In compliance with the
Canadian Privacy Legislation
some supporting forms
may have been removed from
this dissertation.

While these forms may be included
in the document page count,
their removal does not represent
any loss of content from the dissertation.

MCGILL UNIVERSITY

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF THE JAPANESE EXCHANGE TEACHING PROGRAMME AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

A Thesis Submitted to

The School of Social Work

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for

The Master's Degree in Social Work

by

Shauna Callender

Montreal, March 2003

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 0-612-88088-5
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 0-612-88088-5

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

Culture shock and reverse culture shock are profoundly personal experiences affecting individuals in a multitude of diverse ways. They happen inside each person who encounters unfamiliar events and unexpected situations. For people who work abroad (sojourners), cultural adjustment is a significant time in their lives. Following the examination of cultural adjustment, a review of literature is explored, highlighting sojourners' acculturation and coping strategies. A case study of the JET (Japanese Exchange Teaching) Programme is presented through an analysis of public documents and interviews with JET staff and former sojourners. Findings report that JET sojourners experience adjustment difficulties with reverse culture shock and that there exists an unavailability of resources providing support. Limitations of the study are highlighted; areas of weakness were found in the lack of literature addressing the needs and experiences of sojourners, particularly JETs. Recommendations and suggestions for future research in the field of social work are made.

Résumé

L'ajustement culturel est une expérience profondément personnelle affectant des individus. En ce qui concerne les personnes qui travaillent à l'étranger (séjourneurs) l'ajustement culturel est un temps significatif dans leurs vies. Après l'examen de l'ajustement culturel, un examen de la littérature est exploré accentuant l'acculturation de séjourneurs et les stratégies de faire face. Une étude de cas du programme de JET (Japanese Exchange Teaching Programme) est présentée par une analyse des documents publics, des entrevues avec le personnel de JET et des anciens séjourneurs. Les conclusions de l'étude démontrent que les séjourneurs éprouvent des difficultés de choc de culture renversée. Il n'existe pas de ressources de soutiens pour ces personnes. Il y a peu de littérature portant sur les besoins des séjourneurs. Ces limites sont mentionnées dans le cadre de l'étude. L'auteur présente aussi des recommandations et suggestions pour les recherches futures en travail social.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my family, Mummy and Jason, for their undying support and motivational encouragement. Thank you to my friends Ayanna, Edgar and Greg for their patience with the hours and time spent away from a real life, without this thesis. Thank you also, Beverly Robinson, "cousin extraordinaire," and Kim St. Hillaire for their input and tirelessness revision of the thesis. Thanks as well to my Advisor, Dr. Samantha Wehbi, for her unbelievable guidance, help and patience in answering all my minute questions in person and on the phone, no matter how redundant they may have seemed. Thanks to my supervisors, Joy Lepage, Madeleine Berard and Harley Schwartz, for allowing me the chance to take time off to complete school requirements. Thanks to the Consul General du Japon in Montreal and the participants of this study for opening themselves up and sharing their experiences as JETs. Without you, this study would never have happened. Lastly, I would like to extend a very special thank you to Russell Adams for his sincere understanding and undying love throughout this process.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Cultural adjustment can be a challenging experience for people opting to work abroad. The year 1999 was a whirlwind ride for me. I ate raw fish, attended more enkais (drinking parties) than I can remember and learned to speak and write Japanese from a very strict Japanese teacher. If these things seem foreign to you, imagine how they must have felt for me during the whole experience. I lived in Japan for one year and worked as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) in junior high schools and elementary schools. I can recall feeling at times isolated, lonely, alone, homesick, anxious, ambivalent and frustrated by my choice to live and work in Japan. I can also remember being excited, perplexed, dazzled and welcomed by friends that I have since left behind.

During my year abroad, I did much soul searching and realized that by removing myself from my comfortable surroundings (e.g., language, culture, food) in Canada, I was forced to adapt to a Japanese lifestyle. I realized that who I was and why I chose to work in Japan played a significant part in how I was viewed and treated by my Japanese counterparts and how I interacted with them. I soon understood that this opportunity made an indelible impact on my experience of culture shock while in Japan.

When the time came for me to return to Canada, I was faced with a new challenge, reverse culture shock, which forced me to readjust my thinking of home. As with my challenges of culture shock, my former familiarity with speaking French, eating cereal for breakfast and shaking hands with new

people (instead of bowing) suddenly became difficult for me to remember. Not only did I question what Canadians did, but I also found myself bothered by their inability to see how the Japanese way was more efficient. I struggled through this process and sought out what I hoped would be a means to an end: support. What I soon discovered was that I and others like me who had similar experiences with cultural shock and reverse culture shock were alone in our quest for validation as to how our experiences abroad affected us.

As an alumni of a cross-cultural program, I knew from personal experience of the adaptation difficulties associated with cultural adjustment (e.g. loneliness, confusion, displacement, etc...). I also learned through informal exchanges with fellow program participants and alumni, of a general consensus that the experience of cultural adjustment was traumatic and caused many to feel displaced. Through their displacement, I soon felt compelled to further examine the role social work played in relation to cultural adjustment for people who opt to work abroad. I began to view their plight as a problem that needed to be further addressed. Yet, during initial research on cultural adjustment, I was puzzled to discover how such a large group of people with cross cultural experiences, went unnoticed by the field of social work.

As a social work practitioner, I felt compelled to further examine the role social work played on cultural adjustment for people who opted to work abroad. I felt these experiences needed to be further addressed and began my quest for information on the topic. I was quickly disillusioned by the lack of

research on cultural adjustment, and could not understand how such a large group of people with cross cultural experiences, went unnoticed by research in the field of social work.

For several years, the profession of social work has stumbled around trying to adequately address the issue of cross-cultural practice and ethnic diversity in its ranks. Social work has recognized that often the benefactors of the service do not live like the givers of the service. As the multicultural population continues to grow, the call for a less homogeneous group of caregivers arises.

A sojourner's (a person who travels abroad for a temporary stay in a new place) experience can be used as an untapped resource to give the profession first hand information about how other cultures live and problem solve from a perspective that is new and necessary. As thinkers and doers open to cross-cultural practices and experiences, sojourners could help better understand the client's perspective and their methods of intervention are vital to the profession moving forward in this direction. Where the client can give the worker an opportunity to understand their culture, a sojourner that has lived amongst them can offer another perspective that is equally vital for a social worker trying to assist a family from a different culture. This type of cross cultural issue is exactly what the profession needs to immerse itself in so as to build the pocket of cultural resources outside of the Westernized world. Gutierrez & Nagda (1996) also contend that "through the development of multicultural human service organizations, the challenges of the

demographic shift can be met and the work toward greater equity in our society can commence" (p. 205).

Sojourners can also help social workers possibly understand their own reactions to working with clients so different to them. However, this cannot occur if sojourners are not educated about the profession, and less so, if they are embroiled in trying to deal with trauma and stress from their cross cultural experience. The bridging of the two groups has to be a healthy enjoyable endeavour so that sojourners are interested in reliving and sharing their experience with others.

Thus, the profession of Social Work may have to service some very desperate needs of its own, by lending its talents to assisting sojourners to better cope with their adjustment experience. Offering assistance to sojourners living in a multitude of countries is another opportunity for the profession of social work to spread the word about the profession as well as to gain knowledge about how other people live.

Through this practice, the information needed to address these issues can be gathered, thereby preventing another potential problem (e.g. increased mental health issues) for society. Therefore, it is imperative that further exploration into the experience of people who opt to work abroad be brought to the forefront of research.

The research question of this study is the following: what is the experience of sojourners and its implications for social work on cultural adjustment? Cultural adjustment has an increasingly different effect on different people, and we are reminded by Furnham & Bochner (1986) that

research on the interplay between social support and cross-cultural adjustment remains limited. This void in research as well as in my training as a social worker gave rise to the need for further explorations on the topic, with an aim to shed light on a potentially unseen problem. In order to answer the research question, a case study of the JET (Japanese Exchange Teaching) Programme is presented through an analysis of public documents and interviews with JET staff and former sojourners.

In Chapter 2, a comprehensive literature review examining cultural adjustment and issues related to culture shock, reverse culture shock and coping strategies for persons opting to work abroad are outlined. Difficulties encountered in stranger/host relationships and highlights from the literature of the specific populations affected by acculturation are also explored. Several references to existing theories and research on these topics are also investigated.

In Chapter 3, an illustration of the JET Programme is given and the methodology is discussed.

Chapter 4 includes study findings and provides extensive discussion for the study. Excerpts from interviews are presented and incorporated throughout the discussion.

Chapter 5 presents the limitations of the study and implications for social work practice and recommendations for future research on cultural adjustment.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Living and working in Japan as an Assistant Language Teacher has left me with exceptional memories. I thought my preparation for my temporary stay in a new place—a "sojourn", according to Furnham & Bochner (1986)—had been thorough. Actions such as understanding the economic climate and researching the cultural and linguistic history would all assist in minimizing my stress related to the transition from old to new. As a prepared "sojourner" (traveller) I felt that I had done what I had needed to do to embrace this new culture. It quickly became apparent that this was not so. I did not comprehend the potential impact of acculturation—changes that take place as a result of continuous first-hand contact between individuals of different cultures (Redfield, Linto & Herskovits, 1936)—until long after my Japanese Exchange Teaching experience ended.

As a Japanese Exchange Teaching or JET participant I wondered if fellow participants experienced culture shock, an occupational disease precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse (Oberg, 1960). How did other JETS cope with the phenomenon of cultural adjustment? Did they, as I had, develop new strategies and abilities to manage culture shock? Upon my return from Japan, I again faced acculturation difficulties similar to those I had struggled with when arriving in Japan. I questioned whether the phenomenon of culture shock had a reverse polarity which Adler (1976) defined as reverse culture shock: reacculturation or re-entry into one's home culture after living and working abroad. Furnham

& Bochner (2001) support the notion that crossing cultures can be a stimulating and rewarding adventure, fraught with potentially stressful and bewildering periods. Questions arose in my mind as to what the cultural adjustment experience for my fellow JETs was. What supports were available to assist their adaptation, and what could social workers do to address their needs?

This chapter will review the literature examining a number of key concepts and issues including: culture shock, reverse culture shock, sojourner/host relationships, acculturation/cultural adjustment and coping strategies of sojourners.

Culture Shock

Our ability to cope with daily stressors, critical life transitions and environmental or cultural change is inextricably tied to the social ecology in which we are embedded (Adelman, 1988). Moreover, personal networks of social support have been the focus of extensive research, demonstrating the significance of informal relationships in coping with uncertainty and change (Albrecht & Adelman, 1984). Several researchers (Adler, 1975; Arsenberg & Niehoff, 1964; Foster, 1962; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Lundstedt, 1963; Oberg, 1960) commonly view culture shock as a normal process involving symptoms such as anxiety, helplessness, irritability and a longing for a more predictable and gratifying environment.

Several stages of adjustment and particular coping styles have been experienced by sojourners. Oberg (1960) identified culture shock in terms of four stages: "honeymoon stage, crisis stage, recovery stage and adjustment

stage" (p. 131). Adler (1975) outlined five stages: "initial contact; disintegration of old, familiar cues; reintegration of new cues; process of reintegration; and reciprocal interdependence" (p.541), which are similar to those of Oberg. The first stage, of honeymoon or initial contact, is a process during which sojourners, in their initial reactions to the new culture, are fascinated. The second stage, of crisis or disintegration of old familiar cues, is when sojourners recognize the differences of the new culture and experience self-blame. The self-blame is a result of the sojourners feeling depressed, alienated, confused and withdrawn. The third stage, known as recovery or reintegration, sees sojourners accepting the new culture, but Adler (1975) also characterizes it as a period of anger towards or resentment of the host culture. Oberg's (1960) final stage of adjustment finds that sojourners begin to work and enjoy the new culture, whereas Adler (1975) depicts it as a period of gradual autonomy for the sojourner. Adler's (1975) final stage is the point at which sojourners have achieved a level of understanding and become fluently comfortable in both the old and new cultures.

It should be noted that not all sojourners move through similar modes of adjustment. Unlike Oberg (1960), Adler (1975) and Martin (1984) who described a series of discrete phases, Lysgaard (1955) suggested that the stages of culture shock could be better understood as a U-curve and described the sojourner's level of adjustment as a function of time in the new culture. By interviewing 200 Norwegian students who had studied in the United Sates, Lysgaard (1955) found that sojourners moved through three phases of adjustment: initial adjustment, crisis and regained adjustment.

Groups of students took part in being categorized into three groups of professional-education and personal-social adjustment. He found that "good" adjustment was reported by the first and third group, whereas the second group was "less well" adjusted, implying that a U-curve occurs wherein satisfaction and well-being gradually decline but then increase again. The results of Lysgaard's findings indicate that the period of adjustment took about twenty months, with some point between six and eighteen months being the lowest point in the adjustment phase. Upon further research investigating the accuracy of the U-curve hypothesis, other researchers denounced the use of this instrument and concluded that it was not clear whether the model could accurately represent most sojourners' experience. Hull (1978), Klineberg & Hull (1979) in particular found little support for the U-curve after an international longitudinal study of foreign students in 11 countries. They decided to break up sojourn length in several ways and looked for evidence of a U-curve for several different variables (e.g., number of problems reported, personal depression, loneliness, homesickness, opinion regarding the local people) but concluded that there was almost no cross-sectional support for Lysgaard's hypothesis. There continue to be issues about the validity of the use of the U-curve model. As some consider it to be inaccurate, various theorists have used other methods to explore the issue of sojourners' cultural adjustment. The answer to the question regarding culture shock's impact on sojourners continues to be lacking in clarity. What is evident is that sojourners do experience several phases of adjustment and that certain periods of this adjustment create anxiety, which qualifies as culture shock.

Acculturation/Cultural Adjustment

Cultural adjustment is a psychosocial process focusing on the attitudinal and emotional adjustment of the individual to a new culture (Martin, 1984). This process involves socially integrating into another cultural system. The sojourner is characterized as someone who makes a short-term adjustment to a new culture. Church (1982) described acculturation as the adjustment of an individual to a foreign culture and characterized it as "culture shock" (Church, 1982).

It is commonly assumed that the greater the differences between home culture and host culture the greater will be the problems of acculturation (Dyal & Dyal, 1981). As this is a common assumption, some researchers maintain that to test this hypothesis would be difficult. Tatje & Naroll (1973) hypothesized that such a test was possible and introduced Naroll's Social Development Index. This test systemically measured the stress levels of people in their home countries versus the stress level of immigrants (from similar home countries) who had already immigrated to a new country. This index indicated a relationship between some index of cultural complexity of the home cultures and indices of acculturative stress of immigrants from those cultures.

Murphy (1973) theorized that the difficulties of cultural adjustment are not limited to sojourners and that immigrants from foreign countries underwent similar difficulties with adjustment to new host countries. He (Murphy 1973) postulated that Canada differed substantially from the United States and Australia in the rate of mental health problems of immigrants and suggested

that these differences (which were based upon data obtained in the late 1950s and early 1960s) might be related to the different ideologies that existed in the three countries. Based on Murphy's study, it might be safe to assume that in today's world, regardless of where we live, we are still very much surrounded by elements that continue to add further stress to our lives (work, school, etc.)—perhaps more, given the evolution of time since the study. It would also seem that immigrants, like sojourners, regardless of where they came from or where they are going, seem to demonstrate levels of stress with the process of acculturation. These groups seem to be on common ground with the level of stress they experience, suggesting that whether one is a sojourner in a foreign country or an immigrant in a new one, the stress levels of acculturation remain at an all-time high.

Other studies, reported below, have explored the psychological stress associated with cultural adjustment, focusing on key factors such as age and gender. Researchers have investigated identity issues cross-sectionally, focusing on age and generational differences to explore cultural adjustment.

According to Marin et al. (1987) and Mavreas et al. (1989), younger migrants appeared to be more malleable than older ones, and they tended to take on more readily host culture norms and values (p.106).

Rai (1988) also suggested that the experience of refugee transition was fundamentally different for younger and older groups. The young appeared more resilient and effective in coping with the transition process (p.236).

Roskies, Iida-Miranda & Strobel (1978) used the Social Readjustment Rating Scale developed by Holmes & Rahe (1967) to study the adjustment

of Portuguese immigrants to Montreal. The scale sought to quantify the amount of stress experienced and the readjustment required during cross-cultural transition. By implementing the scale with 303 Portuguese adults between the ages of 20 and 60 years old, the authors found that "the relationship between life change scores and illness was much stronger for women than for men," suggesting that gender is another factor that prevented and/ or progressed cultural adjustment for some (p. 312). They found that "the relationship between life change scores and illness was much stronger for women than for men," suggesting that gender is another factor that prevented and/or progressed cultural adjustment for some (p. 312). But other researchers (Dyal & Dyal, 1983) felt that the Holmes & Rahe's (1967) Social Readjustment Rating scale instrument was not sensitive to the special stresses associated with immigration and proposed the need for an instrument including this feature.

One such instrument was implemented by Spradley & Phillips (1972), who developed a Culture Readjustment Rating Questionnaire and applied it successfully to differentiate between 83 returned Peace Corp volunteers, 34 Chinese foreign students and 42 U.S. students who had no intercultural experience. Using a psychophysic methodological approach (a questionnaire entailing different magnitudes to various experiences), the study allowed participants to make quantitative judgments about socio-cultural phenomena (e.g., life changes and cross-cultural transition). The results supported the premise that, regardless of what population sojourners originated from, cultural adjustment was inevitable. This study looked at life changes and how

they associate with cross-cultural transition. Results supported the view that, regardless of which population sojourners originated from, cultural adjustment was inevitable.

In Hill's (1983) opinion, it would seem that no amount of preparation, knowledge or skills could prepare you for work abroad. The learning process begins once you have left your comfort zone and moved to unfamiliar territory with different cultural, socio-economic and political standards.

Sojourner/Host Relationships

Taylor (1983) argued that adjustment to life-altering events (such as leaving home) centres on three distinct themes: (a) a search for meaning in the experience, (b) an attempt to regain mastery over the event and (c) an effort to restore self-esteem through self-enhancing evaluations. One question that is often omitted is, how does the host setting's reception of the sojourner affect cultural adjustment?

The process of cultural adjustment would appear to be more difficult when a sojourner is not only faced with a new language, food and traditions but also with stranger/host relationships. In the context of this discussion, "stranger" is defined as "one who has come face-to-face with the group for the first time" (Wood, 1934, p.43). The host in this context is the receiving party for the stranger. Levine (1979) theorized that whatever the stranger's (sojourner) aspirations for travel a response from the host community is likely. He noted that "the relationship between stranger and host is invested in a high degree of affect, and insisted that the relationship would be friendly if positive feelings

predominate, and antagonistic if negative ones dominated" (Levine, 1979, p. 30).

Levine (1979) also contended

> *that the critical variable is not the length of time a stranger spends in the host community; rather, the focus should be upon the type of relationship that the stranger aspires to establish with the host. Whatever the stranger's aspiration, there is a response by the host community to the stranger. (p. 404)*

Levine (1979) also specified

> *four factors that will affect the host's response toward the stranger; (a) the extent of stranger-host similarity (e.g., ethnicity, language, race), (b) the existence of categories and rituals for dealing with strangers, (c) the criteria used by the host for group membership (e.g., kinship, religion, citizenship), and (d) the conditions of the host community (e.g., size, age, degree of isolation). (p.406)*

Gudykunst (1983) enumerated several descriptive titles for strangers in foreign countries: guest, newly arrived, newcomer, immigrant, intruder, middle man minority and marginal person. He also found that whether or not a stranger was a universal person affected the host's attitude towards the stranger. His theory reveals that, regardless of what title sojourners receive or how they are viewed by their hosts, they remain susceptible to potentially difficult experiences of cultural adjustment.

Of noteworthiness is the fact that Levine (1979) and Gundykunst (1983) seem to differ on what is the key variable in the host's acceptance of the sojourner. Levine clearly identifies the length of time as the key component in evaluating how difficult the cultural adjustment for a sojourner will be. Gudykunst, however, noted that the title given to the sojourner is the key

element in determining his or her acceptance by the host country. In turn, the level of acceptance will affect the sojourners' cultural adjustment.

Brein & David (1971) theorized that a central ingredient of adjustment seems to be effective intercultural communication, which depends on the degree to which a flow of information and mutual understanding is exchanged between the sojourner and host. Mutual understanding, in turn, depends on the degree to which the sojourner understands the host culture, thereby requiring an understanding of the cultural variables that influence the communication situation (Martin, 1984). What is clearly evident is that host communities can view a stranger in different ways. The host's reception of the sojourner (stranger) virtually depends on the sojourner's motivation to visit abroad and the efforts he or she makes on various psycho-social levels while there.

Other Sojourner Groups Affected by Culture Shock

Much of the literature looked at thus far has highlighted the experience of students, immigrants and Peace Corps volunteers. Other studies have examined other populations (i.e., military wives, business personnel) who have been affected by the acculturation process and demonstrate several variables influencing the adjustment to a foreign culture. More specifically, Church (1982) labelled these critical variables "background variables" (nationality, status, language, gender, etc.) and "situational variables" (living arrangements in host family, social interaction) (p. 549). Church hypothesized that these variables had implications for both social interaction patterns and adjustment for sojourners. In Martin (1984), a study by Torbiorn (1982) examined 30 variables of adjustment for corporate personnel working abroad. He concluded that about 30 variables

together explain between 25% and 50% of the variance of satisfaction (adjustment variable) for that population (Martin, 1984, p.124).

In another study, Baty & Dold (1977) suggested that an intercultural home stay (i.e., living with a host family abroad) for college students was more distressing and upsetting for men than it was for women. The authors performed interviews, questionnaires and used several instruments of quantitative measurement (the OPI, CIQ, SD, CMI and MM) with a group of 59 students from affluent backgrounds. The participants lived for one month in Southwest Mexico in unfamiliar surroundings and the authors accounted their findings for either a relatively greater adaptive efficiency on the part of the women students or by the nature of the homestay. They accounted for their findings on the basis of either a relatively greater adaptive efficiency on the part of the women students or by the nature of the home stay. They concluded that women were either more skilled in adapting to new situations or were more protected in their home stay situation, which led to less exposure to stress (Martin, 1984).

Mckain (1984) supports Baty & Dold (1977) by suggesting that there are other factors apart from gender that contribute to the outcome of why females fare better than males with cultural adjustment. Mckain (1976) found that among military wives feelings of alienation were significantly correlated with reported problems with children, marital role tension and incidents of marital problems (Adelman, 1988). In addition, he found that non-alienated military wives reported greater social involvement with those in their community, and he

concluded that informal sources were more likely to be utilized in coping with environmental change (Adelman, 1988).

Klineberg & Hull (1979) studied 2536 non-immigrant foreign students at several post-secondary educational institutions around the world (i.e. Brazil, Canada, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Kenya, the United Kingdom and the U.S.). Participants of the study were asked to complete questionnaires and were also interviewed between five through seven months of the academic calendar. The study identified the variable of previous international experience; which indicated that foreign students who previously resided abroad seemed to significantly adjust better during their subsequent cross-cultural sojourns.

In the Furnham & Bochner (1986) study, the variable of distance between the culture of the sojourner and the culture of the host country is a crucial determinant of stress and coping. It is those same stressors that force sojourners to seek out and maintain strong social supports.

What is increasingly evident is that, whether one is a student, immigrant or military wife, cultural adjustment has its stressors, and different variables influence different groups to address better or worse the stress of cultural adjustment.

Coping Strategies for Sojourners

Sources of social support throughout various phases of cross-cultural adjustment are necessary. Regardless of how sojourners prepare for the journey ahead, the immediate response is an instinctual need to reaffirm their social support network. However, Groves (1984) found that telephoning home as a means of coping with stress may be reassuring, but it is often dysfunctional,

since family members are unfamiliar with the host culture and ill-prepared to solve problems. Groves also determined that strong ties with members of the home culture could undermine the development of close ties with host nationals, thereby lengthening the acculturation process for the sojourner.

There is a distinction between what is considered a close tie (e.g., family, friends) versus a weak tie (e.g., non-intimate relationships) and whom sojourners might choose for social support. For instance,

> *in a large scale longitudinal study of family relocations within the United States, Brett & Werbel (1980) found that 96 % of wives discussed the move with parents and friends, and that these women received expressions of confidence in their ability to handle the move from parents (96%) and friends (88%). For husbands, initial adjustment encouragement for the new job was derived primarily from old bosses (however, after the move, wives served as the primary resource for discussions about work, Brett & Werbel, 1980). (Adelman, 1988, p.190)*

Some sojourners seek out "informal support groups to engage in mutual self-disclosure and problem-solving" (Greenberg, 1980, p. 191). Arnold (1967) found that the "self-help groups for Peace Corps personnel experiencing poor adjustment enabled members to ventilate frustrations, receive appraisal from colleagues, and obtain suggestions for solving problems in the field" (p. 191).

Once sojourners begin to participate in cultural learning from their host country, they are in a better position to learn and accept their second-culture skills (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). Still Furnham & Bochner identify that even such favourable conditions do not necessarily lead to a reduction in cultural stress.

Reverse Culture Shock

In order to adequately prepare for work abroad, you must be emotionally and psychologically prepared to handle the adjustments to a new country, culture and lifestyle. Apart from these preparations, Hill (1983) suggests, "Workers posted abroad should attempt to learn more about the culture of the people, gain new language skills and properly research the country they plan to call home in the near future" (p. 81). But what of the home country they choose to leave and the adjustments that sojourners must make upon returning home? As they do with culture shock, many sojourners experience difficulties associated with reverse culture shock/re-entry upon their return home. Storti (1997) suggests that most expatriates find the readjusting back home or reverse culture shock more difficult than their adjustment overseas ever was (p.2). He invited observers to consider the following:

> - *In one study of American and Japanese returnees, 64 percent of the former and 55 percent of the latter reported "significant culture shock" upon repatriation.*
> - *Sixty-two percent of Peace Corps volunteers said they found re-entry "difficult."*
> - *Only 7 percent of returning teenagers said they felt at home with their peers in the United States.*
> - *Seventy-five percent of returning soldiers in one study said they found re-entry "difficult, time-consuming, and acrimonious."*
> - *More than 50 percent of Swedish exchange students said they "didn't fit in" when they returned to Sweden.*
> - *More than 50 percent of the executives in a survey of U.S. corporations said they experienced social re-entry problems upon repatriation.*
>
> *(Storti, 1997, p. 2)*

Reverse culture shock or re-entry can be perceived as the opposite experience to culture shock. Similarly as in culture shock, many sojourners move through several stages of readjustment upon their return home.

Storti's (1977) re-entry model consists of four stages: leave-taking and departure, the honeymoon, reverse culture shock and readjustment. The first stage of re-entry, called leave taking and departure, is a bittersweet time, when the sojourner looks forward to going home and reconnecting with friends and family, but is sad at having to leave behind their overseas life and friends. The second stage, known as the honeymoon, occurs when the novelty of being home is high for the returnees, and they become the centre of attention wherever they go. The third stage of re-entry, reverse culture shock, usually sets in when most of the friends and family of the returnees have visited. During this period, returnees begin to realize how their experience abroad sets them apart from their compatriots at home. Some returnees begin to doubt their reasons for returning home and become overwhelmed by their situation. Returnees are also known to withdraw from family and friends at this stage. The final stage of Storti's re-entry model is readjustment. It occurs when returnees are able to see both the home and host country for what they are and no longer hold ill feelings towards their home country for not being their host country. (Storti, 1997)

Although the actual problems faced by each sojourner will be different, the experience itself does seem to unfold according to a predictable pattern (Storti, 1997). However, Storti reminds us that it's not possible to lay down a predictable timetable for these stages. It is my assumption that re-entry/reverse

culture shock can last for an unspecified amount of time and that a predetermining factor would be the individual experience of each sojourner.

Adler (1986) found that six months was a common milestone, with returnees generally accepting their situation and reporting feeling "average," that is, neither emotionally higher nor lower than normal, at that point. The amount of time a sojourner spent abroad seemed to also affect his or her re-entry experience. But some researchers, like Uehara (1986), maintain opposing views to Adler's theory.

According to Uehara (1986), length of stay abroad is not related to re-entry adaptation in student sojourners, although age could be considered an important factor. Uehara also suggested that student returnees experienced difficulties during the re-entry transition, which took its toll on the psychological well-being of student sojourners.

Unlike Uehara, Storti (1997) determined that the longer the sojourn, the greater the chance for adaptation and the harder it may be to leave or come home. He adds that "to truly understand re-entry, we need to understand what we mean by home, what we want—and especially what we need—home to be" (Storti, 1997, p.14).

Sojourner's Coping Strategies with Re-entry

Klineberg (1981) noted that pre-departure experiences, levels of competence and degree of preparation will affect what happens to a person while abroad. These, in turn, will influence a sojourner's course after returning home. There are several variables that affect re-entry/reverse culture shock for the sojourner.

Storti (1997) outlined eight key variables for difficulties associated with reverse culture shock: 1) involuntary re-entry, 2) unexpected re-entry, 3) age, 4) previous re-entry experience, 5) degree of interaction with overseas culture, 6) the re-entry environment, 7) amount of interaction with the home culture during the overseas sojourn and 8) degree of difference between the overseas and the home culture (Storti, 1997, p. 70).

The presence of variable one of Storti's model indicated that the return home for the sojourner would be more difficult to overcome if it was involuntary. If variable two was present—if re-entry was unexpected by the sojourner—the experience of readjustment would be more challenging. Variable three indicated that the experience of re-entry could be easier for older sojourners, given their life experience; and variable four highlighted that past re-entry experience allowed for an advantage to those who had sojourned previously. With variable five, the more interaction a sojourner had with their host culture, the harder it would be to leave it behind. Yet with variable six, the more familiar the sojourner is with changes at home, the easier the process of re-entry. The final variable noted by Storti (1997) indicated that the greater the differences between a host and home culture, the greater the readjustment difficulties for the sojourner.

It is my assertion that the experience of reverse culture shock/re-entry can be viewed as a mourning or loss for the sojourner. What once was will no longer be, and the realities of coming home and the inevitable change involved can bring on emotional and psychological difficulties. One possible way to avoid such a potential reality is for sojourners to prepare for their return home while

abroad. Another way is for sojourners to anticipate reverse culture shock and to prepare themselves prior to going abroad.

Storti (1997) also offered several suggestions to those abroad—business employees, military personnel, missionaries, spouses and their children, exchange students, Peace Corps volunteers. He (Storti, 1997) advised sojourners to

> *adjust their attitude and expectations about returning home, to develop a budget as soon as possible while still abroad, to seek out other returnees for a sympathetic ear and continue to have contact with other foreigners even though you have come home. (p. 43)*

Rationale and Research Question

Literature on cultural adjustment has shown that the experience of culture shock is different for everyone, that sojourners move through stages of culture shock differently and that the symptoms associated are unavoidable. In addition, acculturation is depicted as a more difficult transition for the sojourner to undergo when home and host cultures have greater differences. Furthermore, the experience of immigrants and sojourners are seen to be synonymous, for they suffer similar symptoms of cultural adjustment. Some researchers (Wood, 1934, Dyal & Dyal, 1981, Murphy, 1973) argue that the reception by the host country, length of time abroad and ability to communicate with host nationals all have a direct effect on the overall sojourner experience. Yet the literature only provides examples of stressors and variables related to the sojourner experience of military wives, students, Peace Corps volunteers, refugees and immigrants. The effects of reverse culture shock also seem to have a more

strenuous impact on the experience of sojourners, and the literature provides only minor suggestions on how sojourners could better cope with reverse culture shock.

What is for certain is that in all aspects of cultural adjustment, sojourners, whether they are students or Peace Corps volunteers, are affected by their experience. If the information provided in the literature on cultural adjustment is applicable to other groups, such as immigrants, could it not be the same for sojourners who opt to work abroad? For some reason, the acculturation process, coping strategies and experience of sojourners who opt to work abroad is excluded from the literature. In addition, the coping strategies of sojourners do not present sources other than family, friends or other informal social support networks utilized by sojourners. It is in this area that social work can play an influential part in responding to the needs of sojourners who opt to work abroad by addressing what the literature fails to address. Perhaps with this knowledge, further research can be undertaken.

While the shortage of empirical knowledge is real, what is increasingly evident is that whether one is examining theories of culture shock or researching the effects of reverse culture shock/re-entry for sojourners, current literature is outdated and fails to bridge the gap between these two experiences. Furthermore, there is a dearth of literature on cultural adjustment and what it implies for social work practice. Furnham & Bochner (1986) are both firm believers that when it comes to culture-learning for sojourners the technology exists for teaching second-culture skills training (SST) and that it is easier, more economical and more effective than remedial approaches based on counselling

and psychotherapy. It should be noted that not all sojourners are privy to international program luxuries of psychotherapy and counseling. Bearing this in mind, we must remember that in many instances, program participants have already been victimized by symptoms of stress, isolation or depression as a result of their experience with culture and reverse culture shock.

Furnham & Bochner (1986) argued that despite the fact that people have sojourned since time immemorial, it is not until comparatively recently that systematic research has been done on this topic. The authors also reported that research has been undertaken by researchers from a variety of academic backgrounds, but that the research in this area has been primarily confined to two groups: students and voluntary workers. This suggests that very little research has examined the experience of other groups, such as sojourners who opt to work abroad.

As social workers we are called upon to work with a variety of groups/populations that require support, assistance and sometimes referral (e.g., refugees, immigrants) regardless of their historical background or reasons for coming to Canada. It is also my assertion that, although the experience of refugees and immigrants varies widely from that of sojourners, these experiences do maintain some similarities. Like refugees and immigrants, sojourners are subjected to a variety of stressors upon entry into a new cultural milieu (Furnham & Bochner, 2001). Lin (1986) enumerated eight major pre- and post-migration sources of stress: culture shock, acculturation pressures, accelerated modernization, loss and grief, social isolation, status inconsistency, pre-migration trauma and minority status. Martin (1984) found that these

stressors were felt by both immigrants and sojourners. Such an association could suggest that similar implications for other groups are possible and could be applied by social workers who work with such groups. That being said, similar propositions could be implemented for sojourners. The remaining question that is addressed by this study is the following: how do sojourners who opt to work abroad experience culture shock and reverse culture shock? The present study is designed to explore the experience of cultural adjustment for the JET sojourner and their implications for social work practice.

Chapter 3

Methodology

For the purpose of this research, I chose to implement an exploratory/descriptive case study. Through this methodology, I sought to understand the program participants' experience with cultural adjustment.

I am a trained social work practitioner with bachelor's degrees in Applied Social Science and Social Work. In addition to my professional experience as a JET alumna, I had a general interest in the many obstacles and facilitative factors that JET alumni experienced because of this chosen lifestyle. This case-study method was incorporated to grasp a sense of understanding of JET participants' experience while on the JET and upon returning home. Its aim was also to highlight the meaning and themes these sojourners attach to those experiences and what coping resources, if any, they draw on through this process. Although researchers such as Fortune & Reid (1999) do not believe that case studies are able to determine effects of intervention in a definitive way, other researchers such as Patton (1990) report that case studies are particularly valuable when the evaluation aims to capture individual differences or unique variations from one program setting to another, or from one program experience to another (p. 124).

The JET Programme

The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme was established by the Japanese government in 1987 with the objective of improving foreign-language education and for promoting internationalization at a local level throughout Japan. JET participants work in Japanese public schools and

government offices for a minimum of one year to a maximum of three years. As of 2002, there were 6,273 participants in the program from 38 countries, 991 of which were Canadians (JET Application 2003–2004). Participants are hired as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), Coordinators of International Relations (CIRs) or Sports Exchange Advisors (SEAs). For the purpose of this study, only the sojourn of ALTs will be further explored.

ALTs are engaged in language instruction and are placed mainly in local Boards of Education or publicly run elementary, junior and senior high schools. An ALT's main role in the classroom is to participate in what is called "team-teaching" with a Japanese English instructor. The concept behind this design is to offer Japanese students a learning environment in which they can receive English or French instruction from a native speaker as well as the comfort of knowing that a Japanese teacher is available for translation if necessary. In some cases, participants team-teach other languages, such as German, Chinese and Korean. Applicants to the program must possess specific requirements. Primarily, they must hold a bachelor's degree, have a general interest in Japan and, in the case of Canadians, be a Canadian citizen. Applicants who become participants in the JET Programme must also be prepared to perform the following duties:

- *to assist in classes taught by Japanese foreign language teachers in junior and senior high schools,*
- *to assist in foreign language conversation training, etc., at primary/elementary schools,*
- *to assist in preparation of materials for teaching a foreign language,*
- *to assist in language training of Japanese teachers of the foreign language,*

- *to provide information on language and other related subjects for people such as Teachers' Consultants and Japanese teachers of the foreign language (e.g. word usage, pronunciation, etc.).*
- *to assist in foreign language speech contests,*
- *to engage in local international exchange activities,*
- *and other duties as specified by Contracting Organisation*

(The JET Programme 2002-2003 CLAIR pamphlet, p. 6)

As of July 2002, the JET Alumni Association (JETAA) was active in 12 countries, consisted of 45 chapters, and boasted approximately 14,000 members (The JET Programme CLAIR pamphlet 2002-2003).

The Montreal chapter of the JET Programme is administered by the Consular General du Japon, and potential participants must write an essay and complete an extensive application form. Applicants undergo a panel interview and, if selected, depart from Montreal or their home province by July of the same year. During participants' time abroad, they engage in local international exchange activities as well as other cultural events promoting their home country.

In Japan, the JET Programme is overseen by the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations, or CLAIR. As stated in The JET Programme CLAIR pamphlet 2002-2003,

> *CLAIR was established in July 1988 as a joint organization of local authorities to promote and provide support for local level internationalization in Japan. Based in Tokyo, CLAIR has a domestic network of branch offices located in each prefecture and designated city in Japan. In addition to managing the JET Programme, CLAIR uses its domestic and overseas networks to gather and distribute information regarding grass-roots internationalization and community promotion policies in foreign countries. (p. 19)*

In addition to CLAIR, JET participants are offered the resource of AJET (Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching), which "is an independent organization comprised of current JET participants. AJET cooperates with the JET Programme to promote and support internationalization, provide information to participants and assist with specialized training seminars" (The JET Programme CLAIR pamphlet 2002-2003, p. 18).

Upon the JET participants' return to Montreal, some become involved with the Japanese Teaching Exchange Alumni Association or JETAA which prides itself on offering several resources and, among other things, providing assistance to JET participants returning to Canada to cope with reverse culture shock, find new jobs, or excel in academics. (http://montreal.JETaa.ca/contents/english/english.html, Feb 4th, 2003)

Participants

Two staff (one male and one female) members from the JET Programme selection committee, two volunteers (one male and one female) from the JET Alumni Association (JETAA) and four former JET participants (four females) participated in this study. Of the participants in this study, the staff participants were born outside Canada, as were two of the former JET participants. In contrast, the JETAA volunteers and the remaining two JET alumni were all born in Canada. It should be noted that this occurrence was coincidental. What is more, the volunteers from JETAA were also former JET participants and also assume administrative roles at times with JET staff. For this reason, they were regarded as JET staff. The JET staff participant had never participated on the JET programme. For the purpose of this study, all participants were classified

into two groups, to simplify their responses. Through the course of this research, JET staff and JETAA volunteers are referred to as *Staff* and former JET participants are characterized as *sojourners/participants*.

All sojourners had participated in the JET Programme for the maximum period of three years, and all had previous experiences with cultural adjustment. More specifically, sojourners either immigrated to Canada themselves or participated in other excursions abroad prior to the JET Programme. Additionally, all the sojourners who participated in this study were women.

Prior to contacting people for interviews, the Coordinator of the JET Programme in Montreal was contacted by formal letter explaining the research and requesting authorization to contact other Staff and former sojourners of the program. Once permission and confirmation of the research was given, staff participants were specifically chosen by the researcher based on their position title and role in conjunction with the program. Non-confidential public documents pertaining to the JET Programme were provided by the Consul General du Japon, and a content analysis of thesis documents was completed by the researcher.

Study participants were recruited through verbal announcements at JETAA meetings and activities and were contacted through the Montreal JETAA group e-mail list. In addition, events held by the Japanese Cultural Centre of Montreal and Consul General du Japon allowed the researcher to have further contact with potential participants. At JETAA meetings, group facilitators as well as the researcher announced the purpose of the study to JET alumni. JET

sojourners were randomly selected on a voluntary basis in response to recruitment notices.

Data Collection

Initial contact between potential participants and myself was made by e-mail to set up a time and location for an interview to take place. This was normally followed up by a telephone call to the participant to confirm and//or answer any questions regarding the study. Once confirmation of the interview was made, interviews were conducted at the participants' home or in other locations, such as an empty music room or participants' office. Prior to the interview, participants reviewed and signed a detailed informed consent form and received answers to any questions they had. Participants were informed in the consent form, as well as by me that they could withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, participants were asked to voluntarily take part in a one-hour in-depth, semi-structured interview. All interviews were tape recorded and were transcribed with no identifying information. Pseudonyms were assigned to participants and public documents as follows: JET sojourners/participants (JSP1, JSP2, JSP3, JSP4), staff (S1, S2, S3, S4) and public documents. Subsequent to the transcription of the audiotapes, the tapes were destroyed. Participants were assured anonymity and confidentiality.

Interviews ranged from 30 to 60 minutes. For many of the participants, this created an opportunity to reminisce about their experience in Japan, their experience returning home and what gains they had made from those combined experiences. At times, while participants were in the process of recounting stories and being very open on the topic, the audiotape would come to an end.

Participants continued their stories even after the tape had stopped recording. In these cases, I took notes of the participants' responses after the completion of the interview.

As has been previously mentioned, interviews were semi-structured, consisting of open-ended questions followed by prompts to obtain further information or clarification. The main themes addressed in interviews were personal/cultural background, initial expectations of Japan, experience in the JET Programme, coping skills and support and degree of adjustment while away and upon returning home. All tape recordings were reviewed after transcription. Verbatim responses from study participants were recorded, and common themes were coded to highlight patterns in participants' experience with cultural adjustment.

Ethical Issues

This study was approved by the McGill University Ethics Review Board for studies involving human subjects (see Research Ethics and Approval form in Appendix A).

Participants in the study were ensured confidentiality and anonymity, and they signed consent forms (see Appendix B) detailing this assurance. Interview transcriptions and audiotapes utilized for the study were destroyed by the researcher.

Chapter 4

Findings and Discussion

As was noted in earlier chapters, three data sources were examined to answer the research question. The data were derived from public documents, interviews with staff and interviews with sojourners of the JET Programme. This chapter will explore the findings for each of the sources of data and provide a discussion of themes that arose from the data.

4.1 Findings and discussion from Public documents

I completed a content analysis of non-confidential public documents was completed by the researcher, and four major themes emerged: *internationalization, culture shock being inevitable and job performance carrying more value, availability of support and reverse culture shock does not exist..*

One finding was the theme of *internationalization.* This theme characterizes the goal of promoting mutual cultural understanding between JETs and the Japanese. Throughout public documents this theme was displayed as a requirement for JET applicants/sojourners. The following excerpt provides an example of this theme:

> *Participants are invited to Japan as representatives of their countries. Therefore, they are expected to be responsible in all their activities, especially those concerning the promotion of mutual understanding between actions.*
>
> *(JET Application Form for Canadian Applicants 2003-2004)*

The theme of *internationalization* was also indicated by statements such as the following:

> *...the program aims to enhance foreign language education in Japan, and to promote international exchange at the local level though fostering ties between Japanese and foreign youth. (Join the JET Programme and discover Japan pamphlet, 2002)*

and

> *The Programme is expected to increase cross-cultural understanding as well as contribute to internationalization efforts in Japan. (The JET Programme 2002-2003-CLAIR pamphlet)*

as well as the following, which stated:

> *As a JET participant, it is important to keep in mind that you will be seen as a 'cultural ambassador' of your own country. Your actions, whether fairly or unfairly, will be interpreted as representative of all people from your home country. (The JET Programme: General Description pamphlet from CLAIR, 2001)*

Another finding outlined in public documents was *culture shock being inevitable and job performance carrying more value*. This theme showed that culture shock occurs to all who sojourn, but for JET sojourners the task of teaching is more prevalent than the experience of culture shock. This particular finding was highlighted by passages in public documents such as;

> *Applicants to the position of ALT must have the ability to adapt to living and office/school conditions in Japan. (The JET Programme 2002-2003-CLAIR pamphlet)*

and

> *...it is desirable that applicants are adaptable and display a keen interest in Japan and its culture. (Join the JET Programme and discover Japan pamphlet, 2002)*

and finally,

> *There is no doubt that you will encounter many first time experiences while on the JET Programme. Therefore, JET participants will need to be able to think and act on their feet. Additionally, as you will be working as part of a team within a foreign culture, it will be expected that you have the ability to adjust to changing circumstances as they present themselves. (The JET Programme: General Description from CLAIR, 2001)*

The third theme that I found in public documents was the theme of *availability of support*. This theme can be perceived as the availability of support resources for JETs. Elements of this theme were apparent in phrases such as:

> *...specialized training to Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), as well as counseling in education–related matters throughout the year. CLAIR also provides a counseling information service for JET participants during their tenure in the JET Programme. (Join the JET Programme and discover Japan pamphlet, 2002)*

In addition, public documents noted an availability of support through CLAIR. More specifically, they emphasized the following:

> *To help the JET Programme run smoothly, a counselling system has been set up to meet participants' needs for consultation regarding personal or work-related issues.*
>
> *There are seven Programme Coordinators (PCs) working in the JET Programme Management Department at CLAIR. Programme Coordinators are former JET Programme participants who have undergone basic counselling training by professional counsellors. Programme Coordinators respond to direct inquiries from JET Programme participants as well.*
>
> *In order to develop the counselling system for non-English speaking JET Programme participants, CLAIR has created the role of Self-Support Group Leaders (SGL). Two SGLs are available from each language group to handle consultation and counselling–type calls.*
>
> *(All the above excerpts were taken from The JET Programme 2002-2003 CLAIR pamphlet).*

The final theme that emerged in public documents was that *reverse culture shock does not exist.* This theme is derived from the absence of information given in public documents to JET applicants. It was evident from the lack of information related to this topic in public documents. The following excerpt was the only reference to reverse culture shock in public documents from the JET Programme:

> *Some JETAA chapters hold orientations for JET returnees to offer them helpful information on readjusting at home and on how their work with JET can apply to their future careers. (Join the JET Programme and discover Japan pamphlet, 2002)*

In as much as public documents regarding the JET Programme offer information and insight into the expectations of applicants and sojourners, much discussion can be held on the underlying themes that surface from an extensive content analysis.

Upon further investigation of the theme of *internationalization,* what is apparent is that, while several references to *internationalization* are made in public documents for applicants, little specific information is given as to how JET sojourners are to achieve internationalization. It is almost as though an assumption is made in public documents that JET sojourners possess a special ability to transfer this knowledge to their Japanese counterparts and students. As well, references to "cultural ambassador" and the responsibilities associated with this role may have the potential to create a burden for JET sojourners who do not fully understand the extent to which their participation is valued. Furthermore, evidence of this theme suggests that stranger/host relationships

will strengthen as a result of internationalization. Additionally, the literature (Brein & David, 1971) supports the notion that positive exchanges between sojourners and a host country can promote mutual cultural understanding. It has also been my experience that as cultural ambassadors of the JET Programme, sojourners carry out the task of bridging cultural gaps between their home culture and the Japanese one, all the while balancing that task with the one of making smooth cultural adjustments while there. The difficulty becomes more apparent as it becomes clear that there are high expectations within public documents for sojourners to cope with adaptability.

Pubic documents also displayed the theme that *culture shock was inevitable but that job performance carried more value.* Although academic literature indicates that culture shock is to be expected when working abroad, and in some cases it can be a difficult experience, public documents failed to offer realistic means by which JET sojourners could experience cultural adjustment. Consequently, public documents showcased job performance as the main ingredient for a successful JET experience. Consequently, it would be safe to assume that JET sojourners might improve upon tasks performed if their experience of culture shock was not overlooked, but rather was addressed by the JET Programme.

Since the literature (Oberg, 1960) maintains that many sojourners experience difficulties with culture shock, it is evident that support for JET sojourners is crucial. As the theme of support came to light in public documents, there was a vague sense of how efficiently already existing support systems from the JET Programme functioned. Other questions began to arise. More

specifically, although CLAIR clearly outlined its *availability of support* for JET sojourners in need, there was no indication as to what "basic training" for Program Coordinators (PCs) consisted of or whether PCs were clinically certified by any other organization apart from JET to appropriately address the needs of JET sojourners. Failure to examine this probability could therefore promote increased difficulty with culture shock for the JET sojourner. The absence of this information could potentially allow for a false sense of reality for the JET applicant of what working in the JET Programme entails regarding emotional and psychological well-being.

The final theme revealed in public documents indicated that *reverse culture shock does not exist*. By contrast, many researchers (Storti, 1997) contend that the experience of reverse culture shock tends to be far worse than that of culture shock. In this instance, public documents contradicted this claim. Somehow the experience of re-entry to what is familiar is said to create more difficulties with adjustment for the sojourner. What is more is that, through my own experience, it can be said that the process of adjustment is equally difficult but can sometimes take longer to move through than that of the initial experience of culture shock. In all this, what is clear is that public documents for the JET Programme offer great appeal and an international opportunity, but they negate some of the emotional and psychological costs sojourners must pay if selected to participate.

4.2 Findings from Staff Interviews and Discussion

In addition to analyzing public documents, staff members of the JET Programme were interviewed, and several themes became apparent through

further analysis. They are the following: *the JET Programme is the most reputable of programs; JET carries high standards for those who are eligible to take part; sojourner experience, good or bad, was to be expected; there was uncertainty of support for sojourners.*

One of the themes that emerged from staff interviews was that the *JET Programme is the most reputable of programs.* This theme is described through the high reverence given to the program and how other similar programs fail to have the standards of JET. Many indicators of this theme were displayed through the responses by staff regarding their expectations of participants and of the program itself. When staff were asked what the ideal candidate for JET possessed, many listed qualities such as a clear sense of self and cultural understanding and flexibility. One example was reported by S1, who said that,

> *The ideal candidate in my mind is someone who has a passion for cultures and I mean their own culture and other cultures and not just Japan and Canada for example. But one of the- a lot of people have said this-one of the most trying things they had was dealing with the Japanese culture but if they were in a city they had to deal with-and had to work with- a lot of people from a lot of different cultures might think that Japan is just Japanese but you have a lot of other foreigners there and you're socializing.*

Other members remarked that many JET participants did not realize the opportunity given to them, and some staff were bothered by this pattern. For instance, S1 indicated,

> *I guess one thing I found really annoying was a lot of people went on the JET programme because they had nothing else to do. They'd left university, didn't know what they were doing or-I mean that's fine there's no reason why you have to be completely directed throughout your entire life. But the JET*

> *program affords you a lot of time to think you know, quietly by yourself about what's the next step. And a lot of people, after three years even, still didn't know what they wanted to do. And you know they had that before they went on the JET program, and the JET program didn't solve it for them and they still have it when they get back. That's, you know, the fundamental question for all young people. What they want to do.*

Another finding reported by staff was the *high standards JET carries for those who are eligible to take part.* This theme is defined by the measures by which JET applicants are rated. Some responses varied regarding the criteria of participants:

> *I think there are a few, very important points in terms of, criteria that we're looking for that are mandatory. Candidates have to be young people, because it is a, a youth-oriented program, so they have to be under 40 years of age. It is a bit unfortunate for some people, because we do have people do re-apply who have a ton of experience and, are just above the age limit and, they would probably be very good candidates. Another one, is that they need to be Canadian citizens. The JET programme is based on nationalities, so, we have different countries participating, but, when you want to apply, you have to go through your country of residence, through your country of nationality. And the third one, obviously is that you have a bachelor's degree. These are, the 3 main criteria that if you don't have any one of these 3, you won't be able to participate. If you can... show in the application and during the interview that there is a legitimate interest, in the program and most of it being in Japan, then that's, general interest. When you see someone's file, it's pretty easy to define what it is right there. If someone is smart enough, they will make an effort put in whatever link they have to Japan or visit they made, in the country.*
> *(Excerpt from S2 interview)*

and as described by S3 said,

> *In the foreign country, so you have to be quite mature to handle, this and uh, so we have to look for, this kind of quality, person who can and, having a sense of humour. Japanese society compared to Canadian society... is a, a bit too close or stiff I would say.*

Staff acknowledged their own judicious values for the ideal participant, as specified by S1:

> *I think I'd be slightly prejudiced toward people who had not come straight out of university, who had had some working experience before they went- like a full time working experience because I think they'd have a better, better grounding of what work would be like on JET.*

When asked about suggestions for improvements with the JET Programme, staff referred to the need to change JETs' departure dates. JET participants currently must depart from Montreal on two separate departure dates in the month of July. Staff also mentioned the fact that the general aim of the JET program was questionable. For example;

> *I really didn't realize how in some ways what a waste some of the JET Programme is. I mean it's such a great opportunity for the Japanese people and the Japanese government and it's squandered because of largely not completely largely squandered because the Japanese education system in, my mind, doesn't really know how to teach a foreign language. So you have all these people who could be this great resource and you know fifty per cent of the time you just imitate recorders and I don't know it seems. It's a very untapped resource! You know and if only you know I think the Japanese have to sort of take a page out of I don't know, say Holland's book or other countries that have really mastered a second language like English and just use their techniques in teaching it because their own method of trying to teach English like they teach Japanese is just futile you know And it sets them back yeah. So the JET-you know, my opinion of the JET Programme is that it's a great program, it's great for the participants you know? How much the Japanese are getting out of it could be enhanced. (Excerpt from S1)*

Another theme that arose in findings was that *sojourner experience, good or bad, was to be expected.* This theme is explained as the normalcy of

positive and negative attributes attached to the experience by participation on JET. Staff outlined several indicators that revealed their opinions why sojourners' experience with adjustment in Japan was difficult. Comments from staff ranged from whether or not a sojourner was well-prepared to the fact that the obstacles of adjustment were inevitable and that good preparation on the part of the sojourner allowed for a smoother transition through cultural adjustment. Yet what was also noted was that many JETS indulged in negative behaviour to cope with this adjustment, which often caused stress. For example, the following was expressed by S4:

> *I think one of the greatest complaints or things that caused the greatest stress for people there was I think the amount of time they had on their hands like a lot of people had again they keep busy in their own culture, they have friends they have family everything takes up a lot of time right? But then suddenly you arrive in this culture where you don't know many people, you're in an isolated place especially like if you're in "inaka" (countryside) you're like god there's only so much TV you can watch, so much Japanese you can study and you need to find something else to keep your mind active and keep you engaged in the society. It doesn't mean you know, cocooning away and, you know, I don't know, playing video games or something. But, you know, becoming engaged in the culture and society and, yeah making sure you don't go stir crazy. Because I knew a lot of people over there who just went really stir crazy, they were bored out of their minds and then they're so bored they start overindulging in alcohol or food or you know?*

In addition to these findings staff emphasized a need for sojourners to develop routines and appropriate goals and the importance of becoming involved in community activities. As well, sustaining friendships with Japanese people and maintaining ties with other JETs were mentioned as being equally important in coping with culture shock. When asked about what

coping mechanisms JETs mostly utilized, the following responses were reported:

> *Being able to share on that level and have intimate conversation with someone, again who understood... but at the same time not... letting go of the Japanese friends I was making... as if they – you know, that I had to pick one... group? But I saw a lot...either they weren't in the same... age group, or they just... it didn't occur to them that you could... where's the cultural gap of people really just didn't – make friends with their Japanese... co-teachers? And I – I think...they seemed to sort of get on okay in terms of surviving their time, but I don't think any of them really, got a lot of... rich experience out of it. (Excerpt from S4)*

More particularly, staff reported how sojourners sometimes did the best they could with the resources they had, as noted by S2:

> *JETS certainly use social resources like their friends. You rely heavily on your friends like it's quite amazing how again you have maybe foreign friends and some Japanese friends and everyone's from a different culture. And you know I'm still in touch with most of the people I worked with because I think there's kind of this crucible where you're sort of forged together. Because you relied on each other a lot in those months and years you were over there. And there's a very strong bond I still feel with a lot of people that I worked with whether they're Japanese and foreign. And we still keep in touch and stuff like that. A lot of it is survival tactic sure. Honestly I've said this many times. Would I have been friends with many of these people had I not been thrown in this situation? Maybe I was with ten people? Probably one. Had I met them in Montreal and you know things are cool. Probably one of them I would have been friends with but probably even then casual friends you know? But in that situation where the- you have to work together. If you want to speak English you have to find these guys you quickly find ways to tolerate and to overlook several things.*

This theme also led to staff reactions to reverse culture shock. Some staff reported that the JET experience could shift people's thinking and thereby have an effect on their experience of reverse culture shock, while

others minimized the effects. But what staffers agreed upon was the fact that the duration of the JET experience affects the process of reverse culture shock. This finding was explained by S2:

> *I think both (culture shock and reverse culture shock) are difficult. To be honest, I think the longer you've stayed abroad, the harder it is for you to come back. And... that for me was a bit of a surprise when I came back. I think the danger which, is – is a strong word, maybe too strong, but when you 're abroad, for a long time is that you do lose, many contacts and many relationships that you had at home.*

The final theme in findings for staff was that of *uncertainty of support resources for sojourners.* This theme is described as staff's ignorance staff remarked about CLAIR and the availability of resources for JET sojourners. Although social workers are not available to sojourners on JET, some staff agreed that during Montreal interviews social work could play an invaluable role in the selection of participants. It was suggested that this resource could aid sojourners in their experience with culture shock and reverse culture shock. An illustration of this was given by S3:

> *Japan itself is completely homogeneous... so they have to learn, to accept, foreigners. So for this purpose I think the JET programme is doing a really good thing for Japan to learn, to accept their faults. It is a good step for them. The purpose of the interviews is to find out their differences, adjustment ability and cultural sensitivity of applicants. The area of social work could benefit as social work is needed to... make a bridge.*

Based on the findings, it is obvious that staff place high value on the maintenance of the JET Programme and its highly esteemed and regarded reputation. The preservation of this standard is accomplished by a means of protocol and practice that insist on a selection of only the best candidates.

Apart from the program's criteria for Canadian citizenship, age and a university degree, candidates must also demonstrate their ability to remain flexible and culturally appropriate and to know themselves. But what of applicants who do not have a clear sense of self? Or applicants who cannot apply or participate on JET due to lack of appropriate criteria? It would seem that JET applicants are caught in a conundrum to satisfy the expectations of the programme while ensuring their own sense of being. And for many of us, knowing ourselves still remains a mystery. It cannot be forgotten that JET must adhere to some mode of selection for participants. I believe that JETs' current standards for participants is so high, that many applicants do not match up. As a result, these applicants could be considered victims of some form of discrimination by exclusion. This issue could be further investigated as a topic for future research.

Findings from staff also described immaturity as an unavoidable reality of sojourners. While the JET Programme boasts the fact that this is a youth-oriented program, many staff interviewed expressed an unnerving opinion of the level of maturity for many sojourners who take part in JET. This finding may suggest that there is a contradiction between JET's goals for a youth-oriented program and that of the current population of sojourners chosen by JET. And although some researchers (Rai, 1988; Marin et al., 1987; Mavreas et al., 1989) consider that younger people experience cultural adjustment more easily than do their older counterparts, JET staff findings do not.

In addition, findings from staff minimized the improvements needed for the program, but some comments raised the question of JETs' efficiency in

Japan and the possibility of a need for curriculum changes for Japanese students.

When asked about suggestions for sojourners in regard to good preparation, staff talked about the necessity for sojourners to do this but offered few suggestions other than those of attending pre-orientation departure, becoming involved in community activities and contacting CLAIR as a means by which to achieve a smoother adjustment while in Japan. JETAA was the only suggestion made to sojourners regarding reverse culture shock. What is more is that staff referred in findings to bad indulgences and practices by sojourners trying to cope with cultural adjustment. Yet somehow, no preventative plan for sojourners who felt distressed by cultural adjustment has so far been. Staff also conveyed that JET relied on the presence of CLAIR and its abilities to handle any situation experienced by sojourners. But from what we know of CLAIR, it is equipped to manage only "basic" issues for sojourners. And although research (Hill, 1983) points to a need for proper preparation prior to departure, it would seem that more planning for sojourners in turmoil might be a consideration JET staffers may have to begin to look at.

Regarding reverse culture shock, staff findings displayed a consensus with the literature (Storti, 1997) that determined that a longer term abroad allowed for a harder re-entry experience back home. It is my opinion that time does play a significant role in the process of cultural adjustment for JET sojourners.

Finally, staff findings articulated the idea of social work as a positive addition to the program's performance, yet there was no indication of the likelihood of social work playing an indelible role or becoming a resource for JET sojourners. What is of more concern is that all findings indicate an awareness of CLAIR, but no quantifiable information is provided on how often JET sojourners access CLAIR or on the reliability of CLAIR's resources.

4.3 Findings and discussion from JET Sojourners' interviews

To gain a better understanding of the experience of cultural adjustment among JET sojourners, data from interviews with JET sojourners were also investigated. There were three outstanding themes that stood out from the analysis. They were as follows: *JET will give me the answers, reckoning with self and a need to be heard.*

First and foremost, the theme *JET has the answers* presented itself in many forms throughout the data. This theme is depicted by the many questions that JETs sojourners have and hope to find answers to while in the JET Programme. JET sojourners reflected on the opportunity that JET offered, how they found out about the program and the reputation that preceded the program. An indication of this was shown by JSP1:

> *Q: Before going to Japan did you – did you have any interests, in, the country, the culture, anything like that?*
> *A: I basically chose the JET program because it was, after doing some research on the internet, it was the most legitimate sounding and you know well set-up program that existed. And I really felt like it was, well done it was professional it was well-organized.*

Another finding within this theme was the fact that JET sojourners admitted to applying for JET based on a general avoidance of home life, an uncertainty about themselves and a search for validation through this new-found independence. Evidence of this practice was revealed by JPS4:

> *Q. How did you hear about the JET programme?*
> *A. I was at McGill... And... I think it was just by luck, I was passing... by something on the board, and I saw it there? The JET programme? And I was finishing my – my degree, and I wanted a change, you know a break and... it was actually... my way of, running away from home? But in a structured environment? I just wanted to leave. I just wanted a new experience, I... knew that I always liked to travel....And this program sounded, very well structured, they pretty much set you up there, and it would be to teaching. I applied and my parents didn't even know I applied... And then I went to the interview and I said, "I'm going to an interview for JET." And they're like, "for what?" (Laughs) And I'm like, "it's to go to Japan." And they freaked.*
> *Q. In a good way or a bad way?*
> *A. Bad way. Because... they knew I was, running away, type of thing?*
> *A. When they visited me, ... they actually realized wow, you – you actually are... capable, of living without us.... You're independent.*

Other findings indicated that some JET sojourners who applied to JET did so based on a need to seek employment and expand their résumé. But, when asked about their view of preparation, some reported their confusion with the way in which information was given to them regarding pre-departure in Montreal. JPS3 explained that;

> *To be honest I find that although you have lots of presentations, and then after you are accepted you have lots of meetings. Nobody actually tells you clearly, that you will be team-teaching. Or at least, I didn't get that idea. That it will be team-teaching. So... I expected a lot more hard work? Thinking that I will be all by myself? I think you're – you're never well-prepared. Because, I think, all the meetings and all*

> *the documentation had worked fantastic. To give you an idea. But, you know once you get there, it's a totally different world, so yes, all those, documents I read before, they gave me an idea, but it's one thing to read about it, it's another thing to experience it.*

The second theme that was revealed in findings from JET sojourner interviews was *reckoning with self*. This theme is defined as the inner turmoil many JET sojourners feel throughout this experience. When the topic of culture shock/adjustment was broached, some JET sojourners reported that their previous experience of moving around helped them through some of the phases of adjustment. As stated by JPS3,

> *Just maybe my... well my moving around? So I learned to keep my patience very quickly. With the Japanese? Cause I know I've lived in other parts of the world so... So, maybe, I had, a little bit of, cultural sensitivity. (Excerpt form JPS3)*

Some referred to the relationships with their fellow teachers and the climate/location as being a major determinant for their depleted mood while going through their initial adjustment in Japan, as is shown in an interview with JPS4:

> *Q. As you explain your experience... how would you have described your adjustment, because you said in the first month everything was a novelty?*
> *A. Yeah.*
> *Q. Then?*
> *A. Then afterwards when... even in Montreal, you need to understand this about me... weather, influences me. Wintertime... there's less light, I get depressed.*
> *Q. Okay.*
> *A. And... how do you call it, seasonal...*
> *Q. Depression?*
> *A. Depression.*
> *Q. Okay.*
> *A. And... so when the winter months started hitting, in Japan...*

Q. Yes.
A. I had total homesickness.

In other instances, sojourners echoed similar sentiments and the difficulty that came about with day-to-day routines, like JPS1, who stated,

> *I, I think I followed the, the regular culture shock pattern that they introduce to you, you know saying by about the second month you'll start to feel this and that and – . and, I didn't recognize it right away. But I did feel that I was still having trouble adjusting to the sleeping and the light hours. – Cause up North it's quite light. And then when the snow started to fall it was more snow than I'd ever seen in my whole life. So yeah, like I said the work really did impact my life and my living.*

Others expressed how their involvement in hobbies, language classes and community activities helped to ease the pain of adjustment and in some instances caused very little experience of culture shock. This is shown by JPS2:

> *I felt that because I was having, such a, positive experience at work, socially and in my town and, getting to know the neighbours and everything? It was sort of an interesting... a learning experience for me. I think I was in this initial excitement for a very long time and I don't – I think my... negative culture shock thing, was very dramatic? I know, for a few months I did experience that like they're getting my- on my nerves for, like why don't they have to be so, anal about this or, you know whatever. I think, it was fairly short? And not very dramatic, at all. (laughs) To be honest! It was exciting you know, we kind of learned, cause it was a daily learning experience. I was always so busy with different activities. I was so busy that I didn't pick up Judo. I took up pottery a bit but I only had time for myself on weekends.*

Another finding uncovered under the theme of *reckoning with self* was sojourners' explanations of how they coped with culture in shock in Japan.

More particularly, JET sojourners reported their opinion of how their issues with adjustment became less traumatic the longer they remained in Japan. In some cases, sojourners revealed how they relied heavily on other JETs to validate their feelings and work through their issues with adjustment. As noted by JPS4,

> *It wasn't that difficult with that in terms of, trying to reach out. I guess meeting people, became more of an easier thing to do in your second year. Because I had, established my, friendships with the people in the "ken" (region). But the first year, it was expensive, my phone calls, because I was calling friends that I, left Montreal with. I have one really good friend. She was in Chiba-ken. And, every night almost we'd talk. She'd call me I'd call her cause we were trying to adjust together. So... the first year was mostly, trying to keep those connections with those Montreal friends and the Montreal JETs. And then I started like building my own support system in the ken. Cause then I, didn't need to talk to talk to the Montreal JETs that much anymore.*

Several sojourners reported the means by which they found themselves coping with adjustment in Japan. Some confessed to isolating themselves, crying, keeping a journal and indulging in alcohol as an escape. One example of this was given by JPS1:

> *Well it was the end of the 3 years. And, I would say probably, January... for the last 6 months. I started to... have such anxiety that it was manifesting itself physically in me? And I wasn't able to sleep and, I don't drink alcohol at all, at all? I never at any of the "enkais" (drinking parties) , never before I left even at all. I started drinking, because it was the only thing that I could do, to help myself sleep at night like to – to forget it was really – it was really quite dramatic. I went into this depression where I couldn't um – I just basically wasn't functioning. And all, and that lasted a good... 3 months, because, there wasn't anyone to help me.*

While most JET sojourners said they were aware of CLAIR, some felt the need to call only for extreme medical reasons or to talk to a friendly ear. JPS3 stated,

> *The only time when I called, I think it was the English, JET hotline (CLAIR). I'm not sure but it's when my friend passed away. Because, my fiancée was there for Christmas... And, then, I found out she passed away and 2 days later after my fiancée left. So I was really by myself. And that first month was really hard to deal with, so I did call one of those lines. I talked to somebody for a while, and they proposed if I wanted to meet, a psychologist or a councillor. But why didn't I do it, I don't know. I didn't go, in the end. I just ended up talking with that person and it actually helped a lot?*

When the topic of reverse culture shock was raised in interviews, JET sojourners reported almost unanimously that their re-entry experiences were far more difficult when compared to their initial culture shock upon arriving in Japan. Evidence is clearly shown by JPS4, who reported reaching out for external support in order to better understand her emotions.

> *When I came back to Montreal, major reverse culture shock. And I felt it. I knew, I was going to have it, because I had a really bad culture shock when I got there. So I figured yeah, I'm going to have it, because I was moving back in with the parents, too. So,I did go to – actually, when we today, we were passing West Broadway? There was the counseling right there? So that's where I went. I went for a counseling a few times, and I talked to them about the reverse culture shock. Maybe it was a social worker then. But, she was you know, helpful. No I just – I guess, needed to talk? So I talked to her. . Because I mean, I couldn't talk to my friends here. (Excerpt from JPS4)*

Evidence also exists in the case of JPS2, who expressed feeling displaced and reaching a breaking point:

> *It was really weird. This is my country, but I always asked myself, what am I doing here, why did I come back? Maybe it has a lot to do with... the fact that I didn't have much of a...*

> *negative culture shock in Japan. I had series after series of really positive, experiences. Getting to know people both Japanese and other people. Some people had other friends. I really loved teaching. I mean coming back I didn't know that many people that were in Montreal. Suddenly, just having a very small network, I felt displaced, kept thinking to myself... I'd left things behind? Like, it was like, personal possessions, like a lot of Japanese language books. I had so many. (laughing) When I was back I kept on, "Oh I should have brought this back! Cause they were, sort of, personal... Part of me, when I was there or something like that.... I guess maybe I didn't really know quite what to expect. I had a friend, who came back the same time as me. We talked a lot about Japan. It was good to have someone that you could, constantly talk about Japan and, other people obviously just sick of you (laughing) talking about Japan! She got a boyfriend here in Montreal and I think if you have someone, who's really close to you, that's kind of support right? Whereas I didn't have any boyfriend. So I think maybe that could have helped her. I was sometimes walking home after my class crying, like... I'm lonely here, why did I come back ?*

Throughout this interview theme, there was a common pattern forming amongst sojourners. JET sojourners who had a clear sense of self prior to departure seemed to struggle more with the reverse culture shock, as their reality had been shifted from what they once knew. However, those sojourners who planned ahead for their return seemed to adjust more easily than those who did not. On the whole, JET sojourners expressed having undergone a positive experience while on JET, but many disclosed mixed feelings about themselves upon return, and some were left with unanswered questions about who they are now.

The final theme revealed in JET sojourner findings is *a need to be heard.* This theme is outlined as a cry for help by JET sojourners in their search for support with cultural adjustment. JET sojourners reported feeling

more at ease consulting with other JETs and seemed comfortable with the knowledge that CLAIR existed should they have need of it. However, other JETS and CLAIR were only available to help with culture shock during sojourn in Japan, but what help was available upon returning home? Most revealed only seeking external assistance upon re-entry into Montreal, and felt that the support of JETAA was not addressing the needs of some JETs. JPS1 remarked,

> *The only thing I've heard about JETAA negatively, is that... I had a friend who was Francophone, who went over to teach English. She was my roommate, we lived fairly close to one another, and she came back after 1 year because she had difficulties because of language. I mean I know at – at the, Canadian consulate when we were there, they were petitioning to have Francophone Canadian JETs – As one of the members, you know but, I don't think it's happened yet, but anyways she was teaching English and she had a lot of problems, and when she came back, she didn't find that there was the Francophone support. In JETAA. Cause they were mostly Anglophone.*

Some sojourners expressed a need for a change to renewal dates for for ALTs; the current practice forces many to opt out of renewing for another year, as JET renewal requests are made in February. Others saw a conflict with departure dates for Japan and the fact that many applicants lost out on the opportunity to apply because of the rigidity of departure dates. JET sojourners also requested, as noted in the interview with JPS2, longer pre-departure training in the hopes that it would better prepare them for their journey.

> *I think the orientation in Toronto, that it's lengthier and, more rigorous. It's like the two and a half days. Better than what they're doing, in Montreal. Just, one day. Yeah and I think that they should make sure the orientation is... lengthier and more vigorous.*
> *(Excerpt from JPS2)*

Overall, JET sojourners reported their complete satisfaction with the program and their guarantee to refer others to participate, in spite of the struggles they encountered with cultural adjustment.

The findings for JET sojourners revealed many things. Primarily, they presented the reality that many apply with the hope of finding answers—answers to questions about themselves. The theme *JET has the answers* describes the level of uncertainty many applicants seemed to have when they decided to apply for JET. Whether it was for validation of independence, an avoidance of home life or the prospect of a global opportunity, sojourners chose JET for what many theorists (Pearce, 1982; Maslow, 1966; Dann, 1977) regard as a process of self-actualization. Yet, based on previous findings, it is known that the JET Programme seeks out participants who have already attained this objective. What, then, can be said of this inconsistency? What is apparent is that, although *JET has the answers* may be an underlying theme, it is clear that JET sojourners will have to come to the halting realization at one point or another that, in fact, JET does not.

Further exploration of the theme *reckoning with self* presented many findings that were reflected in literature, for instance, the view that sojourners can make an easier transition through culture shock and reverse culture shock if they prepare prior to their departure from home as well prior to their arrival back

home. As some JET sojourners revealed, their practices before and after leaving JET aided them; this view was also echoed by Storti (1977), who insisted that sojourners could lessen the difficulties associated with cultural adjustment by a means of good preparation.

Additionally, findings illustrated that JET sojourners who participated in community activities and formed companionships with the Japanese and other JETs, seemed to experience less trauma with culture shock. This point was clearly defined in a number of studies (Hill, 1983; Storti, 1997), which also suggested that the sooner sojourners realized that this process took time, the better off they would be.

The finding that the longer a sojourner remains abroad, the more difficult reverse culture shock is, is sustained by some observers (Storti, 1997), and what is more, JET sojourners seemed to rely on external supports to work through their issues with reverse culture shock. Moreover, their once familiar surroundings and friends could not relieve the pain that most expressed feeling during this period as they realized their experience had changed them and the way they saw themselves. It can also be assumed that JET sojourners were aware of JETAA and the services provided, but findings showed that in some cases JETAA was not enough. Herein lies the theme *a need to be heard.* This theme was expressed by sojourners as they expressed their JET experiences as positive. Interestingly enough, what became apparent throughout their accounts were traces of bittersweet memories from their experiences. You would have to wonder whether JET sojourners were truly being honest, as Furnham & Bochner (1986) reported sojourners sometimes are not. Some findings outlined

instances where JETs expressed their positive experience on JET, but also conveyed their disappointments their JET experience. This could possibly be a subject for further research and investigation.

In my own experience, reverse culture shock was also more difficult than culture shock as many of my questions were left unanswered. Yet a process of healing was endured and although a time period for restoring oneself cannot be determine, it is a process that all who choose JET must undergo. What is evident is that JETs whether they had good or bad experiences, need to know that someone is listening.

Chapter5

Conclusion

In short, the main findings of this study are that public documents and JET staff applaud the efforts and goal of the JET Programme. Yet, it must be remembered that as JET sojourners report positive experiences with cultural adjustment, many still battle the effects associated with reverse culture shock. In this chapter, I will discuss the study limitations and implications for social work practice.

Findings from public documents echo the literature and staff findings both refute and echo the scholarship that does exist. JET sojourner findings echo the literature and provide new information which creates the need for further research. However, we must remember that there are limitations involved through the course of this study.

Study Limitations

Researcher bias was a limitation in this study as the researcher was a former JET participant. Although the objectivity of opinions and insight into the experience of JET sojourners was of concern, this bias allowed for insider knowledge and permitted the researcher to assess the experience of participants through finer lenses.

The fact that JET sojourners were all women may also have posed a limitation in the study. This fact implies that there could potentially be a difference of experience for men versus women as men seemingly may have had a different outlook on cultural adjustment and how it might have affected them.

Another limitation was the fact that only one interview was performed with each of the participants of the study. Additional interviews over time might have allowed for a longitudinal study, there by displaying the evolution of cultural adjustment (culture shock and reverse culture shock) and offering more insight into other problems faced by sojourners.

An additional obstacle of the study was that given participants' eagerness to tell of their experience, they might have answered interview questions in an attempt to impress the researcher. Furthermore, the fact that this researcher informed participants of her reasoning for the study and history of being a JET sojourner might have fostered cohesive relationships between the researcher and participants which may have led them to be more open but also more reluctant to be critical.

Another limitation to the study was the fact that only eight participants were interviewed. A larger participant sample might have offered different results pertaining to how JET sojourners experienced cultural adjustment.

The non-inclusion of CIRs' (Coordinator for International Relations) and SEAs' (Sports Exchange Advisor) experiences in the study was also a limitation. Further research on the experiences of CIRs and SEAs (who are required to speak Japanese) compared with the results from ALTs (who do not have to speak Japanese) would have allowed for a greater understanding of the extent to which JET sojourners experience and cope with cultural adjustment.

Finally, the fact that participants reported mostly positive statements throughout the study also causes another limitation. More specifically, with mostly good things to say about JET, one would have to wonder whether true

good experience was had by most or whether continued involvement with the program incited participants to report positive experiences.

Implications for Social Work Practice and Research

The findings outlined in Chapter 4 highlighted several difficulties of cultural adjustment for the JET sojourner. The findings from public documents displayed a lack of information on cultural adjustment, made several assumptions of the JET applicant and offered no clear definition of available counseling supports for applicants while on JET. An overall pretence of perfection was the general theme of public documents.

Staff interviews contradicted the findings in public documents. They displayed duration of time abroad as a main factor affecting culture shock, as well as the general opinion by JET staff that a support system exists for JETs, only the reliability of this system is unknown by staff. The general finding from staff interviews is the promotion of prominence for the JET Programme.

The findings from JET sojourner interviews also emphasized that efficiency and prominence were attached to the JET Programme. JET sojourners' interviews noted that culture shock is real, but that reverse culture shock is more difficult to overcome. These findings also revealed a need for greater support through these transitions and the general theme found is that JET sojourners are victims of pretence and their needs for support are not being addressed.

To better address the needs of JET sojourners and some of the issues related to cultural adjustment, several implications for social work practice and research could be considered.

Implications for Social Work

Prior to their departure sojourners should be briefed on the possible emotional and physical changes they may experience due to leaving their homes and attempting to live in another place foreign to them.

Public documents for the JET Programme would need to include more information surrounding the affects of culture shock and reverse culture shock. This information could be derived from further empirical research into the affects of cultural adjustment not only on ALTs (Assistant Language Teachers), but also CIRs (Coordinators of International Relations) and SEAs (Sports Exchange Advisors).

The field of social work should also play an integral part by becoming an available resource to participants of the JET Programme when information in public documents is not sufficient. Social workers could aid future JET sojourners by establishing a cultural learning model with the JET Programme, thereby instructing potential JET applicants and sojourners of the signs and necessary strategies to better cope with cultural adjustment. Orientation/reorientation workshops covering these topics should also be offered to JETs before they leave and after they return.

In addition, a telephone help line should be established as well as a website email offering insight and explanation on the sojourner's experience. Access to these medium should remain confidential and could fill the void of support that many JET sojourners seem to feel exists when experiencing reverse culture shock. These tools along with a newsletter and brochure should provide verbal and written information that would assist the JET sojourner to

develop better coping strategies (i.e. journaling, joining community activities, and developing new hobbies). This shared resource of information should also highlight behaviours JET sojourners should avoid (i.e. indulgence in alcohol, drugs or sex) in order to minimize the effects of cultural adjustment.

Signs JET sojourners should look for in their behaviour, attitudes, and physical well being, should also be available to them so that they can begin to be self-aware and critically analyze their own personal responses to the processes they are experiencing. Social workers should play a key role in the minimization of culture shock and reverse culture shock by assisting JET sojourners to develop their abilities to be aware of what may be happening to them.

On a regular basis, the JET Programme should provide JET sojourners with opportunities to explore their emotions about their new experiences and what they are missing. JET sojourners should be able to share their feelings of grief, loss, confusion, alienation and fear during their time in the host country as well as when they return home. These experiences should be shared with trained competent Social work professionals that have the ability to deal with loss and grief in an empathetic way. Social workers, for example, who have working experience with immigrants, refugees or are past sojourners themselves, might provide JET sojourners with an opportunity to understand their feelings and difficulties. In this role, Social Work professionals can act as soundboards to JET sojourners who feel the need to be heard.

Individual and group support should also be provided to JET sojourners so that he/she has the opportunity to share common triumphs and pains with

others. This would enable the JET sojourner to identify some of the emotions they may experience as common and normal to the displacement process. This normalization, in turn, may assist in minimizing the effects of cultural adjustment.

Social workers who have sojourner experience could also act as JET peer group facilitators, as well as advocates for JETs bringing their issues/needs to the attention of the Consul General du Japon.

Similar suggestions should be offered to other programs that function similarly to the JET Programme. As the literature has shown us, all sojourners (i.e. students, military, and Peace Corps volunteers) are potential sufferers from cultural adjustment and could benefit from further support.

Implications for Research

Longitudinal studies exploring the long-term affects of cultural adjustment, as well as studies examining the relevance of gender and age are also key areas for further research. While previous research, including the present study, did not examine the impact of race on cultural adjustment, future research could explore this factor. With such research the JET programme can build in extra supports for particular JET sojourners that may fare as well as others. For example, if such academic literature (Baty & Dold, 1977) indicated that women coped better as sojourners then the JET programme might build in extra supports for men like a buddy program or mentoring supportive network. The program could also use such research during selection of JET candidates. This proposal could possibly be useful for other similar programs.

Another area of research that could be further investigated is the experience of JET sojourners who teach French, Korean, Chinese and German while on the JET Programme. If such research were available, it could provide the rationale for necessary supports for these groups of JET sojourners preclude.

Previous research has shown that reverse culture shock can be more challenging to overcome given the time spent abroad (Adler, 1986) and age of the sojourner (Uehara, 1986). Further empirical research could be made available through the exploration of JET sojourners who return earlier than their expected term stay. In addition, age levels and maturity of JET sojourners could also be further investigated. Such research were available, it could be used to provide the JET Programme and similar international programs on the impacts that time abroad and sojourners' ages have in relation to their experiences. This research could also provide vital feedback into information for program improvements.

Another subject for research could explore whether persons considered unsuitable for the JET Programme felt discriminated by JETs' standards for applicants. Such research could be used to offer suggestions of how the JET Programme and similar international programs can address this practice.

Finally, further research is required on the reliability of CLAIR's resources of support for JET sojourners. Such research would provide JET with empirical statistics to fund further social supports to JET sojourners.

We can conclude that there remains a gap in literature addressing the needs and experience of sojourners, such as those from the JET Programme. What is for certain is that JET sojourners in Montreal suffer extreme difficulty when experiencing the course of reverse culture shock. With regard to the JET Programme, if they are not already in the process of doing so, the Japanese Ministry of Education may need to re-examine the reliability and efficiency of sojourner support for culture shock as claimed to be overseen by CLAIR.

It should be noted that while the JET Programme offers an indelible opportunity for people to go abroad, this study's aim is not to criticize the current practices, but rather provide food for thought and ideas for further research. As social workers we are trained to respond to need and this study has shown that the effects of cultural adjustment on sojourners establishes a need for further research.

References

Adelman, M. B. (1988). Cross-cultural adjustment: A theoretical perspective on social support. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 12*, 183-205.

Adler, P. S. (1975). The transitional experience: An alternative view of "culture shock". *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 15*, 13-23.

Adler, P. Beyond cultural identity. In L. Samovar and R. Porter (Eds.). *Intercultural communication: A reader* (2nd ed.). Belmont: Wadsworth, 1976.

Albrecht, T.L., & Adelman, M.B. (1984). Social support and life stress: New directions for communication research. *Human Communication Research, 11*, 3-32.

Arensberg, C. M., & Niehoff, A.H. *Introducing social change: A manual for Americans overseas.* Chicago: Aldine, 1964.

Arnold, C. (1967). Culture shock and a Peace Corps field mental health program. *Community Mental Health Journal, 3(1)*, 53-60.

Bartel, A. (1979) The migration decision: what roles do job mobility play? *American Economic Review, 69*, 775-86.

Baty, R. M., & Dold, E. (1977) Cross-cultural homestays: An analysis of college students' responses after living in an unfamiliar culture. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 1*, 66-76.

Bochner, S. and Wicks, P. (Eds). (1972). *Oversea students in Australia.* Sydney: University of South Wales Press.

Brein, M., & David, K. H. (1971) Intercultural communication and the adjustment of the sojourner. *Psychology Bulletin, 76*, 215-230.

Brett, J. M., & Werbel, J. D. (1980). The effect of job transfer on employees and their families. *Research Report.* Washington, DC: Employee Relocation Council.

Church, A. (1982) Sojourner adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin, **91***, 540-572.

Dann, G. (1977) Anomie, ego-enhancement and tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research, 4*, 184-94.

Dunbar, H. T., Mueller, C.W., Medina, C. and Wolf, T. Psychological and spiritual growth in women living with HIV. In S.A. Kirk (ed.), *Social Work Research Methods: Building Knowledge for Practice.* Washington, DC: NASW Press, 1999.

Dyal, J. A., and Dyal, R. Y. (1981). Acculturation, stress and coping: Some implications for research and education. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 5,* 301-328.

Fortune, A. E. and Reid, W. J. *Research in social work.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Foster, G. M. *Traditional cultures and the impact of technological change.* New York: Harper & Row, 1962.

Furnham, A. and Bochner, S. (1986). *Culture shock: Psychological reactions to unfamiliar environments.* New York: Methuen.

Greenberg, M. S. (1980). A theory of indebtedness. In K. J. Gergen, M. S. Greenberg, & R. H. Willis (Eds.), *Social exchange: Advances in theory and research.* New York: Plenum.

Groves, C. L. (1984). *Dynamics of international host family* (AFS Research Report No. 27). New York: AFS International/Intercultural Program.

Gudykunst, W. B. (1983a). Similarities and differences in perception of initial intracultural and intercultural interactions'. *The Southern Speech Communication Journal, 49,* 40-65.

Gudykunst, W. B. (1983b). Toward a typology of stranger-host relationships. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 7*, 401-415.

Gullahorn, J. T., & Gullahorn, J. E. (1963) An extension of the U-curve hypothesis. *Journal of Social Issues, 19(3),* 33-47.

Guthrie, G. M. Cultural perception for the Philippines. In R B. Textor (ed), *Cultural frontiers of the Peace Corps.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1966.

Gutierrez, L. and Nagda, A. The Multicultural Imperative in Human Services Organizations: Issues for eth Twenty-First Century. In P.R. Raffoul and C.A. McNee (eds.), *Future Issues for Social Work Practice.* Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1996.

Hill, R. Coping with the culture shock of an overseas posting. *International Management, (March 1983),* 81-85.

Holmes, T. S. and Rahe, R. H. (1967). The social readjustment rating scale. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 11*, 213-218.

Hull, W. F. (1978). *Foreign students in the United States of America: Coping behavior within the educational environment.* New York: Praeger.

JET Application *Form* for Canadian Applicants 2003-2004

JET Programme. (2002) *Join the JET Programme and discover Japan.* (Pamphlet.) Japan.

JET Programme. (2001). *The JET Programme: General description.* (Pamphlet.) Japan: CLAIR.

JET Programme. (2002-03). *The JET Programme: General description.* (Pamphlet.) Japan: CLAIR.

Klineberg, O., & Hull, W. F. (1979). *At a foreign university: An international study of adaptation and coping.* New York: Praeger.

Klineberg, O. (1981). The role of international university exchanges. In S. Bochner (Ed.), *The mediating person: Bridges between cultures* (pp. 113-135). Cambridge, MA: Schenkman.

Levine, D.N. Simmel at a distance. (1979). In W. Shack & E. Skinner (Eds.), *Strangers in African societies.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lin, K. M. (1986). Psychopathology and social disruption in refugees. In C. Williams and J. Westermeyer (Eds), *Refugee mental health in resettlement countries* (pp.61-73). Washington, DC: Hemisphere.

Lunstedt, S. (1963). An introduction to some evolving problems in cross-cultural research. *Journal of Social Issues, 19(3).* 1-9.

Lysgaard, S. (1955). Adjustment in a foreign society: Norwegian Fulbright grantees visiting the United States. *International Social Science Bulletin, 7*, 45-51.

Marin, G., Sabogal, F., Marin, B., Otero-Sabogal, R. and Perez-Stable, E. J. (1987). Development of a short acculturation scale for Hispanics. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Science, 2*, 21-34.

Martin. J.N. (1984). The intercultural re-entry: Conceptualization and directions for future research. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 8*, 115-134.

Maslow, A. (1966) *The Psychology of Science*, New York, Harper & Row.

Mavreas, V., Bebbington, P. and Der, G. (1989). The structure and validity of acculturation: Analysis of an acculturation scale. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 24*, 233-240.

Mckain, J. L. (1976). Alienation: A function of geographical mobility among families. In H. I. McCubbin, B. B. Dahl, & E. J. Hunter (Eds.), *Families in the military system* (pp. 69-91), Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Murphy, H. B. M. (1973). The low rate of hospitalization shown by immigrants to Canada. In C. Zwingmann & M. Pfister-Ammende (Eds.), *Uprooting and after.* Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag.

Oberg, K. (1960). Cultural shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments. *Practical Anthropology, 7,* 177-182.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods.* Newbury Park: Sage.

Pearce, P. L. (1982a). Tourists and their hosts: Some social and psychological effects of intercultural contact. In S. Bochner (Ed.), *Cultures in contact: Studies in cross-cultural interaction* (pp. 199-221). Oxford: Pergamon.

Pederson, P. (1995). *The five stages of culture shock: Critical incidents around the world.* Westport: Greenwood.

Rai, S. (1988). Perception of changes and difficulties by older and younger Tibetan refugees in India. *Indian Journal of Current Psychological Research, 3*, 90-94.

Raffoul, P. R. and McNee, C.A. Future Issues for Social Work Practice.

Roskies, E., Iida-Miranda, M. L., & Strobel, M. G. (1978). The applicability of the life events approach to problems of immigration. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 19*, 235-240.

Spradley, J. P., & Phillips, M. (1972). Culture and stress: A quantitative analysis. *American Anthropologist, 74*, 518-529.

Storti, C. (1997). *The Art of coming home*. Yarmouth, MN: Intercultural Press.

Tatje, T. A., & Naroll, R. (1973). Two measures of societal complexity: An empirical cross-cultural comparison. In R. Naroll, & R. Cohen (Eds.), *A handbook of method in cultural anthropology.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Taylor, M. (1983). Psychology and police education. *Bulletin of the British Psychological Society, 36*, 406-8.

Torbiorn, I. (1982). *Living abroad*. New York: Wiley.

Uehara, A. (1986). The nature of American student re-entry adjustment and the perceptions of the sojourn experience. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 10*, 415-438.

Ward, C., Bochner, S., and Furnham, A. (2001). *The psychology of culture shock.* Philadelphia: Routeledge.

Weiner, B. (1980) *Human motivation.* New York, Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Wood, M. J. (1934). *The stranger: A study in social relationships.* New York: Columbia University Press.

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form to Participate in Research

This is to state that I agree to participate in the research project entitled: An exploratory case study of The Japanese Exchange Teaching (JET) Programme and its implication for social work practice on cultural adjustment and conducted by: Shauna Callender, a Master of Social Work student from McGill University supervised by Dr. Samantha Wehbi.

1. Purpose- This is an exploratory /descriptive case study which seeks to research the experience of staff, participants/alumni from the Japanese Exchange Teaching (JET) Programme. The aim of the study is to identify what coping skills and problems (i.e. acculturation and reverse culture-shock) are faced by participants and seeks to devise what role social work can play in addressing this phenomenon.
2. Procedures- Data will be collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews. Interview tapes will be transcribed with no identifying information. Your name will not be disclosed in this study and identifying details will be omitted or disguised. Pseudonyms will be assigned to your responses. Tapes will be destroyed following transcription. You have the right to refuse to answer any of the questions you are presented with and are free leave at any time without penalty.
3. Conditions of Participation- You will be asked to participate in a one (1) hour long interview session where you will be asked about your experience as a member of the JET programme. Data will be reviewed by my supervisor and included in a thesis. Data might also be used for publication.

I understand the purpose of this study and know about the risks, benefits and inconveniences that this research project entails.

- I understand that I am free to withdraw at anytime from the study without any penalty or prejudice.
- I understand how confidentiality will be maintained during research project.
- I understand the anticipated uses of data, especially with respect to publication, communication and dissemination of results.

I have carefully studied the above and understand my participation in this agreement. I freely consent and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Name (please print) _____

Signature _____Date _____

APPENDIX C
Interview Guide Questions for Jet Programme Staff

1. **Welcoming and General Orientation**
2. **Completion of Consent Form & Clarification/Explanation of any concerns of interviewee**
3. **Relationship with the Program**
   a) What is your personal cultural background? Where did you grow up?
   b) How did you first hear about the JET Programme?
   c) Have you ever participated on JET yourself?
   d) What were your interests in Japan prior to participating on JET?
   e) What were your expectations of the program?
   f) What is has been your impression since returning?
   g) How long have you been involved with the program?
4. **Description of the Program**
   a) What does the application and selection process consist of? Any specific criteria?
   b) Who is the ideal candidate?
   c) What are the advantages to participating on JET?
   d) How are participants prepared prior to departure?
   e) What is the most FAQ that pre-departure participants ask?
   f) What type of feedback have you heard from returnees?
   g) How do returnees usually describe their experience?
   h) Is stress a common factor? How do they describe it?
   i) What is the biggest problem participants' face when they go to Japan?
   j) What recommendations do you suggest for pre-departure participants? What about returnees?
   k) What could improve the program?
8. **Experience with the Program**
   a) If you were not in your current position, would you recommend the JET programme to others?
   b) Was the experience of the visible minority JET similar/different to that of the non-visible minority JET participant?
9. **Adjustment and Resources Available**
   a) How have returnees explained they coped with adjustment in Japan? And returning home?
   b) What types of resources exist for JETs in Japan experiencing stress?
10. **Closure** Any other comments, question?

APPENDIX D
Interview Guide for Former JET Participants

1. **Welcoming and General Orientation**

2. **Completion of Consent Form &**
   Clarification/Explanation of any concerns of participant

3. **Background**
   a) What is your cultural background?
   b) What did you study?
   c) Had you ever traveled abroad prior to JET? If yes, where?

4. **Initial Expectations of the program**
   a) Where did you hear about the program?
   b) What interest did you have in Japan prior to leaving?

5. **Thoughts About the Program:**
   a) Were you well-prepared by JET staff for Japan?

6. **Adjustment in Japan**
   a) How would you describe your experience living and working in Japan?
   b) How was your adjustment to Japan?
   c) Did you know anyone in Japan when you arrived?
   d) Did you have a social network in Japan to talk to?
   e) If not, was it easy to make friends?
   f) Were there many social activities? If so, did you participate?
   g) What was a difficult adjustment to make?
   h) When during your time abroad did this occur?

7. **Thoughts about Additional Support Services:**
   a) Did you ever consider seeing someone professional? (e.g. doctor, psychologist, SW, counsellor, etc...)
   b) If not, why?
   c) If counsellors were offered, what was the likelihood that you would use them?
   d) Looking back, would you have used them now?

8. **Expectations:**
   a) Were your expectations of the program met? Any feedback?

9. **Closure:**
   a) Are there any suggestions you would offer organizers of the JET programme?