard Amougou

Subjectivization Analysed by the Biography of the Subject-Entrepreneur in a Precarious Environment.

doi: [10.12759/hsr.48.2023.38](https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.48.2023.38)

Mart n Hern n Di Marco

“Stop it with Mommy and Daddy!” Analyzing How Accounts of People in Prison Change with Their
Trajectory in Argentinean Penal Institutions.

doi: [10.12759/hsr.48.2023.39](https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.48.2023.39)

Daniel Bultmann

A Global and Diachronic Approach to the Study of Social Fields.

doi: [10.12759/hsr.48.2023.40](https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.48.2023.40)

Swetlana Torno

Life-Course Management and Social Security in Later Life: Women’s Biographical Practices Spanning
Generations and Historical Contexts in Tajikistan.

doi: [10.12759/hsr.48.2023.41](https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.48.2023.41)

Marian Burchardt & Johannes Becker

Subjects of God? Rethinking Religious Agency, Biography, and Masculinity from the Global South.

doi: [10.12759/hsr.48.2023.42](https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.48.2023.42)

Hannah Schilling

Navigating Uncertainty: Young Workers and Precarity in Berlin and Abidjan.

doi: [10.12759/hsr.48.2023.43](https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.48.2023.43)

Arne Worm

Migrantized Biographies. Reconstructing Life-Stories and Life-Histories as a Reflexive Approach in
Migration Research.

doi: [10.12759/hsr.48.2023.44](https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.48.2023.44)

Joschka Philipps

Whose Uncertainties? Dealing with Multiple Meanings in a Transnational Biography.

doi: [10.12759/hsr.48.2023.45](https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.48.2023.45)

Michael P. K. Okyerefo

The Autobiographical Self as an Object for Sociological Enquiry.

doi: [10.12759/hsr.48.2023.46](https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.48.2023.46)

Eva Bahl & Yvonne Berger

Processes of South-South Migration in Their Historical Context: Biographical Case Studies from Brazil and China.

doi: [10.12759/hsr.48.2023.47](https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.48.2023.47)

Nkululeko Nkomo & Sibusiso Nkomo

Melancholy as Witness and Active Black Citizenry in the Writing of A.S. Vil-Nkomo.

doi: [10.12759/hsr.48.2023.48](https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.48.2023.48)

Gaku Oshima

Societal Envisioning of Biographical AIDS Activism among Gay People Living with HIV in Japan.

doi: [10.12759/hsr.48.2023.49](https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.48.2023.49)

Fabio Santos

Mind the Archival Gap: Critical Fabulation as Decolonial Method.

doi: [10.12759/hsr.48.2023.50](https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.48.2023.50)