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The Role of Social Capital for Returned Study Abroad Participants in Post-War Okinawa

Panel: Social Capital and Well-being in Okinawa and Japan from the Perspectives of the Life Course (Session 2)

During the US Occupation of Okinawa from 1945 to 1972, the United States government created a US study abroad program to provide young Okinawans with US higher education to create human resources that would contribute to the development of post-war Okinawan society. More than a thousand Okinawans studied abroad in the United States. Many of the study abroad participants became influential leaders in various fields, including higher education, business, and politics. This presentation illuminates the roles of returned study abroad participants in post-war Okinawa and how they have utilized their knowledge and skills as distinctive professional individuals. I demonstrate how the role of social capital was important in the process of their contributing to the development of post-war Okinawa. Using my interview data with the study abroad participants, I highlight that the role of social capital for study abroad participants have changed as Okinawa reverted to Japan.