Japanese Women's Reentry to Japan After Studying in North America:

A Narrative Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

In the age of globalization of higher education, there have been calls for research that investigates international students' cross-cultural transitioning experiences and their career counselling needs. Compared to initial adjustment to the host country, little is known about reentry transition to the home country, and the available literature suggests that female international students experience more reentry difficulties than male students. Yet, gender and social contexts have largely been overlooked in the reentry literature, and no research to this date has specifically investigated how a North American degree impacts the lives of women upon reentry to their home countries. Therefore, a narrative inquiry was conducted to answer the overarching question: How do Japanese women, who have completed a university degree in North America, construct their stories of the process of pursuing a degree and returning to Japan? Informed by feminist standpoint theory as an epistemological framework, specific attention was paid to the role of gender and sociocultural factors that influence these women's reentry experiences. The participants were 14 Japanese women (age: 25-49) who returned to Japan following the completion of a university degree in North America. The results elucidated how gender-based hierarchical structures in Japanese society impacted women's motivation for an international education and the challenges they faced after returning to Japan. Consequently, they positioned themselves along the continuum of conformity to non-conformity, which accompanies a range of psychological responses such as self-silencing, withdrawal, and acceptance. Overall, the standpoint of North American educated Japanese women provided fresh perspectives on issues such as Japanese employment practices, as well as future directions for research. Responding to the call for providing pre-reentry programs that accommodate the needs

of returning students, this study also offered recommendations for service providers working

with international student populations.

Keywords: Japanese women, international students, reentry, re-acculturation

RÉSUMÉ

À l'époque de la globalisation de l'enseignement supérieur, on fait appel à des projets de recherche qui étudieraient les expériences de transition interculturelle vécues par des étudiants internationaux et leur besoin de services en orientation professionnelle. Si l'on sait beaucoup sur l'adaptation initiale au pays hôte, on est moins bien informé sur la transition que vivent ceux qui regagnent leur pays d'origine. Les études disponibles avancent l'idée que les étudiantes internationales font face à plus de difficultés que les étudiants internationaux au moment de rentrer chez eux. Or, il est rarement question des contextes d'ordre social ou concernant le sexe dans ces études sur le retour au pays d'origine. Jusqu'ici, aucune recherche n'a étudié l'impact d'un diplôme d'études nord-américain sur la vie des femmes qui rentrent au bercail. Nous avons donc mené une enquête narrative sur cette question fondamentale : comment les Japonaises ayant obtenu un diplôme universitaire en Amérique du Nord construisent-elles l'histoire de leur expérience durant leurs études et au moment de leur retour au Japon? Dans un cadre épistémologique relevant de la théorie féministe, il est surtout question du rôle du sexe et des facteurs socioculturels qui influencent l'expérience de réintégration vécue par ces femmes. Les participantes comprenaient 14 Japonaises âgées de 25 à 45 ans qui avaient regagné le Japon après leur obtention d'un diplôme universitaire en Amérique du Nord. Les résultats de cette étude ont clarifié la façon dont les structures hiérarchiques de la société japonaise basées sur le sexe ont affecté le désir de certaines femmes de poursuivre leurs études universitaires outre-mer et les défis qu'elles devaient relever après leur retour au Japon. Par conséquent, elles se situaient dans le continuum de conformité à non-conformité qui comprend un large éventail de réponses telles que le déni de soi, le retrait et l'acceptation. Dans l'ensemble, le point de vue des Japonaises instruites en Amérique du Nord a fourni de nouvelles perspectives sur des questions

comme les pratiques japonaises en matière d'emploi ainsi que de nouvelles pistes de recherche.

En plus de s'adresser à la demande de créer des programmes de réinsertion qui pourraient

répondre aux besoins des étudiantes qui retournent au bercail, cette étude a proposé des

recommandations aux intervenants dispensant des services auprès des étudiants internationaux.

Mots clés: Japonaises, étudiants internationaux, retour, ré-acculturation

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When I started my doctoral study, a friend advised me to choose a good dissertation topic that met the following three criteria: a topic that (1) you are passionate about, (2) is feasible, and (3) is marketable. Reflecting on how my dissertation met all of them, I am deeply indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Ada Sinacore. While developing my research proposal, week after week, you kept asking me, "What is it that you want to know? Why is it important to know? And how do you want to know?" These difficult questions helped me refine and claim my passion, which I never lost sight of during the course of this study. Moreover, your ingenuity and knowledge in methodology not only made my research feasible, but rigorous and epistemologically coherent. You taught me that it is not just my dissertation, but everything I have done thus far and who I have became as a professional that will determine my marketability. Most importantly, I appreciate how truly dedicated you have been to feminist values in the way you taught and mentored me. If I listed everything you did that empowered me, this acknowledgement would be as long as my dissertation itself!

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the age of globalization of higher education, North American universities are exerting increased efforts and resources to recruit international students, capitalizing on the perceived prestige of North American degrees and studying in the English language (Johnstone & Lee, 2014; Sidhu, 2006). As a result, international students represent a significant proportion of the student body in higher education in North America. It was estimated that in 2011, 4.5 million students worldwide were undertaking studies in higher education outside their countries of origin (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013). In Canada, approximately 89,000 international students were enrolled in undergraduate programs in 2014, nearly quadrupling from the 22,300 who were enrolled in 2000. The number of international graduate students tripled from 13,000 to 44,000 in the same period (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2014). Quebec alone received on average 14,563 new international students each year for the period of 2008 and 2012 (Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés Culturelles, 2014).

With this increase of international students on North American campuses, several counselling psychologists have articulated that understanding the complexity of cross-cultural transitioning is an important component in working with international students (Arthur, 2004; Leong & Chou, 2002; Pedersen, 1991). Thus, increased scholarly attention has been paid to international students' unique challenges, such as adjusting to North American educational systems, culture shock and acculturative stress, language-related difficulties, identity confusion, and discrimination (Johnson & Sandhu, 2007; Mori, 2000).

Despite the growing literature on international students, literature on international students tends to regard them as a homogeneous population (Rhee & Sagaria, 2004; Yoon &

Portman, 2004). Little attention has been paid to how gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status impact international students' lived experience. In particular, gender has largely been overlooked in the literature on international students. Rhee and Sagaria (2004), who conducted a content analysis of articles in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, reported that international students are described as gender neutral, "rendering women invisible" (p. 91). Kenway and Bullen, (2003) also observed the tendency in the literature to assume international students as male, whereas discussions on challenges faced by spouses of international students assume the student as the husband and the spouse as the wife, "thereby, to assign the woman student the subordinate status of 'other'" (p. 6).

However, the recent trend in student mobility into North America has shifted from elite male students sponsored by their home countries to an expansion of female students (Kenway & Bullen, 2003; Sidhu, 2006). These women pursue North American degrees as "biographical solutions" to realize imagined future careers and new identities either in North America or in their home countries (Doherty & Singh, 2007, p. 119). Yet, little is known about what happens to these women when they return to their home countries. Although reentry transition can accompany significant distress and identity crises regardless of gender, evidence suggests that female international students experience more reentry difficulties than male students (Brabant, Palmer, & Gramling, 1990; Yoshida et al., 2002). As a result, it has been theorized that women's changed values and behaviors (e.g., independence and assertiveness), as well as their Western education and language skills, are often perceived as threats to the male dominant hierarchy in their home countries (Gama & Pedersen, 1977; Ono & Piper, 2004). However, no research to date has specifically investigated how North American degrees impact the lives of women upon reentry to their home countries.

Thus, the present study investigated one particular group's psychosocial experience of returning home after completing a higher education degree in North America: Japanese women. As it will be discussed, a variety of gender barriers exist for women in the area of education and work in Japan (Suzuki, 2007), and their study abroad is often motivated by their desire to resist conventional gender roles ascribed in Japanese society (Habu, 2000; Ichimoto, 2004). Using feminist standpoint theory (Harding, 1998; Sprague, 2005) as an epistemological framework, the researcher conducted an in-depth narrative inquiry to understand how these women construct their stories of the process of pursuing their education and subsequent return to Japan.

This documents is organized into five chapters. In this introductory chapter, the definition of key terms and scope of the present research will be delineated. Chapter Two presents a review of the literature concerning existing models and research of reentry adjustment to a home country, with analyses of their strengths and limitations. In addition, the gender issues in contemporary Japan will be discussed to situate the present study. Chapter Three lays out the detail of epistemology and methodology that guided this narrative inquiry. Chapter Four summarizes the results of the study. In Chapter Five, the results are discussed in light of the current literature, including the identification of the study's strengths and limitations. Finally, the document will be conclude with a discussion of the present study's implications for research and practice, as well as original contributions.

Terminology and Scope

In the literature on cross-cultural adaptation, several terms have been used to refer to reentry transition to one's home country. This includes reentry shock or reverse culture shock (Adler, 1981; Gaw, 2000; Howard, 1974), repatriation (Sussman, 2000), and reacculturation (Martin, 1984). In earlier literature (e.g., Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963), reverse culture shock

was used, but the term culture shock has been critiqued in that it implies only temporary negative affective responses, and it does not encompass positive nor the long-term impact of cross-cultural relocation (Berry, 1997). Repatriation is commonly used in the management literature, as it is tied with the term "expatriates". Expatriates typically refer to professionals sent abroad by organizations in the home country, distinguished from migrant workers who move abroad in search of employment. Reacculturation is least commonly used, and it originates from the term "acculturation", which refers to the cultural changes resulting from encounters with different cultural groups rather than individual's psychological adaptation (Berry, 1997).

Given the connotations of the above terms, the researcher avoids using them unless she refers to research that specifically investigated these constructs. Instead, the term reentry is used to refer to one's return to a home country after a period of sojourn abroad. With no definitional consensus in the literature on the difference between "reentry transition" and "reentry adjustment", the two terms were used interchangeably to refer to the long-term process of adaptation that returnees undergo upon following reentry.

Although this paper includes relevant literature on non-student populations, the researcher intentionally excluded the literature on refugees as well as military personnel returning from foreign combat. Despite the burgeoning attention to these populations, they are not the scope of this paper given the traumatic nature of their experience.

Home country refers to the country of origin whereas host country refers to a destination country in which individuals seek an international experience. The following terms are used for different phases of cross-cultural transition: pre-departure, sojourn, pre-reentry, and reentry (Martin & Harrell, 2004). *Pre-departure* refers to a period up to the time when the individual leaves for the host country. *Sojourn* encompasses the duration of the individual's entire

international experience. *Pre-reentry* is a sub-phase within sojourn, in which decision-making, preparation, and anticipatory emotional reactions related to returning to the home country became salient. Although the pre-reentry phase is most commonly experienced toward the end of one's sojourn, the exact time when this phase starts is arbitrary; some people may experience the pre-reentry issues from early on and/or intermittingly throughout their sojourns. Thus, sojourn and pre-reentry phases are inherently overlapping. Lastly, the *reentry* phase refers to the time since one's return to the host culture. Martin and Harrell (2004) narrowly defined this phase as initial reentry period that "usually lasts for 6 months to 1 year", although "[f]or some people it can last longer" (p. 322). However, given the absence of evidence that supports this cutoff, this study employed a view of reentry to be open-ended, long-term process of integrating one's international experiences in his/her subsequent development.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this review of literature, the nature of reentry in comparison with the initial adjustment to the host country will be discussed, followed by an examination of research on reentry on two groups: students and professionals. The research on professionals, mostly from literature in organizational psychology and management, was included because the group in this study is in the school-to-work transition (in addition to the reentry transition). With its roots in vocational psychology, school-to-work transition has been an important focus in the field of counselling psychology from its inception (Bluestein, Juntunen, & Worthington, 2000; Parsons, 1909). However, only a handful of studies have investigated international students' school-to-work transition (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Nunes & Arthur, 2013; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014), none of which are specifically on a transition to workforce in the home countries. Thus, reviewing the impact of international assignment on professionals' career development provides an insight into the nature of transition into the workforce upon reentry. Existing models of reentry will also be examined with analyses of their strengths and limitations.

Comparison between Reentry Adjustment and Initial Transition to Host Culture

Reentry is generally discussed in conjunction with cross-cultural adjustment to host countries, in part because reentry adjustment is considered part of the cross-cultural sojourn cycle (Martin & Harrell, 2004, Sussman, 2000). However, this practice also reflects an assumption that reentry is just a reverse process of the initial adjustment to a host culture (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Howard, 1974), as the term reverse culture shock most notably implies this assumption. Although the term culture shock has been criticized, this concept will be explored in relation to reentry given its prevalence in the early literature.

Indeed, the processes of these two types of transition share certain elements. Pedersen (1990) described the characteristics of culture shock, which he applied to his discussion of the brain drain and the reentry of international students. Upon reentry, previously familiar cues as to how the person is supposed to behave become absent or carry different meanings, while aesthetic and moral values (i.e., ideas about what is good, beautiful, and valuable) may not be honored in the new environment. Stress and confusion inherent in cultural transitioning may accompany emotional distress such as anxiety, depression, or even anger and hostility. Furthermore, the person who is dissatisfied with the way things are in the host culture may idealize the way things are at home. Coping skills that previously worked may not work in the new environment, while the support system that the person used to rely on may no longer be available, leaving the person even more vulnerable in stressful times. Finally, culture shock is likely to last for some time until familiar cues are replaced by new ones and the person's identity crisis is resolved (Pedersen, 1990).

Research evidence has corroborated the commonality between these characteristics of culture shock and reentry adjustment. For example, Cypriot participants in Thompson and Christofi (2006) recounted the shock that they internally experienced upon return to their home country. As time passed they began to adjust, but they felt frustrated with the loss of freedom that they had had in their sojourn countries. Similarly, Japanese students in Kidder's (1992) study idealized the direct communication style in the United States as honest and considered it more desirable than the indirect communication style in Japan.

Despite certain commonalities, however, the experience that sojourners undergo upon reentry differs from adaptation to host cultures. Sussman (1986) discussed five characteristics that distinguish the reentry process from the process of initial cross-cultural adjustment. First,

whereas most people usually expect to encounter cultural differences and difficulties when they are going abroad, they do not expect to experience difficulty in coming back to a familiar environment. This unexpectedness leaves the sojourners unprepared for potential difficulties, making the reentry a more challenging process. Second, whereas initial adjustment to a host country involves changes in environment, changes central to reentry adjustment are those that occurred within individuals. These changes become only apparent after coming back home. Third, changes occur in the home environment as well. Changes in the home environment can create difficulties for those who idealized it during their sojourn. For example, a participant in Thomson and Christofi's study (2006) lamented that during his absence, the good old Cypriot society that he missed during his sojourn had actually westernized in a way that he did not expect (e.g., the spread of American fast food restaurants). Fourth, significant others expect returnees to be the same as when they left home, and thus they are likely to be intolerant of their changes. Lastly, colleagues and friends may not be necessarily interested in, or capable of comprehending, the sojourner's experience abroad, which can leave them alienated. In sum, reentry adjustment is often considered a reverse process of initial adjustment to a host country. However, despite some similarities, transition to one's home country accompanies unique challenges that are distinct from a transition to a host country.

Research on Reentry

In this section, I will review research conducted specifically on the reentry transition to one's home culture. Most research on reentry adjustment focuses on two distinct groups: students and professionals.

Professionals

This group consists of corporate employees, missionaries, and Peace Corps workers, with a small number of cases that looked at their spouses (Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992; Hammer, Hart, & Rogan, 1998). With the current trend of globalization, staying competitive in the global market is a major concern for today's corporations. Therefore, international assignments are thought to play a crucial role in knowledge transfer and relationship building between the headquarters and subsidiaries abroad, as well as developing culturally competent leaders (Dickmann & Harris, 2005). As a result, topics related to international work assignments, such as global career and boundaryless managers, are gaining increased attention in prominent business journals (e.g., Baruch, Altman, & Adler, 2009; Brewster & Suutari, 2005; Collings & Scullion, 2009; Inkson, Lazarova, & Thomas, 2005).

In the management literature, repatriates' occupational adjustment is often discussed in terms of economic return of capital invested in expatriates. Organizations invest in training expatriates to be agents of knowledge transfer and multiculturally competent global managers. Thus, an unsuccessful international assignment is costly to the organizations not only in terms of invested capital but also unrealized opportunity cost (Dickmann & Harris, 2005; Lazarova & Tarique, 2005). However, evidence suggests that organizations are not necessarily making the most out of repatriates, which in turn makes repatriates' career advancement challenging. It is common that repatriates feel that they are placed into positions that are unrelated to their foreign experiences, and unable to apply skills learned overseas to home organizations due to resistance from coworkers. As a result, they experience considerable frustration that their international assignment did not facilitate their career advancement in the organization (Adler, 1981; Black et al., 1992).

Occupational difficulty upon reentry may be due to an organizational culture that is unwelcoming of returnees, which was documented by one of the classic reentry studies by Adler (1981). She studied over two hundreds corporate and governmental employees returning to Canada from international work assignments. Her data indicated that work colleagues reacted to returnees with xenophobic responses. Specifically, even though returnees reported that their international assignments helped them to develop managerial skills, their learning was unrecognized and their attempt to apply their new knowledge was negatively perceived by their colleagues. That is, the more returnees used skills and knowledge they had acquired overseas, the less effective they were rated by colleagues. Furthermore, work colleagues' evaluation was most positive toward returnees who had had the least foreign experiences and the least contact with people in the host countries, whereas lower effectiveness ratings were given to returnees who spoke more than one language, had foreign friends, or had previously lived or worked abroad. These results led Adler (1981) to suggest, "perhaps returnees should mask the origin of their overseas knowledge" (p. 351).

At the same time, because international experience is increasingly regarded as an attractive asset in the global job market, many repatriates are headhunted to other organizations even before their international assignment is completed (Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Thus, a higher turnover is common among repatriates than domestic counterparts (Black et al., 1992). As a result, the literature began to recognize the importance of organizational support and the role of supervisors. Furuya, Stevens, Bird, Oddou, and Mendenhall (2009) found that organizational support leads to the repatriates' sense of their own competency as global managers, which in turn leads to higher job motivation and work performance. Benson and Pattie (2009) studied expatriates' relationships with both home-country and host-country supervisors. Whereas host-

country supervisors are instrumental in expatriates' short-term job performance and completion of their assignment, home-country supervisors play key roles in their long-term professional development.

Students

Recently, the counselling psychology literature has seen a rise in books on international students in higher education (e.g., Arthur, 2004; Hasan, Fouad, & Williams-Nickelson, 2008; Singaravelu & Pope, 2007). Although these books typically include a chapter on reentry transition (Arthur, 2007; Kracen, Zeinoun, Wu, & Stevens, 2008; Leung, 2007), little is actually known about the reentry experience of international students who pursued a degree in higher education. Aside from a few notable exceptions (Brabant et al., 1990; Gama & Pedersen, 1977; Thomson & Christofi, 2006), the majority of reentry studies on student populations are on either children accompanied to host countries by their parents, or students who participated in short-term (i.e., no more than a year) intercultural exchange programs.

Studies of student returnees have focused on the extent to which these students experience adjustment difficulty. A significant amount of research indicates that returnees experience high rates of psychological and academic problems. In a study on Japanese adolescents who participated in a yearlong exchange program, Furukawa (1997) found that six months after their return to Japan, 57 % of students were experiencing psychological disturbance at a level that warrants clinical attention. Similar results were reported in Sahin's (1990) study on returnee students of Turkish migrant works to Germany; after they returned to Turkey, a significantly higher proportion of returnee students met the criteria for clinical depression and anxiety compared with non-returnee students. In addition, Gaw's (2000) study of American

college students revealed that students who completed high school outside the U.S. had more academic difficulties compared to non-returnees.

Not surprisingly, the level of reentry difficulty is related to psychological distress. Rogers and Ward (1993) reported that among New Zealand students who participated in an exchange program, students who were having social difficulties upon return and those whose reentry experience was worse than expected, were more likely to experience a higher level of anxiety than those relatively at ease with reentry adjustment. Similarly, among American college students who completed high school outside of the U.S., returnees experiencing a higher level of reverse culture shock reported significantly higher scores on personal adjustment problems (e.g., depression, anxiety, loneliness, and making friends) as well as shyness than those who were experiencing a lower level of reverse culture shock (Gaw, 2000).

Japanese Students. A significant portion of the reentry literature comes from studies on Japanese returnee children and adolescents, called *kikokushijo* (which literally means repatriated children). Although studies on Japanese *kikokushijo* use the term *returnee children*, their samples are mostly high school students or university students who spent some of their childhood years abroad. This is because in the Japanese language, (a) children can include adolescents; (b) adults who sojourned abroad in their childhood are also referred as *kikokushijo*, regardless of their current age (Isogai, Hayashi, & Uno, 1999). Due to Japan's post-war economic growth, the number of Japanese living and working abroad on international assignments has drastically increased since the 1970's. Many of them brought their children with them. As a result, successful integration of these children back into Japanese society and the educational system was a concern. However, Japan's unique sociocultural factors seem to make these children and adolescents' reentry particularly challenging.

Japan has been a relatively homogeneous country with collectivistic cultural values. Simply stated, a collectivistic culture emphasizes interdependence and group identity, as opposed to an individualistic culture that values independence and autonomy (Hofstede, 2001). One characteristic of collectivism lies in the strong value of group conformity, as expressed in a well-known Japanese saying "the nail that sticks out gets hammered down". In such a context, returnees are often perceived as different, and their differences are not tolerated. For example, teachers perceive returnee students as troublemakers, who disturb group harmony due to their unfamiliarity with Japanese cultural norms (Yoshida et al., 2003). In addition, Isogai et al., (1999) reported that traditional reentry programs in the Japanese school system "focused on stripping the returnees of their foreignness and making them 'pure ' [Japanese] again" (p. 407). This re-assimilation style of dealing with returnee students is characterized by the example of forcing returnees from English speaking countries to learn to speak English with a Japanese accent (Isogai et al., 1999)

With a stigma and pressure to re-assimilate, it is not surprising that identity crisis appears to be a central feature of reentry experience (Isogai et al., 1999; Kanno, 2000). For example, in her article entitled *Requirements for being 'Japanese'*, Kidder (1992) reported that returnee students are perceived as different in terms of physical appearance, behavioral signs, and interpersonal communication (e.g., direct speech versus traditional indirect Japanese communication style), which made them question their Japanese identity. Similarly, Yoshida et al. (2002) found nine factors that described Japanese students' experiences of reentry, with "feeling different" emerging as a key factor.

The Japanese educational system and economic contexts further complicates Japanese returnees' relationship with their peers. A survey on peers' perception of returnee children

(Yoshida et al., 2003) indicated that their peers perceived the returnees as different from them and possessing both advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantages include returnee students' academic difficulties, lack of Japanese proficiency, and different communication styles (e.g., directness). On the other hand, peers also perceived advantages associated with being returnees, which is partly rooted in the practice of admission at Japanese universities. In Japan, universities rely on entrance exams that test a broad range of knowledge covered in the Japanese high school curriculum. Since this has historically put returnee students who did not study in Japanese schools at a disadvantage, many prestigious universities started to set a special quota for returnee students, exempting them from taking an entrance exam. In addition, knowing a second language has been increasingly recognized as valuable in the Japanese labour market. As a result, many companies started to see returnees as highly desirable employees in the globalizing economy. However, as other Japanese students have to go through an extremely competitive process to enter universities and the workforce, these advantages are perceived as "unfair merits" by other students, which may result in further alienation of returnees by their peers (Yoshida et al., 2003).

Given the educational system and social contexts that reinforce returnees' alienation, social support and acceptance appears be a key factor that alleviates reentry stress for Japanese returnee students. Yoshida et al. (2002) found that communication with parents, special provision for returnees, and enrolling in a class with other returnees predicted better reentry adjustment. In another study, the same group of researchers (Yoshida et al., 2009) reported that the lack of social acceptance and experience of discrimination or being bullied differentiated returnees who had difficult reentry transitions from those who had smooth ones.

In sum, significant psychological, academic, and occupational adjustment difficulties associated with reentry have been documented. As a result, some authors suggested that reentry

is more difficult than initial adjustment to a host country (Black et al., 1992; Sussman, 1986; Tannenbaum, 2007). In addition, a number of authors have highlighted the greater need to provide pre-reentry programs that accommodate the needs of returning students (Arthur, 2004; Martin & Harrell, 2004; Yoon & Portman, 2004).

Theories and Models of Reentry

Since the 1960's, several models of reentry transition have been proposed. As is in any area in social science, developments in reentry adjustment also reflect a changing zeitgeist from the positivist paradigm to a systems-oriented, more ecological perspective. In this section, the major models of reentry are reviewed as well as an examination of their strengths and limitations. These models were chosen as they were specifically developed as models of reentry and focus on psychological processes in this transition.

The W-Curve Model

The early model of reentry emerged from theorization of culture shock, the most popular of which is the U-curve Model (Lysgaand, 1955; Oberg, 1960). According to this model, individuals undergo a U-shape linear learning curve involving three stages when placed in a culturally unfamiliar environment: the initial feelings of excitement and elation (honeymoon stage); the second phase of disorientation, frustration, and depression (disillusionment or culture shock stage); and finally the phase of gradual adjustment characterized by learning of behaviors appropriate in the new culture (adjustment stage). Some theorists (e.g., Black & Mendenhall, 1991; Oberg, 1960)included an additional "mastery stage" in which personal growth and a sense of satisfaction are experienced. Extending this U-curve hypothesis, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) proposed that sojourners go through similar stages upon return, which in combination resulted in the W-curve model of cross-cultural adaptation and readaptation.

Strengths and Limitations. The contribution of the W-curve model is that it brought attention to the neglected aspect of cross-cultural transition and provided an impetus for subsequent empirical studies and theorization of reentry. Although the model is rather outdated, it is considered classic and still discussed in the literature. The major problem with the W-curve model is that little empirical evidence has supported the U-curve model, on which the W-curve model is based. For example, Black and Mendenhall (1991) reviewed 18 empirical studies that tested the U-curve hypothesis. They found that most studies reported no statistical data, measured reentry adjustment retrospectively, and employed cross-sectional rather than longitudinal designs. These methodological problems thus made it impossible to accept or reject the hypothesis. More recently, Ward, Okura, Kennedy, and Kojima (1998) tested the U-curve hypothesis in a more robust research design, employing a longitudinal study with a relatively large sample of Japanese students sojourning in New Zealand. Their study also rejected the hypothesis. Sussman (2001) studied American managers who had returned from their international assignment and also found little support for the W-curve model.

Furthermore, both the U-curve and the W-curve models offer limited utility as a theoretical model. Black and Mendenhall (1991) summarized that the model "is more a description of phases of adjustment than a theoretical framework of how and why individuals move from one stage to the next" (p. 232). As is the case for any stage models, the U/W curve models assume that all individuals go through the process in a linear, predictable fashion, and it does not address why some individuals may stay in one stage longer than others, or go back and forth between stages. Finally, the U/W-curve models assume that entry and reentry adjustment is essentially the same, just reversed. However, as discussed previously, it has been well documented that the reentry process differs from initial sojourn adjustment.

Expectations Model

Whereas the W-curve model is imbued with a positivistic value of finding universal, predictable stages of adaptation, the expectations model of reentry reflects the zeitgeist of the cognitive revolution that emphasizes the role of cognitive schema on psychological experience. In this model, reentry is thought to be difficult and comes as a surprise because people often do not anticipate adjustment difficulties when going back to a familiar environment; rather, they "planned to 'just slip into' their previous life styles" (Adler, 1981, p. 350). Only after they arrive home, do they realize that the home environment and they themselves have changed. The main assertion of the expectations model is that it is this unexpected nature of reentry that makes a transition back to one's home country difficult.

The expectation model of reentry rests on two theories of expectations (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). The *expectation value theory* quite simply predicts that fulfillment of expectations about the sojourn or reentry results in positive evaluations, which ultimately leads to satisfactory adaptation. By contrast, unfulfilled expectations result in negative evaluations, which lead to difficult adaptation. The second theory, named *expectation violation theory*, offers more nuanced predictions. According to this theory, unfulfilled expectations do not necessarily result in negative expectations; rather, *negatively* violated expectations (i.e., things turned out worse than expected) produce negative evaluations, but *positively* violated expectations (i.e., things turned out better than expected) produce positive evaluations. In other words, the theory posited that undermet expectations are associated with difficult adjustment whereas met and overmet expectations are associated with satisfactory adjustment (Martin & Harrell, 2004).

Research findings seem to support the latter theory. Martin, Bradford, and Rohrlich (1995) employed a longitudinal design to investigate the relationships between expectations and

experience of American university students' participation in a study abroad program. The results indicated that when expectations were positively violated (i.e., the actual experience was better than expected), the sojourn experience was evaluated positively. Applying these theories to reentry adjustment, Rogers and Ward (1993) asked New Zealand students, while sojourning abroad, the degree of difficulty they expected to experience upon reentry to New Zealand. Their answers were then compared with their actual reentry experience measured approximately seven weeks after their return. They found that large discrepancies between expectation and actual experience were associated with psychological distress only when the experience was more difficult than expected. Sussman's (2001) study of American corporate managers also indicated similar results.

Strength and Limitations. The contribution of the expectations model is that it highlighted an importance of reentry preparation training for sojourners, that is, the idea that sojourners should be prepared to develop realistic expectations about reentry. A few authors (e.g., Martin & Harrell, 2004; Rogers & Ward, 1993) went so far as to suggest that it is worthwhile to overprepare sojourners for the potential problems they might encounter upon return. Based on this approach, Westwood, Lawrence, and Paul (1986) developed a group program for international students. In this program, students were encouraged to explore their expectations about reentry, visualize potential difficulties they might encounter in professional and personal areas, and discuss possible problem solving strategies. Although the authors reported positive results of a pilot evaluation of their program, their evaluation was preliminary and did not have a control group. No other training programs have been assessed to evaluate the model's effectiveness.

Although the expectations model highlighted the importance of preparing sojourners to set realistic expectations about their reentry, a few limitations should be noted. First, a practical implication from this model resembles stress incubation—the idea that we should make people expect potential difficulties. However, the model does not provide concrete ways in which people can cope with difficulties. Increasing awareness of potential reentry difficulties without imparting effective coping strategies may heighten anxiety among some sojourners. In fact, contrary to the assumption that sojourners do not expect reentry difficulties, some evidence suggests that they do worry about what it will be like when they go home. For example, Petress, 1995) reported that Chinese students who were about to participate in an exchange program had reentry concerns even before their departure to the United States. Situ, Austin, and Liu (1995) documented that the combination of an ambivalent desire to return to China and limited opportunities to acquire permanent residency in the U.S., drove a small number of Chinese students to illegal activities such as illegal employment and falsifying immigration documents.

Second, the model was proposed before the advent of communication technology and affordable air travels. At the time, international phone calls were expensive and many international students often underwent several years of degree programs without visiting home. Today, however, new communication technologies such as email and the Internet have made it easier for sojourners to keep in touch with people in their home country, while reduction in airfare cost over the years has made it easier for them to visit home during their sojourn. These changes are likely to provide them with a better sense of what to expect upon their return. Indeed, Brabant et al. (1990) reported an inverted relationship between visits home during sojourn and family problems upon reentry.

Cultural Identity Model of Reentry

Given the amount of literature that points to identity crisis corollary to reentry, a more recent model of reentry attempted to take into account cultural identity shifts that occur in the process of acculturation. Sussman (2000) developed the Cultural Identity Model (CIM), which explicates the continuous cycle of host-country and reentry adjustment from the perspective of self-concept and cultural identity. The psychological conceptualization of identity in this model is based on acculturation theories (Sussman, 2000). Similar to Berry (1997)'s acculturation model, this model recognized two primary dimensions of acculturation that are independent of each other: adherence to one's host culture and maintenance to one's home culture.

Sussman (2000) proposed four categories of identity shifts in relation to one's identification to home and host cultures, postulating that the changes in cultural self-concept during a sojourn affect one's reentry experience. That is, it is predicted that the less an individual identifies with the home culture (*subtractive* identity shift) or the more an individual identifies with the host culture (*additive* identity shift), the easier the adaptation is to the host country but the more difficult the reentry adjustment. By contrast, when an individual reacts to transition to a host culture by affirming one's home country identity (*affirmative* shift), he or she will have a difficult sojourn adaptation to the host culture but will find the reentry to home culture a relief.

The fourth category of identity, *intercultural* or *global* identity shift, is postulated to occur when an individual is able to "hold multiple cultural scripts simultaneously and draw on each as the working self-concept requires" (Sussman, 2000, p. 327). This, Sussman specified, is different from integration of both home and host cultures or bicultural strategies, but rather "an identity in which the repatriates define themselves as world citizens and are able to interact appropriately and effectively in many countries and regions" (Sussman, 2000, p. 368). It was

hypothesized that intercultural identity shifts result in high adaptation to the host culture and better repatriation adjustment.

Sussman conducted two studies to test her model, surveying American corporate returnees (Sussman, 2001) and ESL teachers who had returned from Japan (Sussman, 2002). Although both studies supported her hypotheses in general, these two studies have several methodological limitations: retrospective recall was utilized in both studies, with a great variability in time elapsed since return in the second study (average of 30 months with a range of one month to 12 years); the nature of correlation studies makes it impossible to infer temporal and causal relationships; most of the variables were measured by the author-developed survey with limited information on its psychometric properties. The most problematic is that each of the cultural identity shifts, which are the core constructs of the CIM, was measured by a single item. Clearly, more validation studies using psychometrically sound measures are needed.

Strengths and Limitations. The CIM contributed to the literature by placing cultural identity at the center of the reentry adjustment process. In addition, the model recognized the continuous nature of the departure-sojourn-reentry transition cycle, and incorporated mediating variables that are postulated to contribute to different reentry outcomes. Nonetheless, in addition to methodological issues noted above, some of the assumptions underlying the CIM need to be critically examined. For example, it assumes the stability of acculturative or identity categories over time and across situations. However, individuals may explore various strategies and adapt different identities over time during their sojourn, depending on factors such as one's own developmental maturity or formations of significant interpersonal relationships. In addition, although CIM focuses on how acculturation to the host country affects reentry adjustment, the reverse directionality may also be possible. That is, sojourners' expectations about reentry

adjustment and their intention to return or not to return may in fact influence what acculturative strategy they may take up during their sojourn. For example, sojourners who are determined to return home do not see the need to be integrated into the host culture, whereas those who are not intended to return home may assimilate themselves into the host culture.

Furthermore, although the CIM suggests that one's reentry experience is predicted by the degree to which an individual was integrated into a host culture, two opposing views exist in the literature. The first view, consistent with CIM, predicts that individuals who were integrated into a host culture have accumulated the greater internal changes, and will therefore face greater difficulty in readjusting to the home culture. By contrast, the cultural learning hypothesis posits that individuals who adapted well to host cultures are more likely to have an easier reentry process, since they can use the same skills and competencies that they learned in adjusting to the host culture to their reentry process. The research evidence remains inconclusive. Although some research supported the first hypothesis (Rohrlich & Martin, 1991; Uehara, 1986), results from Furukawa (1997)'s study on Japanese returnee students supported the second, which led the author to conclude that "healthy, adaptive, and flexible people [who are able to adjust well in a foreign environment] will remain healthy and adaptive under challenging situations [in reentry adjustment]" (Discussion section, para. 3).

Lastly, emerging empirical evidence indicates that an integration strategy does not necessarily predict psychological well-being. For example, evidence suggests that sovereigntist French-Canadians and assimilated native peoples were better psychologically adjusted than integrationist counterparts (Rudmin, 2003). According to Rudmin (2003), this is may be due to the effect of double allegiance; adherence to both cultures requires extra expenditure of energy and continuous negotiation of identities, resulting in higher distress. Based on such findings, it is

not certain that the global identity shift is necessarily associated with better repatriation adjustment. Indeed, one of Sussman's own follow-up studies (2002) found no relationship between global identity and repatriation distress.

Systems Approach and Communication Paradigm

The models reviewed so far have focused on intrapersonal aspects of cultural transitioning, neglecting interpersonal or environmental factors. By contrast, a systems approach and communication paradigm to reentry adjustment is unique in its emphasis on how returnees engage themselves with their post-reentry environment and how people in the reentry environment react to them. Rather than the work of a single theorist, this paradigm consists of the work of multiple authors and a growing cluster of research that focuses on communication and interpersonal relationships.

Kim (2001) developed an integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation, which was applied to reentry transition by Martin and Harrell (2004). This model conceptualizes reentry as a cyclical process of stress–adaptation–growth, and identifies major variables that are categorized into four factors: sojourner characteristics, host environment characteristics, home environment characteristics, and communication of returning sojourners. A great emphasis was put on the communication factor, which includes facets such as interpersonal communication with members of the home culture, interpersonal communication with other returnees, and mass communication consumption of media from the former host country.

Research from the communication paradigm highlighted that maintaining communication with the home culture during sojourn facilitates the reentry process (Martin & Harrell, 2004). For instance, Brabant et al. (1990) found a negative relationship between the number of home visits during sojourn and family problems encountered upon reentry. Cox (2004) investigated the

relationship between the use of telecommunication technologies (i.e., email, phone) and

repatriation distress, and found that new forms of telecommunication are as effective, if not

more, as traditional face-to-face interaction (visits by friends or family) to buffer reentry distress.

Communication studies are also emerging from research on Japanese returnee children.

They suggest that in order to gain acceptance from their peers, Japanese returnees

overcompensate their difference by adopting collectivistic ways of interacting with others. In one

study (Takeuchi, Imahori, & Matsumoto, 2001), college-age returnee students were presented

with a hypothetical scenario that involved finding another person's unpleasant behavior and

asked how they are likely to respond to this situation. Their answers were compared with those

of two control groups: Japanese non-returnee students (i.e., those who had never sojourned

overseas longer than a year) and American exchange students in Japan. Contrary to the

researchers' hypothesis that returnees' criticism style is less direct than American students but

more direct than Japanese non-returnee students, the results indicated that returnees exhibited

least direct communication styles. Similarly, Sasagawa, Toyoda, and Sakano (2006) found that

Japanese students who returned from individualistic countries behave in more collectivistic ways

than those returned from countries that espouse collectivistic cultures. Moreover, among students

who sojourned to individualistic cultures, those who attended local schools (therefore

hypothesized to have internalized more individualistic cultural values) endorsed more

collectivistic attitudes than those who attended Japanese schools overseas. The authors thus

concluded that students who returned from an individualistic culture are aware of the stereotype

of returnees as "Americanized" and too assertive, and they may attempt to disconfirm this

stereotype by taking an overly collectivistic position in order to fit in.

Chang's (2009) qualitative study revealed a complex dynamic between Chinese mothers and their children during their temporary visit home from American universities. The mothers reported ambivalent feelings about their children: while they were happy that their children had gained maturity, they felt confused about their children's changes that were not consistent with traditional Chinese values and norms. They were also dissatisfied that their children rarely stayed home and disclosed little about their lives in the U.S. In response, the mothers avoided direct confrontation and adopted indirect and courteous communication, in order to keep their children happy during their short visit home. Such indirect and courteous communication styles "virtually transformed the mother-child relationship into a host-guest relationship" (Chang, 2009, p. 262). As a result, these mothers felt left out of their children's lives, which in turn challenged their motherhood identity.

Strengths and Limitations. Collectively, researchers taking a systems approach and communication paradigm began to look at the role of communication and interpersonal dynamics in cross-cultural adjustment and reentry. Kim (2001) argued that through adaptive communication and interaction with others, returnees move through the cycle of stress-adaptation-growth. Moreover, these studies imply that reentry outcome is co-produced by returnees and others around them. While returnees need to adjust to the reentry environment, others need to adjust to returnees, requiring mutual negotiation. Furthermore, some researchers began to point to the impact of sociocultural contexts on the reentry process (e.g., Japanese educational system that puts returnees at an advantage). While these developments represent a promising area for future research, these studies are still sparse and have not led to solid theory development. More sensitivity to analysis of micro and macro contextual factors is also needed.

Limitations

Thus far, studies and models on reentry transition were reviewed. Most come from the literature on business expatriates, returnee children and adolescents, and college students who participated in a short-term study abroad program. Besides this obvious omission of discussion on international students in higher education, the reentry literature has been "fragmented" (Szkudlarek, 2010, p. 13) and suffers from several methodological limitations such as small sample size, low response rates, and a lack of control groups. The majority of studies is cross-sectional and correlational in nature, and is not driven by theories or theoretical frameworks. Moreover, given the lack of valid instruments that specifically measure reentry adjustment, researchers relied on self-developed surveys, many of which are single-item measures with little information about item development and psychometric properties, or with clinical instruments such as Beck Depression Inventory. Although psychometrically more sound than study-specific surveys, application of these measures to a non-clinical population can be problematic.

Implicit in the use of clinical assessment instruments in reentry research is the tendency to pathologize challenges associated with reentry transition. Although it is undeniable that stress resulting from those challenges may lead to significant psychological distress, cross-cultural transitions can potentially be growth promoting. Indeed, researchers observed among returnees positive outcomes such as acquisition of additional languages, independence, widening horizon (Tannenbaum, 2007), improved family relationships (Martin, 1986), and an increased self-awareness as well as heightened awareness of social and political problems around the world (Uehara, 1986). Rohilich and Martin (1991) found that 70% of their respondents (American students who participated in a study abroad program) was satisfied with their life after participating.

Although it is not clear whether these positive outcomes are the result of returning to the home country specifically or the international experience in general, the dichotomous view of reentry adjustment as problematic/growth producing is consistent with the larger cross-cultural adjustment literature, as Kim (2001) insightfully posited:

What needs to be clarified between the problem-oriented and learning/growth-oriented approaches is the fact that all individual experiences of cross-cultural adaptation, long-term or short-term, are both problematic and growth producing.…Cross-cultural adaptation is thus a double-edged process, one that is simultaneously troublesome and enriching. Despite, or rather because of, the difficulties crossing cultures entails, people do and must change some of their old ways so as to carry out their daily activities and achieve improved quality of life in the new environment (p. 21).

Then, future research into reentry adjustment should explore not only challenges that returnees face and how they cope with them, but also what they learn from these challenges, and what they gain from their renewed relationship with their home country.

Furthermore, similar to international students literature in general, the reentry literature has failed to address gender and larger sociocultural factors. With the exceptions of a few recent studies on female managers (Harvey, McIntyre, Thompson Heames, & Moeller, 2009; Janssens, Cappellen, & Zanoni, 2006), studies on missionaries and expatriates are by far overrepresented by male perspectives.

Available evidence suggests that gender impacts reentry adjustment, although the direction of the impact seems inconsistent; while some studies indicated that reentry adjustment is more difficult for females than for males, others found opposite results or no significant differences although findings are inconsistent. A closer examination of sample characteristics

reveals that this inconsistency may be due to the inadequate efforts in the literature to take into account particular sociocultural contexts of both home and host environments. That is, no gender difference, or less difficulty among women than men, was reported by studies on North Americans coming back from abroad (e.g., Rohrlich and Martin's (1991)'s study on American college students who participated in a semester-long study abroad program).

On the other hand, among returnees who came back from Western countries to home countries where gender role expectations are more hierarchical, women appear to experience more reentry distress than men. For example, a survey of former international students at a U.S. university (Brabant et al., 1990) revealed that female students were more likely than males to experience problems with family and daily life and to find that their friends had changed, leading the researchers to conclude, "Sex was the single most important variable in our analysis in terms of predicting problems returning" (p. 397). Likewise, Turkish female students returned from Germany fared more poorly both psychologically and academically than both their male counterparts and non-returnee girls (Sahin, 1990). In a study on Japanese returnee students (Yoshida et al., 2002) being a bilingual male predicted less adjustment difficulty, indicating that being bilingual is an asset for male students but not for female ones. Among returned Brazilian graduate students and scholars who studied in the United States, women reported to have experienced more administrative red tape and value conflicts with their family than men, and perceived themselves as being less adequate in coping than men with family expectations and family supervision (Gama & Pedersen, 1977). Similar results were reported by Jung, Lee, and Morales (2012) in their study on Korean counselling psychologists who obtained their doctorates in the United States.

Further inferences can be made from the existing literature on cultural transitioning and international students. Sakamoto (2006) studied the impact of family and gender roles on the experience of Japanese academic sojourners (e.g., visiting scholars), and suggested that women's cultural negotiation seemed more influenced by their male partners than vice versa. As an example, the author described a woman who felt pressured "not to become like an American" (P. 572) by her partner who remained in Japan. In her discussion on intercultural graduate advising, Manathunga (2007) cited an anecdotal episode of a parent complaining that they had sent their child abroad "as a nice obedient Japanese daughter and…[she's] come back argumentative'" (p. 108).

Taken together, it is highly plausible that female students who sojourn to a culture based on individualism such as North America are likely to incorporate values and characteristics such as independence and assertiveness; however, these changes may not be well received in their home cultures, as they are incongruent with traditional gender role expectations. In addition, North American degrees and language skills obtained by women can be perceived as threats to traditional male dominant power hierarchies (Gama & Pedersen, 1977; Ono & Piper, 2004; Yoshida et el., 2002). However, these gender differences reported above were either haphazard findings or results of a supplemental question at best, rather than a main question specifically investigated, and no study to my knowledge has explicitly explored the impact of culture and gender roles on reentry adjustment. It appears that reentry experience cannot be fully understood without examining intricate interactions among the returnee's changing identity, their relationships with others around them, and external factors such as culture, gender, and the sociopolitical context.

Situating the Proposed Research: Japanese Women in Transition

Given the limitations in the current literature discussed above, several researchers have called for further research that specifically elucidate the impact of gender roles on reentry adjustment (e.g., Jung, Lee, & Morales, 2012; Szkudlarek, 2010). Thus, the present study aimed to investigate one particular group's psychosocial experience of returning home after completing a higher education degree in North America: Japanese women. To situate the study, the following section discusses the status of women in contemporary Japan, focusing on education, work, and family life, followed by a discussion on literature that specifically address Japanese women as international students.

Gender in Japan

Japanese women today live in a society with contradicting messages about gender equality. On one hand, in the last several decades various laws were enacted to give women increased rights, and access to educational and occupational opportunities have increased. Survey results indicate that younger people, men and women, increasingly endorse more egalitarian attitudes than older generations (Suzuki, 2007). On the other hand, traditional Confucius values on hierarchy and conformity tenaciously place women in a subordinate position, as expressed in the Doctrine of Three Obedience: "When she is young, she obeys her father; when she is married, she obeys her husband, when she is widowed, she obeys her son". (White, 2001, p. 144). According to the 2014 Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum, 2014), which measures the disparity in opportunities available for men and women, Japan ranked 104th among the 142 participated countries, lagging behind not only Canada (19th) and United States (20th) but also other Asian countries such as China (87th) and Indonesia (97th).

That is, Japanese women still face considerable barriers and disadvantages in their educational and occupational opportunities, and in family life.

Higher Education. According to the 2014 report published by the Gender Equity Bureau (2015), Japanese women enrolled in universities have dramatically increased over the last two decades, from 15.2% in 1990 to 47% in 2014. Today, similar proportions of men and women advance to higher educational institutions after high school (55.9% for men, 56.5% for women). However, a closer examination reveals a significant disparity in disciplines and educational levels. First, 9.5% of these women study in two-year junior colleges. These two-year colleges have been traditionally nicknamed as *hanayome gakko* (bride-training school) (Anzai & Paik, 2012), since most of which are only open to women and provides limited choice of programs such as home economics and early childhood education. Furthermore, female undergraduate students represent 12.9% of the student body in engineering and 25.7% in science, whereas it is 65.6% in the humanities. There is also a notable pipeline phenomenon, wherein women leak out of a 'pipeline' of professional progression. For example, only 5.9% of women go on to graduate school compared to 14.8% for men. Women represent 14.6% of research positions in Japan, whereas in the United States it is 33.6%.

Continuing disparity is rooted in a traditional view that "academic study would make a young women '*namaiki*' (conceited, impertinent, snobbish)" (Fujimura-Fanselow, 1995, p. 126). Traditional beliefs hold that a woman who is too smart cannot find a husband, as overeducated women may signal a threat to the status quo of Japanese patriarchy. If women's higher education is seen as at all valuable, it is not for the enhancement of their career opportunities. Rather, it is regarded for the purpose of general cultural enrichment, which is thought to help women become "*ryosai kenbo*" (good wives and wise mothers). Indeed, women's education is not associated

with their work status or wage, but rather positively associated with their husbands' income (Kimura, 2007; Tanaka, 1995). That is, university-educated women are more likely to be unemployed than married women with high school level education. Interpreting these data, Tanaka (1995) argues "education is a resource in the marriage market in which women with higher education are more likely to marry men with higher education, who in turn receive higher earnings" (p. 300). The resulting higher family income affords women with higher education a choice to leave the workforce and to stay home (Raymo & Lim, 2011).

Work and family life. Women's status in Japanese society has seen major changes since the end of the Second World War. Under the United States' occupation, the 1947 Constitution was enacted and for the first time women were granted equal rights under the law. Decades later, in tandem with the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985), the Equal Employment Opportunities Law (1985) was enacted to prohibit discrimination against women in employment, promotion, wage and benefits. Since then, a series of laws have been enacted to give Japanese women increased rights, such as the Child-Care Leave Law (1991); the Revised Equal Employment Opportunity Law (1999); the Child-Care and Family-Care Leave Law; and the Law for the Measures to Support the Development of the New Generation (2005). Notably, the enactment of the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society (1999) was particularly instrumental; it led to the establishment of the Gender Equity Bureau within the Cabinet Office of the Japanese Government, enabling the use of the public funding to put forth concerted efforts for gender equality.

The background to the enactment of these various laws is an alarming decline in birth rates. In 2005, Japan's birth rate hit a critical point of 1.26, well below 2.20, which is considered necessary to sustain a current level national population. Although the birth rate minimally

increased in the subsequent years (1.41 in 2012), women are continuing to delay childbirth. The

mean age of women at the birth of the first child is 29 years old, one of the highest among

countries surveyed in the 2014 Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum, 2014).

Thus, Japanese society is facing a growing aging population and a shrinking labour force. This

changing demographic will inevitably put a heavy burden on the nation's social services system.

Japan's declining birth rate is attributed to Japanese societal structures and cultural norms

that are unfavorable to women trying to balance work and family life (Suzuki, 2007). In the

workforce, the traditional assumption holds that women leave jobs and become housewives once

they get married or have children. Therefore, women are deemed to be unworthy of specialized

training and promotion, and assigned to clerical and support staff positions. Although explicit

gender segregation is now illegal, women still occupy less skilled, lower-paid, and part-time

positions than men, and thus make less money. The 2014 Global Gender Gap Report (World

Economic Forum, 2014) estimates that Japanese women earn 68% of the wage that men who

perform similar work earn. Recent statistics corroborated a growing gendered economic

disparity, indicating that one-third of women who live alone fall under the poverty line.

Simultaneously, Japanese cultural norms and societal structures place women in the

domestic sphere. As the work culture demands that men show loyalty to their companies by

devoting long hours on the job, they tend to be absent from family life. Statistics indicate that

among dual income families with child(ren), men spend 24 minutes a day on housework and

childcare compared to 4 hours and 12 minutes that women spend on these activities (Ministry of

Internal Affairs and Communications, 2011). Among couples with children, only 2.03% of men

take parental leave (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2014), and thus the majority of

childrearing responsibilities falls on women regardless of their employment status (Ministry of

Internal Affairs and Communications, 2011). Moreover, the tax system penalizes double income families, and childcare facilities are chronically insufficient. Coupled with the unavailability of satisfying, well-paid jobs for women, many women with small children opt to stay home. As a result, Japanese women's labour force participation sharply drops during childrearing years. The resulting M-Shape formation (Appendix A) shows a phenomenon unique to Japan among developed countries (Suzuki, 2007).

Women's temporary withdrawal from the workforce has grave implications for their career development. The M-shape phenomenon unfortunately perpetuates the previously stated assumption that women are not worth training for specialized positions, and thus further limit opportunities for women. Moreover, once their career development has been interrupted, women reenter the workforce with worsened conditions (e.g., part-time or temporary status, poor benefits), which further contributes to gender wage disparity.

In sum, despite recent changes in the legal system and people's perception of gender roles, Japanese women still face a range of gender barriers and inequality. Several scholars (Fujimura-Fanselow, 1995; Kelsky, 2001) note that, in fact, these contradictions—apparent equality and freedom on one hand; persisting, often invisible gender barriers on the other—lead women to experience considerable confusion and frustration. In response, some women conform to traditional domestic roles, but an increasing number of women resist gender disparity by delaying marriage and childbirth, or deciding to stay single (Maeda, 2008). The literature reviewed in the next section demonstrates that women's pursuit of North American education is one of the ways in which women resist gender inequality.

Japanese Women as International Students

Given the previously discussed social contexts, Japanese women regard North America as an attractive destination for actualizing their potentials and ambitions that are likely hampered in Japan. In her book entitled *Women on the Verge*, cultural anthropologist Karen Kelsky (2001) documented Japanese women's prevalent obsessions with 'foreignness', in the form of international sojourns and studies, pursuit of learning the English language, and desire for relationships with Euro-American men. By 'foreignness', Kelsky specially means the West, as she details how the West has been seen as an "antithesis of everything the modern Japanese disliked in her own country" (p. 43). That is, Japanese people equate foreignness with the West, Euro-American cultures specifically. Furthermore, recognizing Japanese women's economic privilege relative to women from underdeveloped countries, Kelsky points out that their motivation for participating in globalization differs from these women who cross borders from economic desperation. Rather, it is this contradictory state wherein women are marginalized and at the same time "ambiguously empowered to imagine, and pursue, their self-interest" (p. 17), which leads to their "international exodus" (p. 5). Chiefly, Kelsky argues that their international study is "perhaps the most important means currently at women's disposal to resist gendered expectations of the female life course in Japan" (p. 2). From various statistics, she estimated that almost 80% of Japanese who study abroad are women.

Empirical studies on Japanese female international students corroborate Kelsky's assertion that women's pursuit of education in the Western countries is motivated by an attempt to circumvent barriers posed by traditional gender role expectations and gender inequality. For example, Ono and Piper (2004) found a sharp contrast between Japanese women and men studying in American MBA programs. Whereas the majority of male students were sponsored by

employers in Japan, married, accompanied by their wives and children, and will return to work

for the same employer, the vast majority of women students were single, self-financed, and were

motivated to obtain an MBA degree with an "ambition to break though the barriers" (p. 111)

imposed by gender biases in Japanese companies. Unlike men whose future promotion is secured

in the home organization, most women expressed the desire for a job in foreign companies,

believing that "foreign companies provide more favorable prospects for women MBAs than

Japanese employers" (p. 114).

Habu (2000) interviewed Japanese women studying in British higher educational

institutions, and concluded that these women's pursuits were motivated by both "public" and

"private" reasons. That is, on the one hand, they tend to present academic and career goals as

public reasons to come abroad, however on the other hand in-depth questioning reveals that their

endeavor is also motivated by dissatisfaction with domestic career options and pressure to

conform to gender role expectations (e.g., pressure to get married) from both family and the

workplace. Habu translated these public and private reasons as "push" and "pull" factors that

lead these women abroad. Lack of freedom and opportunities pushed women abroad, but the

idealization of Western culture and career opportunities that comes with the acquisition of the

English language pulled them to the West. Additionally, she observed that mature students were

more likely to be motivated by push factors than younger women. Similar results were reported

by Ichimoto (2004), who interviewed Japanese women who were studying in Australia. It is

interesting that these women present pull factors as public reasons, and somehow are compelled

to keep push factors private, as if they are ashamed of their decision to escape from what the rest

of countless Japanese women endure. It may be that, as Kelsky (2001) points out, their relative

economic privilege makes them uncomfortable to present themselves as marginalized.

Research Question

The summary provided above illustrates how modern Japanese women live in a contradictory society that allows them to desire increased freedom and a better lifestyle, yet continuingly marginalizes their opportunities. This raises questions pertaining to reentry adjustment. If gender role is the reason why Japanese women students leave their home country in the first place, then, what is it like for them to go back and experience these gender role expectations upon return from their study abroad? Would their education abroad enable them to break through gender-related barriers, as women in Ono and Piper's study envisioned? Or, given the findings that returnee students overcompensate their differences by adopting collectivistic characteristics, do women attempt, by choice or by need, to fit into the host culture by incorporating more traditional gender role expectations? Unfortunately, the models of reentry previously discussed above do not pay attention to gender and sociopolitical factors, and thus, these questions remain unanswered.

Therefore, the present study set out to answer the following question: How do Japanese women, who completed a university degree in North America, construct their stories of the process of pursuing a degree and returning to Japan? In particular, the study aimed to understand Japanese women's experience of returning to Japan after completing a degree in North America, with specific attention to the role of gender and other factors that influence these women's reentry experience.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Epistemology

Epistemology refers to philosophy of knowledge and the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Ponterotto, 2005). Standpoint theory is a feminist epistemological position spearhead by such scholars as Nancy Hartsock (1983, 1985), Donna Haraway (1988), Sandra Harding (Harding, 1991, 1998) Dorothy Smith (1987), and Patricia Hill Collins (1986). Standpoint theory starts by challenging the traditional positivist's assumption of good scientific knowledge as rational and objective, which renders the researcher's social location irrelevant. By contrast, standpoint theorists argue that such disembodied knowledge, which claims universality, hides its underlying distortion and biases. Instead, they advocate for situated knowledge that is local, specific, and historical (Haraway, 1988). Situated knowledge cannot be achieved without explicit consideration of sociopolitical factors and social locations of both the researcher and the researched.

Standpoint theory places the experience of marginalized groups, particularly women, at the center of research projects. Since marginalized groups have less interest in maintaining the social hierarchy than the dominant groups who benefit from it, the standpoints of marginalized groups are thought to help raise critical and fresh questions about how social structures operate, and thus to produce less distorted knowledge. In other words, standpoint theory contends that there is an epistemological advantage in starting off a scientific inquiry from the standpoint of a marginalized group rather than starting off from that of a dominant group (Harding, 1998).

However, it is not the marginalized status per se that gives a particular group an epistemological privilege. Following Harding (Harding, 1991, 1998) and Collins (1986), Sprague (2005) argues that an epistemological privilege arises out of experiences of "boundary crossing"

(p. 74), that is, an experience of living at the intersection of two social locations that are based on

factors such as gender, race, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. For example, Collins

(1986) describes Black women's constant border crossing between the dominant and

marginalized culture as "outsider within". That is, Black women who occupy domestic or

childcare work are familiar with the dominant culture as they are trained to take care of the needs

of dominant group members, and yet they are systemically marginalized in the social hierarchy.

Collins (1986) argues that Black women's knowledge, grounded in borderland experiences,

allows them see the social realities that are difficult for members of dominant groups to see.

  The aim of standpoint theory is not solely to understand the lived experience of those

belonging to marginalized groups; although understanding their experiences is a necessary first

step, Harding (2004) articulates that the goal of standpoint lies in "studying up", that is, to

understand the workings of social systems that design and maintain social hierarchy and

marginalization (Harding, 2004). Toward this end, Sprague (2005) proposes four provisional

guidelines for research projects informed by standpoint theory: (a) work from the standpoint of

the disadvantaged, (b) ground interpretations in interests and experience, (c) maintain a

strategically diverse discourse, and (d) create knowledge that empowers the disadvantaged.

  Feminist standpoint theory explicitly addresses the role of the researcher's social

locations and the interplay that they have within the research process. Sprague (2005) argues

against the prevalent misconception that feminist qualitative research privileges "insider"

research, wherein the researcher studies a group to which the he or she belongs. She also points

out that the researcher's membership to a group being studied cannot be described in terms of

complete dichotomy of "insider-outsider". Given our multiple and intersecting identities, we are

continually rendered both an insider in some aspects, but an outsider in others. Thus, standpoint

theory calls for heightened reflexivity on the part of the researcher, to produce knowledge that is accountable to the people whom it is intended to empower (Sprague, 2005).

Feminist standpoint theory (Harding, 1998; Sprague, 2005) was chosen as an epistemic framework for the proposed study for three reasons. First, as previously discussed, the existing literature on reentry has suffered from a lack of attention to social contexts and gender. Therefore, starting an inquiry from the standpoint of women with explicit attention to their social contexts will likely add a perspective that is missing from the literature. Second, the group being studied occupies a unique location that makes standpoint theory particularly suitable. That is, Japanese women who were invited to participate in this research have been engaged in boundary crossing in multiple ways; they have crossed national and cultural boarders, educational levels, and are navigating a school-to-work transition. Their standpoints are likely to provide critical knowledge that enriches the current literature on cross-cultural transition, and on women's educational experiences and career development. Lastly, the researcher's background and experience renders her as an "insider" in some respects, and an "outsider" in others. Standpoint theory provides the researcher with useful guidelines as to how she can attend to her social locations and subjectivity throughout the research process.

Research Method

Narrative inquiry was selected for this study, which is a qualitative method that prioritizes people's storied experiences and meanings that they ascribe to them. Narrative inquiry encompasses "an amalgam of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods" (Chase, 2005, p. 651). Specifically, narrative inquiry has emerged out of disciplines such as literary theory, sociology, anthropology, and sociolinguistics (Chase, 2005; Riessman, 2008), and has been extended to fields such as education, medicine, and

psychology. In education, John Dewey's theorization on experience has spearheaded the work of Clandinin and Connelly, (2000). In psychology, Murray (2008) traces a narrative tradition to the pioneering work of Theodore Sarbin (1986), Jerome Bruner (1986, 1990), and Donald Polkinghorne (1988).

Despite its interdisciplinary nature, narrative theories and methods revolve around the focus placed on the stories people tell about their life experiences. The act of narration is assumed to be the primary way through which people make sense of their experiences, construct the self, ascribe and communicate meaning (Chase, 2005; Hoshmand, 2005; Polkinghorne, 1988), thereby reclaiming their agency in how their stories are told (Ochberg, 1996). Narrative has many meanings, and a range of definitions has been offered by theorists in different disciplines (Riessman, 2008). According to a definition proposed within psychology, a narrative is "an organized interpretation of a sequence of events" (Murray, 2008, p. 113), and configures a complex series of plots—each consisting of a beginning, middle, and an end—in a unified story (Polkinghorne, 1988, 1991). A narrative has turning points, also called epiphanies, at which the direction or the emotional climate of the story shifts. Recognizing the complexities and social and interpersonal nature of people's lives, narrative inquiry attends to contexts in which the story unfolds (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Thus, narrative inquiry is best suited for gaining an understanding of people's lives and the meanings that they ascribe to their storied experiences.

Furthermore, narrative inquiry is a methodology that focuses on process, or chronology of individuals' experiences, which sets it apart from other modes of qualitative research (Cortazzi, 1993). This focus on process is particularly advantageous for this study, which conceptualized Japanese women's experiences of cross-cultural transition—from pre-departure, through sojourn, to reentry—as a continuous process with a beginning, middle and end.

Narrative inquiry allowed the researcher to investigate the interplay between the process of attaining education abroad, and the participants' view of their identity. According to Stuart Hall (1996), identity is fluid, a work in-progress, "the process of becoming" (p. 3). As such, he posited that individuals engage in educational careers as "biographical solutions" to realizing an imagined future and new identities (Doherty & Singh, 2007). This view of identity is consistent with a narrative perspective; "the self is understood as becoming, which is a temporal process" (Polkinghorne, 1991, p. 144). In the proposed study, narrative inquiry was useful to investigate how Japanese women have constructed and reconstructed their identity in the process of obtaining a North American education.

Methodological Coherence

Morse and Richards (2002) discuss an important attribute of the quality of qualitative research is methodological coherence—how well the purpose, research question, epistemology, and method form a coherent whole as a project. With regards to the congruence for this study, the philosophy underlying narrative inquiry matches well with the tenets of feminist standpoint theory. Similar to standpoint theory which aims to understand social structures, narrative inquiry focuses "not only on individuals' experiences but also on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2005, p. 42-43). In other words, narrative inquiry recognizes that the stories we tell are socially constructed, "both enabled and constrained by a range of social resources and circumstances" (Chase, 2005, p. 657). Analyzing these enablers and constraints in the narratives of a marginalized group illuminates social structures that dominant cultures impose on their lives. Consistent with standpoint theory, narrative inquiry does not assume "objectivity" (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003) and acknowledges the socially situated and interactive nature of

narrated stories. Thus, both standpoint theory and narrative inquiry call for reflexivity on the part of the researcher (Chase, 2005; Riessman, 2008).

Primary Researcher's Subjective Stance

Reflectivity is central to standpoint theory, and narrative inquiry also attends to the researcher's relationship with the research question as well as to the people who are studied. In fact, Clandinin (2013) recommends that researchers write up an autobiography in which the researchers inquire who they are in relation to the phenomenon under study—a task she refers to as "narrative beginning" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 86). At the outset of the present research, the primary researcher engaged in personal reflection and wrote an eight-page autobiography relating to sociocultural, familial, and personal stories that shaped her academic and occupational development and her interest in the research topic. As Clandinin (2013) states that the discipline will dictate whether or not to include such an autobiography in the final report, only the information that is most pertinent to the research question is included in the following paragraphs.

The primary researcher in this study was an able-bodied, heterosexual woman in her 30's. She originally came to Canada from Japan as an international student in her early 20's to pursue undergraduate study. Upon obtaining status as a permanent resident of Canada, she continued on to her master's and doctoral studies in Canada. During her undergraduate study, she organized a peer support group for Japanese female students. During this group, she observed the salience of reentry anxiety among the participants, including those who were in the early stage of their sojourns. This experience led her to conduct a literature review on international students' reentry issues for one of her master's courses. She was however dismayed by the dearth and limited

scope of available knowledge, which formed the basis of her interest to pursue this topic for her

doctoral research.

The fact that the primary researcher is a Japanese woman who pursued higher education

in Canada positioned her as an insider to the group under investigation. This insider status

afforded her the cultural knowledge to understand participants' narratives, thus helping her build

a rapport with them. Simultaneously, she recognized that she was an outsider for several aspects:

she has not made a reentry transition back to Japan; her Canadian educational experience

differed from participants who complete a post-secondary degree in Japan prior to their studying

in North America and those who studied in the United States; and her permanent resident status

in Canada has offered different options for educational and career development.

Additionally, the researcher's preliminary assumption about the process of cross-cultural

transitioning, including reentry transition, was that it can be extremely confusing, challenging,

and stressful, while at the same time potentially growth-promoting. Another core assumption was

that the reentry transition is highly personal, interpersonal, and contextual. That is, the

individual's sense of wellbeing upon return is mediated by a variety of factors such as gender,

social class, sexual orientation, and quality of returnee's support system. The researcher expected

that the social factors of both the host and home countries would intricately impact how

individuals experience their sojourn and return. In addition, the researcher held the view that the

gender barriers and disparity previously reviewed bear on the lives of the women in her study.

Given the primary researcher's relationship with the researched, as well as her subjective

stance, various measures were taken to ensure that the findings would represent the experience of

the participants, not the experience of the researcher. Thus, this methodology section includes a

description of how she monitored and managed her biases and assumptions throughout the course of the research.

Research Team

The research team that assisted the primary researcher throughout this study included an auditor and a peer reviewer. The auditor was a female university professor in Counselling Psychology, who specializes in cultural transitioning, multiculturalism, and qualitative research. The peer reviewer was a female doctoral student in Counselling Psychology who has conducted research on cultural transitioning. The team represented different nationalities (American, Canadian, and Japanese), religious affiliations (Jewish and a mixture of Buddhist-Shinto-Confucius traditions and Catholic education), and sexual orientation (lesbian and heterosexual). Although the auditor and peer reviewer had first-hand experience of cultural transitioning, they had never visited Japan. With their diverse backgrounds and expertise, constant checks and feedback by the research team served as a strategy to maintain a strategically diverse discourse, which is one of the guidelines proposed by Sprague (2005).

Additionally, four Japanese women who were living in Montreal transcribed the interview data and were compensated for their work. The translation of Japanese quotes included in this document was verified by a male Japanese doctoral student in his 30's. He has lived in North America for 8 years, has taught Japanese to English speakers, and was close to defending his PhD in East Asian Studies at a Canadian university at the time of assisting the present study.

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Ethics

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Prior to participant recruitment and data collection, the researcher obtained approval from the Research Ethics Board II at McGill University, which serves the Faculty of Education for

research involving human subjects (see the ethics application in Appendix B, and the obtained ethics certificates in Appendix C).

To insure the privacy of the participants, all hard-copy data, including consent forms, demographic information sheets, and timelines were secured in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. All identifying information was removed from the transcripts, and audio recordings were destroyed after the interviews were transcribed and verified for accuracy. The demographic forms and timeline were number-coded, and computer files were encrypted with passwords. For member checking, summaries of participants' narratives were emailed to the participant in a password-protected attachment, while the password was sent in a separate email.

Participant Recruitment

Criterion sampling was used to ensure the recruitment of individuals who could best inform the experience under investigation (Polkinghorne, 2005). That is, all the participants met the following predetermined criteria: Japanese women who have (a) not lived abroad for more than one year prior to the age of 18; (b) lived in North America during which time they started and completed at least one university degree; and (c) returned to Japan for at least one year but not more than five years.

Criterion (a) was specified in order to exclude *kikokushijo*, individuals who lived abroad in their childhood as a result of their parents' work, as their well-documented, unique experience differs from individuals who moved to North America as adult international students. Completion of a university degree in criterion (b) was specified in order to examine Japanese society's reactions to internationally educated women, as well as to differentiate participants from short-term exchange students whose reentry experience may differ from long-term sojourners (Sasagawa et al., 2006). This criterion further excluded graduates of programs that

allowed them to obtain a North American degree without leaving Japan for a significant length

of time (e.g., distance education programs, programs offered through a partnership with Japanese

universities). In criterion (c), the time elapsed since return was limited to one to five years to

ensure that participants had the chance to experience the full range of the effect of their foreign

sojourn, yet ensured that their memories were still relatively fresh. The same cut-off points were

used in Thompson and Christofi's (2006) phenomenological study on Cypriots who returned

home after studying abroad.

      To recruit participants, the researcher contacted international students offices and

Japanese student associations at various North American universities to ask them to forward the

attached recruitment flyer to their Japanese alumna (See Appendix D). Additionally, recruitment

messages were posted on the websites of Japanese communities in major North American cities,

and on social networking services (SNS) such as Facebook and Mixi (a Japanese SNS that is

similar to Facebook) (Appendix E). These SNS host a number of virtual 'groups' or

'communities' for Japanese people who are studying, or who have studied abroad. For example,

as of April, 2010, Mixi communities named "Studying or Studied in the U.S." and "Graduate

Studies Abroad" had a membership of 2269 and 4186, respectively. Participants received a 2000-

yen gift card (approximately $22) as compensation for their time. These recruitment efforts

yielded fourteen participants, which met a recommended sample size for qualitative study in

counselling psychology (Hill et al., 2005; Morrow, 2005) and for narrative research in

psychology (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003).

Materials

      The following materials were created for the purpose of the study. Considering that all

the participants had to be sufficiently proficient in English to complete a university degree in

English, all the materials were in English. This allowed the Research Ethics Board and the

supervisor to readily monitor integrity of the research process. Exceptionally, the Interview

Guide was prepared in English and then translated into Japanese. This permitted the researcher to

receive feedback from the dissertation committee on the interview guide, while allowing actual

interviews to be conducted in Japanese. The rationale for conducting the interviews in Japanese

will be discussed later.

Informed Consent Form

The informed consent form was created (Appendix F) to ensure that participants

understood the purpose of the research, the tasks involved in participation, their rights, and the

limits of confidentiality. Specifically, this form explicated the procedure to be used in the data

collection, participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time, and an explanation about

how their privacy was to be protected.

Demographic Form

In order to gather information about their age, relationship status, sexual orientation, and

family background, participants were asked to fill out a demographic form (Appendix G).

Questions were also asked regarding educational and occupational history.

Interview Guides

Narrative researchers typically follow the narrators' flow after posing a broad opening

question that invites them to share their stories (Murray, 2008). However, Chase (2005)

emphasizes that a well thought-out interview guide is necessary for narrative researchers to "not

only attend to the stories people *happen* to tell during interviews, but also work at *inviting*

stories" (p. 661). Thus, an interview guide (Appendix H) was developed following Chase's

(2003, 2005) recommendation that it should focus on the specifics of participants' experience

and their meanings, rather than asking sociological questions—"questions about cultural

ideologies or questions that ask them to generalize about other's experiences" (Chase, 2003, p.

85). Thus, hypothetical questions and questions that are likely to elicit abstract, intellectual

answers were avoided.

      Questions were organized to reflect the chronology of the experience, starting from pre-

departure, sojourn, pre-reentry, reentry, to the present and future. As Polkinghorne (1988, 1991)

contends that temporal configuration of narratives not only includes the present and past but also

extends into the future, a question that taps into the participants' prospect for the future was also

included (i.e., "In two or three years from now, what changes would you like to see in your

life?"). The aim of this question was not to raise hypothetical future situations, but to elucidate

how their understanding of the past and present project into the future, and the extent to which

the participants perceive themselves as having agency for their desired future. The researcher

translated the interview guide into Japanese, which was then reviewed by two psychologists in

Japan. One is an assistant professor in clinical psychology, while the other is a master's level

researcher-clinician working in a hospital setting. Both had published a number of qualitative

studies, and the former has had experience supervising students' qualitative research.

      The researcher's subjective stance included an assumption about the role of gender on the

participants' reentry experience. Thus, to avoid imposing this assumption, the researcher

purposely placed the question, "How do you believe the fact that you are a woman impacted

your reentry?" toward the end of the interview guide. However, as it will be apparent in the

following chapter, gender issues were present in many participants' accounts from the very

beginning of the interviews. As a result, the researcher did not need to ask this question in many

cases; if she did, it was meant to encourage participants to summarize previously discussed threads in their own words.

Timeline

During the interview, participants were asked, with the help of the researcher, to create a timeline that chronologically depicted their educational and occupational history (see Appendix I for an example). For face-to-face interviews, the researcher constructed the timeline on a plain sheet of paper where the participants could see, correct, and/or comment on the timeline being constructed. For the participants interviewed via Skype, the sample timeline was emailed as an attachment in advance, so that they could visualize the timeline that the researcher was constructing at the other end.

When creating the timeline, participants were asked to give two to three English words that characterized their experience in each phase. Although these words were initially meant to use for triangulation, they provided additional benefits to the interview and data analysis process. Co-creating the timeline helped to forge a collaborative interviewer-interviewee relationship, as interviewees used this opportunity to correct, supplement, or validate the researcher's understanding of their experiences.

Moreover, for participants interviewed face-to-face, having a visual representation of their cross-cultural transition in front of them promoted deeper reflection and meaning making. For example, one participant used the word "fun" several times to describe different phases prior to her reentry. By contrast, her choice of words for her life after reentry included, "career pursuit" "struggling" and "frustration". When the researcher drew attention to this contrast, she stared at the timeline in silence and then became tearful. She then revealed further personal

challenges. In this self-disclosure, she explored meaning in her experience and identified hope for the future.

Data Collection

Seven participants were interviewed face-to-face, in various locations in Japan (four in Tokyo; one in Osaka, Kyoto, and Yokohama, respectively). Additionally, with the rest of the seven participants with whom face-to-face interviews were not possible due to their location or schedule, I conducted interviews via Skype. All interviews were conducted in Japanese.

At the beginning of the interview, the researcher explained the goals and risks of the study and the participants filled out the informed consent form, which was designed in compliance with the Research Ethics Board II at McGill University and the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Subject.

At the outset of the face-to-face interviews, the researcher explained the goal of the research, the voluntary nature of the participation, and confidentiality. The participants were then invited to ask any questions they might have about the research process or about the researcher. Once the participants understood the nature of the study, they filled out a consent form and a demographic information sheet. They then received a compensation of 2,000 yen for their participation. At this point, the researcher also reiterated that they could withdraw from the interview at anytime or decline answering any questions with which they were not comfortable, without penalty. Once this process was completed, the researcher started audio recording and asked the opening question that invited the participant to tell their stories.

In adherence to narrative tradition, much latitude was given to the participants by respecting their flow in storytelling (Murray, 2008). The interview guides were thus used flexibly and complementarily, rather than in a rigid, sequential manner. After the interview, the

researcher asked debriefing questions included in the interview guide to invite the participant's reactions to the interview. Immediately after the interview, the researcher recorded her reactions to the interviews as well as her observations in her reflective journal.

For interviews via Skype, the researcher first explained in an email message the goals of the study, the voluntary nature of the participation, and confidentiality, and invited participants to ask any questions they might have. Once participants' questions were answered through email correspondence or a preliminary Skype conversation, the researcher sent them a consent form and a password protected demographic sheet. The password was sent to them in a separate email. They were instructed to scan a signed consent form and to return it to the researcher as an attachment along with the demographic information. As soon as the forms were received, a Skype meeting was scheduled. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher reiterated that they could withdraw from the interview at any time or choose not to answer any questions, but assured them that they would still receive a 2000-yen gift card by mail at a later date. The subsequent interview process was the same as the face-to-face interviews, except for the use of the Skype feature that allowed audio recording of the interviews. After the interview, the researcher promptly sent them the compensation. No participants who consented withdrew from the study.

Once the interview process began, the researcher quickly noticed challenges arising from her insider status, as well as the nature of the Japanese communication. For example, some participants assumed that the description of certain contextual factors, or the meaning of certain words was unnecessary given the researcher's shared cultural knowledge. This was often marked by their use of phrases such as "You know what's like in Japan", and "You must be familiar with..." At the beginning, the researcher felt uncomfortable to ask for elaboration, given the

Japanese communication norm that emphasizes the listeners' ability to infer as opposed to the speakers' ability to express oneself (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1996). In occasions like this, the researcher followed the advice by Davies et al. (2009), who suggested that the researcher use his or her research team's outsider status as a strategy for clarifying and probing for details. Specifically, the researcher learned to ask participants to elaborate by prefacing requests with statements such as "I never studied in the U.S., so it maybe different from my experience in Canada", "I understand what you mean, but my research team who is unfamiliar with Japanese culture might not understand". Even when information that these probes elicited was familiar to the researcher, participants expressed emotions and ascribed unique meanings to their experience in the process of narrating, which provided rich data.

Another challenge related to the Japanese language arose. Japanese does not utilize gendered pronouns, and subjects can be omitted from sentences when they are inferable. Thus, when a participant described an episode that started with "I had a colleague who…", the entire episode could be narrated without establishing the colleague's gender. Given the explicit attention to gender in this research, however, the researcher needed to attend to this linguistic feature and asked clarifying questions.

Data Analysis

Once data were collected, all interviews were transcribed verbatim. Then, the researcher checked the transcripts for accuracy and to ensure that non-lexical information such as pauses, sighs, and laughter were included (Riessman, 2008), and that all identifying information, including names of individuals, institutions, and places of residence, had been removed from the transcripts.

Data were analyzed using a combination of thematic and dialogic/performance approaches to narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008). Thematic analysis focuses on the content (i.e., "what" is told) (Riessman, 2008). For this, Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) *three-dimensional space approach* was employed. This approach organizes narratives in terms of three dimensions: the interaction (personal and social), continuity (past, present, future), and the place (situation). The interaction dimension includes the personal sphere, which encompasses the feelings, values, hopes, and beliefs of the characters involved, mainly the protagonist, and also includes the social element, which refers to external conditions. The second dimension, continuity, involves temporality of the experience ranging from the past, present, and the future. The place dimension, is concerned with the physical location in which the story takes place. Together, these three dimensions require the researcher to analyze data from multiple angles, shifting the investigative focus inward and outward, backward and forward, while attending to specific contexts in which each event unfolds (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Whereas thematic analysis is concerned with the "what" of the narratives, dialogic/performance analysis examines "to whom a story is told and for what purposes" (Riessman, 2008). The dialogic aspect of this approach rests on the co-constructed nature of narratives. That is, narratives are told to a particular audience, and shaped by the interviewer's questions, probes, and reactions. The performance aspect of this approach recognizes that the narrator tells a story in a particular way to construct a particular identity. In other words, examination of what is included, emphasized, or omitted reveals how the narrator wants to be known (Riessman, 2008). Identity in this approach is constructed in postmodern terms—fluid, continuously assembled and disassembled, performed for particular audiences who either accept or contest these performed identities (Langellier & Peterson, 2004).

The actual steps taken for data analysis are as follows. The researcher first read the transcripts and wrote codes in the margin of the transcripts using the comment function of *Microsoft Word*. The codes were paraphrased statements summarizing what the participants were saying in each segment, which spanned from a clause to several sentences (see Appendix J for an example of coding). The researcher also wrote in the margins interpretive comments for dialogic/performance analysis. These comments included the researcher's observations of the features of narratives (e.g., what is included, emphasized, or omitted), interactions between the participants and the researcher, and history and sociocultural contexts. This task was completed for all interviews. The numbers of codes and interpretive comments yielded from each transcript ranged from 114 to 195, with the mean of 155.

These codes and interpretive comments were exported to a separate document in bullet-point format, and were subsequently organized into a data chart organized by Clandinin and Connolly's (2000) three-dimensional approach (see Appendix K for an example of three-dimensional data chart). The peer reviewer checked the resulting three-dimensional data chart for each interview to (a) point out any codes or interpretive comments that were hard to make sense of, (b) ensure that all codes were placed in an appropriate dimension, and (c) verify the researcher's interpretations and, when needed, to suggest alternative interpretations. The peer reviewer's feedback prompted the researcher to further look into the transcripts and rework the data chart. Subsequently, the primary researcher and the peer reviewer discussed any concerns or discrepancies until consensus was reached (Hill et al., 2005).

Based on the completed data chart, the researcher wrote a re-storied narrative for each interview. This interim text was a reconstructed, condensed version of the transcript, which summarized the lived experiences of the participants and included the researcher's preliminary

interpretations. The peer reviewer compared all the re-storied narratives with the data charts to ensure that the narratives reflected the data charts and that they flow well as stories. The length of the narratives ranged from 4 to 7 pages (single-spaced).

The re-storied narratives were then sent back to the participants for *member checking*, a strategy aimed at enhancing the trustworthiness of the analysis (Morrow, 2005). The participants were invited to respond to how well the summary represented their experience, and to add anything they thought was missing in the summary. Ten out of 14 participants (five each from the two interviewing methods) responded to the researcher's email and checked their re-storied narratives. Although the majority of the participants approved the narratives with no or only minor edits, one participant corrected a nuance represented in the particular incident and clarified her experience. The researcher edited the re-storied narratives based on her feedback and sent it back to the participant for her final approval.

Once the re-storied narratives were complete, they were subjected to cross-case comparison in order to find common themes and patterns. To this end, the primary researcher first wrote themes in the margin of each re-storied narrative, which were then made into tables using *Microsoft Excel*. The rows were comprised of participants and the columns were comprised of themes, while descriptions were placed in corresponding cells. These tables tallied emerging themes as the researcher read and reread the re-storied narratives. Four Excel files with a set of worksheets devoted to each phrase (e.g., pre-sojourn, sojourn, etc.) were created until the researcher and the auditor agreed that the aggregated spreadsheets organized the participants' narratives in manageable and meaningful ways.

The researcher then created concept maps using *Mindnode* (a mind mapping computer application) in order to depict interconnections between themes and patterns. This is consistent

with Ollerenshaw and Creswell's (2002) recommendation for the use of graphical organizers to help the process of data analysis. The researcher first created one concept map for each phase. The concept maps for all phases were then combined into one concept map depicting the entire process (Appendix L). As qualitative analysis is an iterative process, the concept maps were constantly revisited and revised as the researcher wrote the draft of the result section. Although the researcher primarily worked from the re-storied narratives, she frequently went back to transcripts to check for nuances and alternative interpretations. At several points in this stage of data analysis, the auditor examined the Excel files and concept maps, and discussed with the researcher how to organize and interpret the data.

Issues of Language and Translation

Language posed a complex challenge in this study, given that the data were collected in Japanese while this report is written in English. Language plays a central role in qualitative researchers' endeavors to understand subtle nuances, deep meanings, and emotional expressions of participants' accounts (Hoshmand, 2005; Polkinghorne, 2005). Despite the importance placed on written or spoken words in qualitative research, Temple and Young (2004) point out that in studies in which data are collected in another language, often reports are "written without any reference to language issues…as if interviewees were fluent English speakers or as if the language [participants] used is irrelevant" (p. 163). Temple and Young (2004) recommend that researchers be transparent as to the language in which data were collected; at what stage and through what procedures the data were translated into English; and the level of the researcher's fluency in the participants' language. In this study, the following steps were taken with specific rationales with regards to language and translation.

First, the interviews were conducted in Japanese. Although both the interviewer and participants were fluent in English, this decision was made for the reasons that (a) since it is the language spoken by the participants in their post-reentry environment, it would be more likely to elicit examples of the participant's interactions with family, friends, or coworkers, which transpire in Japanese, and (b) the face-to-face interviews were to take place in Japan, where talking in Japanese would be most natural among two Japanese nationals.

Second, the translation occurred when the researcher wrote codes and interpretive comments in English on the Japanese transcripts. Writing codes, interpretive comments, and re-storied narratives in English permitted the verification of the research process by the research team. With consistency, the researcher prioritized preserving emotions, nuances, and contextual meanings of the original quotes as opposed to translating word-for-word within the grammatical structures of the Japanese language. Translating this way, as she came to realize, was in and of itself data analysis and interpretation. Thus, the researcher recorded any expressions and/or words that were hard to translate, and often went back to it when the same words/expression appeared in other transcripts. Through this process, the researcher noticed that certain words that lack cultural equivalence repeatedly come up across transcripts. In fact, it was often within these words that the rich meanings of participants' lived experiences were contained. Accordingly, when these words appear in the next chapter, the researcher provides her explanation of the original Japanese words and different ways they can be translated into English.

Third, English words that participants chose for their timelines were included as much as possible in the re-storied narratives. Fourth, as a part of member checking, participants were asked to read and respond to the re-storied narratives written in English. This allowed the

participant to verify that the translated re-storied narratives represented what they disclosed in Japanese.

Finally, quotes included in this report were reviewed by an independent translator. Any quote that the translator disagreed with was discussed with the researcher. Rather than the traditional translation–back-translation procedure often used in quantitative studies, this consensus method fit better with the present study's epistemology and methodology. While the former takes a positivistic view that there is only one right translation, the latter attends to multiple meanings, contexts, and the translator's subjectivities. Given the translation goal of preserving nuances and emotions, the researcher and translator went back to original transcripts to search for relevant information during the consensus-reaching process. The original Japanese texts for selected quotes are included in Appendix M.

Quality and Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is defined as the "quality of an investigation (and its findings) that made it worthy to audiences" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 299). According to (Morrow, 2005), some criteria such as adequacy of data and depth of interpretation are relevant to any qualitative research regardless of its philosophical paradigm, whereas other criteria are in part guided by the paradigm underpinning the project. Using feminist standpoint epistemology, this study was situated within the critical-ideological paradigm (Ponterotto, 2005). This paradigm assumes that there are multiple truths, realities are socially constructed, and that the researcher's subjectivity plays a role in the co-creation of knowledge. Additionally, the critical-ideological paradigm aims at transformation, empowerment, and emancipation by exposing power relations that mediate individuals' lived experiences (Ponterotto, 2005).

Situated within the critical-ideological paradigm, the present research drew on criteria for trustworthiness that are consistent with the philosophy of the paradigm. Although specific strategies (e.g., member checking, reflective journaling) can be used in other paradigms (i.e., the posivitist/postpositivist or interpretivist-constructivist), these strategies were employed to meet the criteria inherent in the philosophy of the critical-ideological paradigm. Specifically, the researcher relied on the criteria of reflexivity, representation and interpretive authority, and authenticity.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to an ongoing process of critically reflecting on the researcher's assumptions, biases, and theoretical predispositions, as well as the entire process of the research (Schwandt, 2007). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) call this "wakefulness", contending that it is most fundamental to narrative inquiry. Rather than minimizing, controlling, or managing the researcher's subjectivity, the interpretivist/constructivist and critical-ideological paradigms tend to embrace the role of the researcher's subjectivity and incorporate it in the findings (Morrow, 2005). Furthermore, in feminist research, reflexivity is not merely a methodological issue but an ethical one; it calls for on-going reflection on how power affects the way the researcher interacts with the participants, as well as, the way knowledge is produced, in order to avoid reproducing oppression (Sprague, 2005).

In the present research, the researcher engaged in and documented ongoing self-reflection. At the onset of the research, the researcher wrote her subjective stance as included above. Throughout the data collection and analysis, she kept a *self-reflective journal*, with the goal of becoming aware of her own biases, assumptions, and thinking processes. Finally, the study employed *peer debriefing*, what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) call "response

community", in which the researcher regularly explained the developments of her work and the

rationale for decisions she made throughout the process to her research team.

Representation and Interpretive Authority

Representation is concerned with "questions about whose reality is represented in the

research" (Morrow, 2005, p. 254). Whereas the goal of some research projects is to faithfully

represent the participants' social reality as they understand it themselves, both narrative inquiry

and standpoint theory demand that the researcher interpret data beyond participants' words and

maintains that researchers have interpretive authority, an ultimate decision over the meanings

and implications of data. For example, writing on narrative interpretation, Ochberg (1996) argues

that social codes operate in a way that the narrator consciously or unconsciously engages in some

sort of self-censoring; thus, a narrative inquirer must undermine the assumption that "people say

what they mean and mean only what they say" (p. 98). Similarly, feminist standpoint theory

points out that participants may have internalized hegemonic discourses. For example, a women

who has internalized meritocracy may construct a meaning of her unsatisfactory career situation

as her own lack of talent or internal strength, without considering limited opportunities and

resources afforded to her. As such, transferring interpretive authority to participants may end up

privileging hegemonic discourse that the participants have internalized (Sprague, 2005).

However, an uncritical claim of interpretive authority on the researcher's part risks

highlighting the researcher's beliefs rather than the participants' experience. In order to balance

interpretive authority with respecting the participants' voice, the following strategies were built

into the research design. First, the researcher conducted *member checking*, whereby

reconstructed participants' narratives were sent back to them so that they had a chance to clarify,

elaborate, or correct the researcher's understanding of their experiences and meanings expressed

in the interviews. Second, an *audit trail* was maintained in order to ensure that the results

represented the participants' lived experiences rather than the researcher's beliefs and biases. As

such, the peer reviewer verified that (a) all codes were organized into the data chart, and (b) each

re-storied narrative reflected the data chart. Additionally, the auditor closely monitored the

process of data analysis and the writing process.

Third, the researcher conducted *discrepant case analyses*, which refers to a deliberate

comparative analysis of disconfirming and confirming instances aimed at understanding

complexities (Morrow, 2005). In the present study, for instance, two women reported that being

a woman (rather than a man), made their reentry experience easier. Their experiences were

compared with the rest of the participants who felt the opposite. Lastly, in order to ensure

fairness in the final report, results were presented with an adequate number of quotes from all

participants.

Authenticity

As previously discussed, critical-ideological research aims for empowerment and

emancipation of the disadvantaged. Morrow (2005) argues that this entails an increase in

consciousness about issues of power and oppression among those involved——the researcher, the

research team, participants, and readers of the final report. In particular, two interrelated criteria

for authenticity speak to increased consciousness and emancipation on the part of the participants

(Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Ontological authenticity refers to the extent to which the participants'

understanding of their own experiences and situations are enhanced and expanded as a result of

their participation in the inquiry. Catalytic authenticity is concerned with the extent to which

participants are stimulated and energized to act. Unlike other criteria for trustworthiness that are

predicated on the research process, authenticity criteria are concerned with the outcomes of the research.

The proposed study included a number of features to collect evidence that point to these authenticities. For example, the interview guide was constructed in such a way that it stimulated the participant's self-reflection, and debriefing questions at the end of the interview were included to invite the participants to comment on the interview process. Member checking also provided participants with an opportunity to express their reaction to the inquiry. With regards to ontological authenticity, abundant evidence demonstrates that participation in this study enhanced and expanded participants' understanding of their experiences. For example, the following passage illustrates the excitement about a new insight that one participant gained during her interview. In this segment, she was discussing how she felt more confortable working with other internationally educated colleagues in her new workplace than at her former workplace, where she was the only internationally educated person.

> Participant: I feel like I'm being myself now…(*silence*). Ah, when I was at [my former workplace] I was performing, in a very controlled way. Ah, yeah! I was acting a false self, yes!
>
> Researcher: I see, like going along with others.
>
> Participants: Wow, I never thought this way! Very interesting. Yes, yes, it was definitely like that…. I was acting, for sure.

Another participant stated during the debriefing section of the interview, "I'm glad that I was able to reflect on how I got to where I am today. Yeah, I gained an understanding of how having studied abroad has impacted my life and what it means to me".

In terms of catalytic authenticity, participants described renewed energy to move forward with their lives and a sense of responsibility at improving society. This was most eloquently expressed by a participant, who reported her reaction to reading her re-storied narrative as follows:

As I read it, my heart was filled with emotions at times. Looking at how my feelings, internal conflicts, and my personal history were put together in writing, I felt like I gained another treasure [that I can carry forward with me]. I will print it out and hold on to it preciously… I believe your study will encourage women with different backgrounds and experiences. As well, starting from where I can, I would like to take part in making a society that is more compassionate and easier for all people to live in.

Participants

Participants' ages ranged from 25 to 49 years old, with a mean age of 32. Eight of them were single, three married, two in relationships, and one divorced. Only one participant had a child. All participants identified themselves as heterosexual.

Eleven women studied in the United States, and three women studied in Canada. Their lengths of sojourn lasted from two to 14 years. In terms of the degree(s) obtained in North America, nine women obtained a Bachelor's degree, three of whom also obtained an Associate degree; five women obtained a Master's degree, one of whom subsequently completed a PhD and postdoctoral studies. Most participants financed their studies through multiple sources such as parental support, personal savings, scholarships, and part-time or temporary work during their studies. Eleven participants relied on their parental support to a varying degree, while three were entirely self-financed.

The elapsed time since reentry ranged fairly evenly within the 1-5 year cut-off delineated in the sampling criteria. Since their return, half of the participants had lived in Japan for one to three years, while the other half for three to five years. At the time of the interviews, two participants were unemployed; two were enrolled in graduate school; and one participant was a homemaker. All participants, except two, lived in two major metropolitan areas (i.e., greater Tokyo and Osaka-Kyoto-Kobe area).

Participants' synopses of their educational and occupational histories are presented below. The numbers in parentheses indicate their age at the time of the interviews. Pseudonyms, chosen by the researcher, were used to reflect participants' identity while maintaining anonymity. For the same reason, the researcher made a conscious decision to keep these synopses brief, without disclosing specific information such as locations or disciplines of their studies. As the following chapter will demonstrate, narratives in this study chronicle much of the participants' adult lives. Thus, extra care has been paid to ensure the privacy and dignity of the participants (Josselson, 2007).

- Akiko (28) worked as a sales person after completing her undergraduate study in Japan. She moved to Canada at the age of 25. After two years of study, she returned to Japan and worked as a research associate.

- Chiharu (38) worked as a translation assistant after obtaining a bachelor's degree from a Japanese university. At the age of 30, she moved to U.S. to pursue a master's degree. Since her return at the age of 33, she has held several IT-related positions while fighting cancer. At the time of the interview, her cancer remitted and she was searching for employment.

- Eriko (25) spent ten months as an exchange student at a high school in the U.S. She then graduated from high school and moved back to U.S. After four years of undergraduate study,

she returned to Japan at the age of 22. Since then she has worked for an international

accounting firm.

- Hanae (26) moved to Canada a year after graduating from high school in a small city away

  from cosmopolitan areas. After 5 years of undergraduate study, she got married and moved

  back to her hometown at the age of 25, where she lived as a homemaker.

- Junko (26) moved to U.S. after obtaining a bachelor's degree from a Japanese university

  located in her hometown, a small city away from cosmopolitan areas. After two years of

  master's study, she became a fulltime doctoral student at the university where she obtained

  her undergraduate degree.

- Kyoko (49) worked as an engineer after completing an undergraduate degree in Japan. She

  moved to the U.S. at the age of 30 where she competed a second bachelor's degree and a

  master's. Followed by a 2-year stay in Tokyo, she once again moved back to the U.S. to

  pursue doctoral and postdoctoral studies, after which she worked as a researcher for three

  years. Upon returning to Japan at the age of 47, she worked as a research associate.

- Maki (25) moved to Canada upon graduating from high school. She obtained a bachelor's

  degree and returned to Japan at the age of 22. After working for a year as an office clerk, she

  embarked on full-time study in a master's program in Fine Arts.

- Midori (38) worked as an administrator after obtaining a bachelor's degree. At the age of 30,

  she moved to the U.S to pursue a master's degree. After three years of study, she returned to

  Japan and held contract positions at Tokyo branches of multinational companies. She quit her

  job a few weeks prior to the interview in order to prioritize her family life.

- Naomi (29) moved to the United States at the age of 21 with her American husband. She

  obtained associate and bachelor's degrees, during which she had a child and got divorced.

After living in the U.S. for six years, she returned to Japan with her son and worked as a graphic designer.

- Sachiko (27) spent ten months as an exchange student at a high school in the U.S. After graduating from high school in Japan, she moved to the U.S. She obtained a bachelor's degree and then worked for a few years. Upon returning to Japan at the age of 25, she worked as an assistant journalist.

- Shiho (29) moved to the United States after graduating from high school. She obtained a bachelor's degree and returned to Japan at the age of 23. Since then, she has worked for the Japanese branch of a multinational corporation.

- Tomoka (45) worked as an office assistant after graduating from high school. At the age of 31, she moved to the U.S. and obtained associate and bachelor's degrees. Subsequently, she worked in the U.S. for three years. Since her return to Japan at the age of 40, she has worked for the Tokyo branch of an American company, during which she also obtained an MBA from a Japanese university.

- Reiko (38) worked as a human resource assistant after graduating from a 2-year college. She moved with her parents to the U.S. at the age of 23, although she never lived with them there. She obtained associate and bachelor's degrees, followed by six years of work experience. After having lived in the U.S. for 13 years, she returned to Japan and worked as a financial analyst.

- Yuri (28) moved to Canada upon graduating from high school. She obtained her bachelor's degree and returned to Japan at the age of 24. After a yearlong contract in international development, she found a position in the international sales department of a Japanese company.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

From the iterative process of data analysis, a concept map depicting themes and inextricably linked contextual factors was devised. The temporal configuration that structured the interview guide (i.e., pre-departure, sojourn, pre-reentry, reentry, present, and future) was retained in this final research text, except that the last two were collapsed under reentry. The line between the reentry phase and the present were arbitrary, and most participants' visions of their futures were nested in their present experiences. Included instead was a section that summarizes participants' reflection of their journeys, which links the past, present, and future.

Pre-departure

Two related factors led participants to consider studying abroad—Japanese societal norms and gender role expectations, and their perception that studying in the West provided an opportunity for alternative educational and career paths. As well, these factors influenced how others reacted to participants once they made the decision to study abroad, which in turn affected participants' own pre-departure feelings.

Societal Norms and Gender Roles

Participants reported feeling constrained by rigid societal norms in general and the resulting gender role expectations within schools, workplaces, and family. Specifically, conformity to norms, which are linked to age, stage of education, and gender, limited participants' opportunities, while questioning these norms invited negative repercussions.

As for norms in school, Maki started off the interview by stating, "It's not that I was attracted to foreign countries, but rather it was because I did not adjust well to the Japanese school system" that led her to choose university abroad. She described strict school rules and

norms (e.g., dress code, mandatory participation in school events), which was echoed by

Sachiko:

> I went to public schools all the way. There were a lot of [school rules] that were absurd,
> especially in junior high school. Like you can't wear a scarf even on cold winter days or
> your skirt had to be a certain length.

Among participants who had working experience in Japan, two referred to the norm of

working long hours, which contributed to their motivation to study abroad. For example,

although Midori liked her job as an administrator in a rapidly growing company, she experienced

the pressure to be a "corporate fighter" (企業戦士) as she devoted over 100 hours of overtime

service a month. Similarly, Akiko who often worked until midnight as a sales person, started off

the interview stating her primary motivation for studying abroad,

> I wanted to quit the company that I was working at. Well, it's like I chose to study in the
> U.S. to quit my job. That's not the only reason, but desperately wanting to quit the job
> ended up being good motivation to get ready to study abroad.

Many of the societal norms by which participants felt constrained were interlocked with

gender expectations for women and linear developmental paths—what several participants at

various points during interviews referred to as "societal rail". For example, Hanae, who excelled

academically at an elite high school from which most graduates go to top universities, stated, "I

did not want to get on the so-called 'societal rail'—go to a good high school and a good

university, find a job in a good company, and then get married [and quit the job] after working

several years".

Yuri, whose parents both worked fulltime, watched her mother do all the housekeeping

and childcare as she grew up; "Watching this, I kind of did not want to be like my mother

(*whispering*)". As a young girl, Yuri vaguely imagined that moving abroad would afford a path different from her mother's.

Both Tomoka and Kyoko, who entered the workforce a few years before the enactment of the first *Gender Employment Equity Law* (1985), saw clear gender-based divisions of labour and inequality. As a high school graduate, Tomoka's career opportunities were limited to clerical positions, which paid her little and did not lead to skill building. In her late 20's, she was keenly aware that she would not see any salary increase or promotion. She explained, "if you are in a support position, there is no need for the company to increase your salary. There are many young girls to replace you". Furthermore, she witnessed that while most women would get married and leave the workplace by their 30's, male employees treated the minority of unmarried women in a derogatory manner. She believed this poor treatment was due to the societal belief at the time that there must be something wrong with women who are unmarried. As a result, she felt the need to make a drastic shift in her career path, as "I realized that I did not have a marketable 'weapon' (武器, an asset) that would allow me to be self-sufficient, regardless of whether or not I was to get married".

In contrast to Tomoka, Kyoko had a university degree and worked as "the first women engineer" at a large corporation. She described this experience with words such as, "gender inequality" and "gender discrimination". At that time, to "make the best use of women's femininity" was the prevailing practice of promoting the advancement of women in the Japanese workplace. As a result, she was always referred to as a "woman engineer" and often asked to offer perspectives that represent women as a whole. Kyoko was assigned to gendered tasks such as developing home appliances (e.g., improving cooking functions of microwaves), while her male colleagues were engaged in projects related to space development and nuclear energy.

Several participants received negative reactions for openly questioning these societal norms, which further frustrated them. For example, when Maki questioned certain school rules, her teachers' responded to her by saying "because that's how it's been". This left her more frustrated with her school life as teachers perceived her as problematic. Similarly, Sachiko used the Japanese saying "the nail that sticks out gets hammered down" to illustrate how she used to get frowned upon for questioning school norms. She felt disappointed that she would have to "fit into the school's mold to get by". For Eriko, the backlash came not only from teachers but also from friends and classmates. She described, "I would ask teachers a lot of questions, like why should something be this way or why do you say this. Then [my classmates and my friends] told me that I'm intimidating. I hated that".

Consequently, a North American education came to represent a solution that enabled participants to reject, circumvent, or escape from societal norms and gender role expectations in Japan. Midori, who had a busy but successful career in Japan, talked about how she wanted a drastic life change around the age of 30. She stated,

> I think many women around 30 wonder about their future, like wanting some kind of change or questioning how one has lived so far…. It is not one definite thing. Perhaps it was a vague anxiety related to marriage, work, and all of those things. It's like all of a sudden you want to turn over the table completely and change everything.

For Hanae, stepping out of the "societal rail" was not an easy decision. As a model student in an elite school, she felt conflicted by the pressures to live up to others' expectations and her desire to explore her own path (自分らしく生きていく). She submitted applications to universities in Japan in order to meet the teachers' expectations, but she impulsively decided to skip an important standardized entrance exam at the last minute. She characterized this day as "the start of

everything that followed", pointing to the moment that she voluntarily dropped out of the socially expected route.

'Western' Inspiration

Nearly all participants noted the appeal of the 'West' as a reason to study abroad, which was instilled by previous international travels (including European and Oceanic countries), exposure to popular American culture, and the influence of others who had lived in Western countries. For example, Junko explains that she was heavily influenced by a professor who had studied aboard. This professor, whom she admired as a mentor, strongly encouraged her students to go aboard, saying "studying abroad will change one's worldviews, don't restrict yourself in your small world, and go check out what's there". Several participants referred to the love of learning English and the advantages of acquiring English proficiency in the global market as a motivator for studying in North America.

For Junko and two other participants, who did not have any dissatisfaction with their lives in Japan, these Western inspirations were the only reason for them to seek a North American education. However, rigid Japanese societal norms and gender role expectations discussed above led the rest of the participants to perceive that 'Western' culture would provide alternative life paths. For example, Eriko, who used words like "stifle" and "suffocating" to describe her high school life, reported that she naively believed that everything would get better if she moved to the United States. These beliefs were based on the idealized images depicted in Hollywood movies and American TV dramas. Similarly, Naomi took a weeklong family trip to New York City at the age of 16, which made a powerful impact on her during a time when she was feeling constrained by the Japanese school system. She stated, "I was very attracted to the city's atmosphere... the atmosphere of freedom".

In addition, a North American education offered specific academic or career choices, and a flexibility that were unavailable in Japan. For example, Shiho, who was a former athlete, chose to go to an American university that had a reputable sports rehabilitation program, a specialty that no Japanese university offered at the time. Tomoka chose to go to the United States because Japanese universities traditionally had closed their doors to mature students like her. Moreover, she saw English proficiency as an attainable, but powerful "weapon" that would advance her career. For those participants who were uncertain about what they wanted to study, the fact that in North American Universities students were able to change their major or double major made these universities more attractive than Japanese ones, where majors are determined by entrance exams and movements between faculties or programs are rarely permitted.

Post-decision Relationships and Emotional States

Participants reported experiencing a range of reactions from their parents, teachers, and friends. Positive reactions were influenced by their endorsement of the benefits of North American education, while negative or ambivalent reactions came from others' perception that participants were deviating from societal expectations.

Most parents eventually responded favorably to their daughters' decision. They expressed their respect for their daughters' autonomy, as they themselves believed that a North American education and English proficiency would be a valuable asset for their careers. For example, Naomi's parents strongly supported her decision "because both of them struggled a lot [with their career] because of their lack of a [university] degree".

By contrast, some of the participants were met with opposition from their parents, friends, and teachers. For example, Akiko reported, "Some of my friends did not understand why I would leave a secure job and life in Japan". When Yuri told her parents about her decision to go to

university in Canada, her father was so furious that he refused to speak to her for six months. He was angry with her choice to "go off the rail" which he had laid down for her by placing her and her brothers in a prestigious private high school. Ironically, the fact that she was a girl made her study abroad possible. Yuri's mother convinced him by saying, "Let her do whatever she wants. She is a girl, we still have two sons."

Likewise, Hanae described her teachers' reaction to her skipping her university entrance exam, "They were cold…because they regarded me as a deviant". Furthermore, she recalled how her friends would say to her "*sugoi*" ("you are great", "you are really something"). This a colloquial expression, which has no equivalence in English, will come up in other participants' experiences in different contexts. Although "*sugoi*" expresses one's admiration for the other, Hanae sensed that her friends used the phrase as a politically correct way of saying "you are different from us". She explains,

> No one came out and said, "you are different", so everyone said to me "*sugoi*" instead. But that phrase meant that you are doing something that they wouldn't dare. I'm sure some people were genuinely envious of me. But they were mostly saying this because they learned that it is sort of a convenient phrase that wouldn't offend anyone. Yeah, I just sensed that they weren't saying it to compliment me wholeheartedly.

Interactions like these made Hanae feel that Japanese society only accepts those who follow the expected path. She felt isolated and believed that others saw her as "deviant" and "peculiar".

These mixed reactions resulted in the participants experiencing a mixture of excitement, hope, and anxiety about how living abroad would impact their lives. For example, Midori was not concerned about her life in the U.S., but had a nagging anxiety about her future. She reported having felt like "a kite with a snapped cord" as a result of quitting a job that everyone envied.

By contrast, Hanae chose the words "hope" and "positive" to describe this period in her life despite negative reactions from others and the resulting isolation. She was optimistic that she would be able to find her own way. Likewise, Akiko was worried about "going off the rail" by choosing an alternative educational path, but she was certain that this decision was right for her and was excited about the future. Still others were optimistic that they would be able to get back onto socially expected paths when they returned to Japan. For example, Kyoko reported, "I was just about to turn 30, so I imagined that everything will proceed normally, like I would go for a few years, come back, and then get married like that".

Sojourn

Given the constraints that participants felt in their pre-departure lives, they cherished the opportunities and meaningful encounters that they had in their new environments. They discussed gratifying experiences despite the challenges inherent in studying abroad, and the resulting personal growth and shifts in their values. Meanwhile, visits home during their sojourns gave them glimpses into what it would be like to move back to Japan, which later influenced their inclination to return to Japan or not.

Rewarding Experiences through Challenge

Participants discussed numerous challenges as international students, such as adjustment issues, language, and loneliness, which Midori summarized as, "Hard, everything was hard. That word sums it all up". She found the initial process of settling down (e.g., finding an apartment) exhausting, and her limited English proficiency posed a great challenge in keeping up with her classes. Further, she felt isolated in a university that lacked a strong sense of community. Most of her classmates had fulltime work and family, and thus they did not hang out with each other outside of school. Living alone, Midori would spend days studying by herself without talking to

anyone. She was also a racial minority in the classroom; as the only Asian student, it took nearly two years for her to feel that she was part of the class.

In addition to challenges, participants discussed idiosyncratic challenges that complicated their lives. For example, shortly after their arrival to the U.S., Chiharu was mugged and Shiho experienced the September 11th attacks. These incidents shook them emotionally as they had not yet developed sufficient English proficiency or support systems. Furthermore, Maki suffered from chronic pain that required many hospital visits until she was properly diagnosed. Naomi, who moved to the U.S. with her American husband, ended up getting divorced shortly after she got pregnant and then gave birth to her son.

Despite these challenges, participants constructed their stories of sojourning in a positive light. Participants shared how challenges were numerous and hard, but most vividly described how they discovered the intrinsic joy of learning, grew through cultural encounters, and received social support. Moreover, participants ascribed meaning to their rewarding experiences against the backdrop of the Japanese educational system and workplace norms, which were the factors that led them to leave Japan.

Joy of learning. Participants described studying hard, often staying up all night, to keep up with classes. Yet they recalled those experiences as fun and fulfilling. For example, Yuri described how absorbed she became with her studies, something she never experienced in high school. She said, "it is emotionally more intense than [hard work]. It was like, I was so 'into it' to the point I didn't know what was going on around me". Similarly, Naomi chose the word "fun" to describe her sojourn experience despite the challenges of going through divorce and being a single mother. She added, "I often stayed up late or all night doing assignments. I never felt it

was distressful. No matter how hard it was…. school was fun. I liked school. I never missed school".

Several participants discussed their joy of learning in light of the North-American instructional style that emphasizes active participation and critical thinking. With their limited English proficiency, actively participating in class discussions and group work was demanding for many participants. Yet, participants described that this type of learning helped them to discover the joy of acquiring new knowledge. For example, Hanae excitedly reported that her university life was "Fun. I studied so much and I probably won't study that hard ever again (chuckle)". She continued:

> The Japanese educational system rarely allows you to express your opinions. You just take notes of what teachers say, summarize, and reproduce it in a precise manner. You learned to be always passive. But at least the university that I went to in Canada wasn't like that…. It was a place where you wouldn't get acknowledged unless you took an active role in your own learning, and being a proactive learner served as an impetus for my growth.

For some participants, the joy of learning was linked with specific fields of study and the shaping of their vocational identity. For example, Akiko took courses taught by professors who were internationally recognized in her field. She chose the words "passionate" and "hopeful" to describe her sojourn, explaining, "I enjoyed the content of my study, so [I had the conviction] like, 'I am going to pursue this profession, that's what I want to do', so what I was studying was meaningful". Similarly, Kyoko described the years in her doctoral study as fulfilling, during which her vocational identity as a researcher emerged.

Cultural encounters. All participants discussed growth-promoting experiences resulting from interacting with people from diverse backgrounds —different ages, cultural backgrounds, and sexual orientations. For example, compared to Japanese universities where the vast majority of the student body ranges from 18-23 years of age, Yuri highlighted that her university had a high proportion of mature students. She commented,

> What was fun is that you meet people with all kinds of backgrounds, so you learn from their experiences and you get to experience different things with them. There were people of all ages in my university so you never get bored.

Similarly, studying at a progressive liberal college known for its racially and ethnically diverse student body, Eriko explained how she became conscious of her social locations (e.g., race, class) as she was surrounded by politically aware individuals. Although she used the term "identity crisis", Eriko's story did not convey the confusion or psychological distress that the term invokes; rather she expressed her appreciation for the rich experience of thinking about her identity that she had not previously experienced in Japan.

Five participants specifically discussed the significance of meeting other international and immigrant students, who came from countries less developed than Japan or fled political unrest in their home countries. Participants reported that by witnessing these ambitious and hardworking friends strive to rise above their underprivileged backgrounds and living situations, they came to recognize their own privileges, became motivated to work harder, and clarified their own values and aspirations. For example, Reiko stated:

> Other Asian students around me were really driven. They had the clear goal of immigrating to the United States, or, even if not, they had the vision of making use of their degrees when they returned to their home counties. How shall I say, they had the

vitality, you know, like putting effort into a job search for example. So by watching them

I started to feel I should live like that.

Support. Experiencing the intrinsic joy of learning and having eye-opening cultural

encounters, participants became motivated to work hard and were determined to overcome their

challenges. Such an attitude seems to have elicited support from others around them, which

participants perceived in and of itself as a rewarding experience. For example, Akiko struggled

to keep up with her classes, but her caring classmates made it easier for her to fit in and

contribute to class discussions. Naomi, who carried dual roles as a single mother and a student,

received the support of friends, teachers, and classmates to continue her studies. Although her

parents told her to quit school and come back to Japan after her divorce, Naomi's determination

changed their attitude and they eventually supported her financially.

At times, support came from the least expected places. When Tomoka was faced with

financial difficulties, she considered taking out a student loan. However, as a foreigner in the

U.S., she needed an American citizen to co-sign a loan for her, and she doubted that any of her

friends would risk doing this. Still, having been inspired by the determination of her immigrant

friends, she did not easily give up. Eventually, she succeeded in having her friend's sister agree

to co-sign her loan. She reflected, "Still today, I feel it was a miracle. Who would take such risks

for a foreigner you don't know all that well?"

Personal Growth and Change

The support from others and the rewarding experiences helped the participants overcome

their challenges, which in turn resulted in personal growth and change. Participants saw in

themselves an increased self-confidence, changes in their value system, and a sense of

affirmation that they had not experienced in Japan. As will be discussed, these changes will be important resources when they encounter various reentry challenges.

For example, growing up in an upper-middle class family, Reiko was a shy, timid young woman who had always lived under the protection and care of her parents. When she moved to the U.S., she lived on her own for the first time and experienced various challenges such as making friends and taking care of herself. As she increasingly adjusted to her life in the U.S., she encountered the recurrent dilemma of whether to stay or to return to Japan. The outcome was her persistent decision to push herself further ("see how far I can go in the U.S."), eventually obtaining her associate and bachelor's degrees, followed by seven years of work experience. Through this process, she grew to be a self-sufficient, confident adult woman, though she still saw herself as an introvert. Similarly, despite her challenges as an ESL student and single mother, Naomi achieved academic excellence and her department gave her an award. She reported that receiving this award was a memorable moment that cemented her confidence in herself.

Several participants discussed shifts in value systems as they were exposed to different cultures. For example, Eriko discussed how she became sensitive to human rights and inequality issues by interacting with politically aware individuals. Likewise, Midori's value system was changed as a result of interacting with international students from South America who valued family and friendship. She explained,

> I was such a corporate fighter [in Japan]. When I was living in the U.S., I realized how much I had neglected my family and friendships. So once I realized that, then I began to desire a lifestyle that prioritizes these relationships. You know, my values were changed completely.

For some participants, changes in themselves took the form of affirmation and a sense of belonging that they did not feel in Japan. For example, Maki described a situation wherein she questioned an aspect of an academic requirement for her degree. As a result, her department considered her request and accommodated her interest. This experience of having her voice heard was deeply empowering, because her questioning of the Japanese high school system was either scorned or ignored. Maki recounted;

> It was so meaningful to have someone who listened to me in Canada, even when it is about school system or complaints. It meant a lot to me that [expressing my opinion] actually made a difference. It still sustains me today.

For Sachiko, who also felt constrained in the Japanese high school where 'the nail that stick out get hammered down', New York City was "the best match" for her. She developed a sense of belonging in New York City where diversity and freedom was cherished. She explained, "It's okay to speak up about what you believe in. That helped me to feel that it is okay to be me."

Visit Home

During their sojourn, all but one participant took at least one trip to Japan. For some, these trips were times of rest, during which they simply enjoyed Japanese food and the company of their families and friends. Many participants, however, discussed how these trips exposed them to challenges that they would encounter after their final return, albeit to a lesser degree. For example, several participants discussed how they discovered divergence with their friends due to their different university experiences or changed selves. Maki, Hanae, and Chiharu discussed how their friends did not understand what their university life was like, while they found themselves unable to relate to their friends' university life in Japan. Shiho noticed how her

friends hesitated to express themselves and chose to go along with others, which in turn led her to realize how she had become more assertive.

Some participants experienced a hint of jealousy and prejudice that Japanese people have toward women who studied abroad, a factor many participants fully experienced upon their return. For example, Tomoka, who worked after her graduation at a U.S. branch of a Japanese company, discussed her experience during a business trip to the headquarters in Tokyo. During a lunch with a group of female support staff, they said to her with covert envy, "I'm so envious of you", "You are so lucky, you have a great career prospect, with your English". Although seemingly positive compliments, she felt that with their comments these women were drawing a line between her and themselves, as if saying, "you are different from us", similar to what Hanae perceived when her friends said *sugoi* about her decision to study abroad.

In contrast, a few participants discovered during home visits that studying in North America was the right choice. For example, Junko visited the professor who encouraged her to go to the U.S. The professor commented on how she had grown from someone who was very quiet to being more outspoken. She reported, "I was really happy that someone whom I respected commented like that about me. I was especially happy that my growth was noticeable to other people". Similarly, at a high school reunion she attended during her home visit, Yuri felt good about how she was getting a college experience that was different from her friends, explaining, "I was feeling better at this time than when I had been doing what everyone else was doing (during high school). I got the sense that I'm living a fulfilling life".

Pre-Reentry

Positive gains from their sojourn and mixed outcomes from their home visits imbued most participants with a desire to extend their sojourn. Yet, they were met with challenges

despite their various attempts to resist returning. Furthermore, the circumstances of their return and pre-reentry job search experiences influenced their pre-reentry emotional states.

Resist Returning

Of fourteen participants, two participants did not have any hesitation about going back to Japan. These participants came to North America for the purpose of obtaining a master's degree, always with the intention of returning to Japan after completing two or three years of studies to pursue specific future career paths. Aside from these two participants, all participants experienced, to a varying degree, a desire to stay in North America, and many of them attempted to extend their sojourn.

Reasons for extending sojourn. Participants' motivation for extending their sojourn was motivated by (a) desire for further growth, (b) social norms and gender roles in Japan, and (c) an increased psychological comfort from living in North America.

Similar to Reiko, whose personal growth was spurred every time she extended her stay, some participants wanted to stay in North America to challenge themselves for further growth and career advancement. For example, when Junko was asked why she was attracted to staying in the U.S. after her graduation, she answered,

> It's not that anything particular about the U.S. appealed me. It's rather that I gained confidence in myself as a result of having pushed myself for those two years [during my master's degree]. So that made me think of challenging myself further.

For others, it was the factors that pushed them out of Japan that served as deterrents to going back. Eriko, who felt judged by her high school friends for being assertive, explained why she thought of searching for a job in the U.S.:

Because I'm rather assertive, I express my opinions. And also the advancement of

women is behind in Japan… There is a pressure to go with the majority [in Japan]. But in

the U.S., it is accepted that everyone is different so no one criticizes you, judges you, for

doing something different or just being different. That's why I thought it is more

comfortable for me to live in the U.S. [than in Japan].

Kyoko, a former engineer, was thinking of returning to Japan after completing her study.

However, she decided to stay for a master's degree, after her undergraduate supervisor reminded

her of what brought her to the U.S. initially. She explained,

My academic advisor at the time said to me, "I think you are going to have a hard time if

you go back to Japan" (chuckle)…I came to the U.S. in the first place because I didn't

like how women were treated in Japan. She said, "in places like Japan situations must

have not changed much in a year or two since you left" and then recommended me to go

to a grad school.

After Kyoko finished her master's degree, she returned to Japan. However, after experiencing the

same societal norms and gender roles, she went back to the U.S., this time for her doctoral study.

Toward the end of her doctoral study, she was desperate to find a job in the U.S. She explained,

"I came back to the U.S. because I couldn't stand living in Japan. So at that point, I looked for a

job in the U.S., because I couldn't think of leaving there."

Participants identified another factor that led them to want to stay in North America,

which was their increased psychological comfort as they developed a social network and become

accustomed to life in North America. For example, Chiharu's described, "I've gotten used to life

in the U.S. My English got better, and I had the sense of being accepted by people around me.

This is why I wanted to stay there".

Difficulties in extending sojourn. Due to the above reasons, participants explored ways to extend their sojourns by obtaining internships, employment, or another degree. However, interlocking challenges of securing an appropriate visa, employment, and financial stability became an insurmountable obstacle at extending their sojourn.

Participants described how their visa status made it difficult to secure employment. Although international students in both Canada and United States can apply for a temporary work visa upon graduation, the steps toward getting this visa is far from simple. First, the visa regulations specify that the job has to be directly related to the subject of one's study, leaving little chance for those who studied the humanities or social science. This regulation preempted Chiharu from even embarking on a job search despite her desire to stay in the U.S. She was pessimistic that she would find a job with her humanities degree.

Moreover, because these visas are issued on the condition that an employment is secured, potential employers must be willing to the do paperwork for them. Yet, even if this temporary visa is granted, the uncertainty of what would happen after the visa expired lingered. Yuri explains how this uncertainty became a hurdle:

> When they talked face to face with me [at interviews], they seemed friendly and
> impressed with me. But once it got to the issue of [visa status]…understandably they
> wouldn't hire you in the end, saying "we want someone who can work permanently".

This visa situation put Kyoko in a catch-22 situation that made it impossible to secure an academic position after her PhD. To get an academic position she needed to be eligible for national funding; to be eligible for this, she needed to be a permanent resident, but to become a permanent resident, she needed employment. While struggling to secure an academic job, one of her Asian friends gave up her academic career and took a job in a field unrelated to her PhD,

only to obtain permanent residency in the U.S. This made Kyoko feel stressed and helpless, as she wondered if she too would have to give up her research like this friend.

Finance was another factor that influenced participants' options. Some participants gave up pursuing graduate studies because of their financial situation. They discussed their hesitation to continue to be financially dependent on their parents. One participant explained how the depreciation of the Japanese yen over time made it difficult for her parents to continue supporting her.

Reasons for Returning

Whereas the above factors forced participants to return to Japan despite their desire to extend their sojourn, several participants also discussed good career prospects, age, and family as factors that made them consider returning to Japan. These factors were rarely decisive forces that made participants eager to return to Japan, but served as a tipping point for those who were already struggling to attain a viable means to stay in North America.

Good career prospects made returning to Japan an attractive and logical decision for some participants. For example, at the end of her study Akiko had the same expectation that she had before moving to Canada——a better paying job in her specialty. For Junko, who became interested in research during her master's degree, pursuing doctoral studies in Japan made more sense than doing so in the U.S., as the Japanese university to which she was admitted had superior facilities for her experiments. Through a job offer that eventually fell through, Tomoka accidentally found out how marketable she would be in Japan with her American degree and work experience, which led her to seriously consider moving back to Japan. She said:

This incident led me to look into how much I would make in Tokyo. And I got the sense

that I would make more money than staying in [a state in the Midwest where she lived].

At the time, I still had a considerable amount of student loan to pay back.

Once Tomoka started a job search in Japan, age became a pressing factor. Of the

employment agencies in Tokyo with which she registered, one replied that it did not cater to

women over 35 like her, for whom few positions are available. While Tomoka was shocked by

the explicit ageism against women, this incident gave her the sense that it would be better sooner

than later to go back to Japan. Similarly, age affected one's marketability in the "marriage

market". Reiko explained her conflicting feelings between staying in the U.S. and her desire to

get married, in light of her parents' pressure and her age (mid-30's).

Certainly, I knew I wanted to get married. But I was being told [by my parents], "the

older you get the harder it will be [to find a partner]".... And you know, with the visa

issues, it is just hard to keep a job in the U.S. They often told me, "if you have to come

back eventually, the sooner the better, while you are still young". So I thought they are

probably right. But I was feeling very anxious. By this time, I was so used to living in the

U.S. that part of me just did not want to leave.

Family is another factor that drew some participants back to Japan. In the subtext of the

above quote lies Reiko's parents' pressure for her to come back to Japan and get married. By

contrast, some participants referred to emotional ties to their family. Akiko described how her

desire to be close to her family intensified when her grandfather passed away during her sojourn.

This incident confirmed her sense of belonging and reinforced her intention to return to Japan.

Another participant described her parent's health issue as a reason for return. In Naomi's case,

her parent's offer to help her with childcare was the determinant of her decision to return.

Pre-reentry Job Search

While still in North America, five participants began preliminary job searches in Japan, and two of them successfully secured employment. Some did searches during their visits home, others attended large-scale job fairs held in two major cities in the U.S. where many companies come to recruit Japanese international students returning to Japan. Participants' experiences of these preliminary job searches resemble what they later encountered upon return: contradicting evaluations of their marketability, societal norms embedded in the job search practices, and the sense of frustration and disappointment. While these themes will be discussed in more detail in the next section, the following example illustrates how the job search process impacted a participant's feeling about going back to Japan.

At a job fair for Japanese international students held in the U.S., Naomi was shocked to see that all job seekers were wearing what is called 'recruit suits' in Japan—uniform black suits that afford little individual differences. In addition, she reported that HR personnel did not respond well to the fact that she gave them her business cards, which she created to demonstrate her design skills as a Fine Arts student. She felt that her effort to demonstrate her unique skills and talent was seen as showing off. As she described this incident, she referred to the same expression that Sachiko used to illustrate her high school experience.

> Like 'the nail that sticks out gets hammered down'. Well, maybe not all companies are like that, but I got the impression that [the pressure for conformity] existed. When I was faced with that, I felt sad about going back to such a society… Reminded me of the sense of constraint that I felt in high school.

Pre-reentry Emotional States

Participants experienced a variety of feelings as the end of their sojourn drew near. A few whose sojourn was stressful described how they felt relieved about going home. However, most of the participants were reluctant to go back, as they expected that reentry was going to be difficult for them because of what they had experienced during their visits home, preliminary job searches, or what their friends who had already gone back to Japan told them. Additionally, many participants described the sense of pride in their accomplishments and in their personal growth. In many cases, participants experienced competing feelings at once.

Anxiety, helplessness, and hopelessness were the sentiment most frequently referred to by the participants, especially those who wished to stay in North America. For example, Maki, whose job search in Canada was unfruitful, explained, "I was just feeling a lot of anxiety. [After living in Canada for four years] it was as though I was going back to an unfamiliar country." Reiko, whose work visa did not get renewed, described her hopelessness as, "My future is pitch black" (お先真っ暗, bleak). At that time, she was in her mid 30's and had lived in the U.S for nearly 14 years. She had heard from friends that Japanese people were critical of returnees, for they were believed to be "*namaiki"* (生意気, impertinent) and often bullied in Japan.

Sachiko, whose work visa renewal was also denied, described how she was feeling just before her return by using the Japanese word, *igokochi* (居心地). This word roughly means 'one's sense of a place', and good *igokochi* denotes feelings of being accepted, comfortable, or at home, whereas bad *igokochi* means feeling out of place. She stated,

This whole process hit the deepest part of me. ...It was so hard that I had to leave this

place that is good *igokochi* because of a visa. I had never found such a place that gives

me good *igokochi*. But just a piece of paper decides whether I can stay or not, that was

really hard.

For Sachiko, whose primary motivation to study in the U.S was to escape from rigid social

norms in Japan, good *igokochi* here signified her sense of "*ibasho*" (居場所, a place to belong),

explaining that she felt "New York City was the best match" for her. Still reluctant to go back to

Japan, she traveled around Europe for a few months after she left the U.S. She explained the

purpose of her travel as "half sightseeing, half finding an alternative *ibasho*".

Several participants reported feeling a sense of accomplishment and hopefulness at the

end of their sojourn. Akiko reported, "I felt a sense of accomplishment, as I did my best to

achieve what I aimed at". For some participants, the sense of accomplishment and the

disappointment of having to return to Japan are not mutually exclusive. For example, although

Yuri expressed frustration and disappointment about how her visa issue kept her from obtaining

employment, she simultaneously declared that she had no regret about her sojourn as she had

done her best in her study and job search.

Reentry

Once participants landed in Japan, participants experienced a brief period of

disorientation, in which they felt awkward to be surrounded by everything that is Japanese or

treated like a guest in their own homes. Some felt relieved to be surrounded by Japanese

language and food, and some felt claustrophobic in the much tighter physical spaces of Japan. A

few others were too exhausted from the frantic days leading up to their departure to remember

their first impressions of coming back to Japan.

Overall, participants recounted their reentry experiences in the contexts of societal norms

and gender roles that originally made them leave Japan, as well as the image that Japanese

people have about North American-educated women. Arising within these contexts was a host of

challenges and resiliencies in the domains of career and social network. Moreover, as

participants struggled to conform or not conform to societal norms, gender roles, and stereotypes

that people have about them, they engaged in intrapersonal processes that simultaneously

empowered and disempowered them.

Societal Norms and Gender Role

Coming back from North America, participants were attuned to characteristics of

Japanese society, including group processes and conformity, hierarchical social structures, and

gender roles. As will be discussed later, these contextual factors influenced the challenges

participants experienced in their career and social life.

Group processes and conformity. Upon their return, participants observed Japan as

operating within clear boundaries between in-group and out-group membership and the pressure

to conform to those boundaries. This distinction between in-group and out-group membership

was in part manifested in people's indifference toward strangers in public spaces. This stood out

for several participants who were accustomed to American culture where people greet and strike

up conversations with strangers. As Eriko described,

> Japanese people are really cold to strangers. They are kind to friends or acquaintances.
>
> Let's say someone tripped in a train station. They don't say anything, when you would
>
> think it is normal to say, 'are you ok?' And they are inconsiderate, indifferent toward
>
> people with disabilities, like someone walking with a cane. I really don't like Japanese
>
> people's indifference toward strangers.

Sachiko reported similar incidents, and explained that although these incidents seemed trivial, the cumulative effect of daily discomfort is significant, especially for someone like her who did not want to be in Japan. Sachiko continued,

> These incidents were the beginning of a vicious circle. I left Japan in the first place because I did not like living in this country. So I probably noticed minor things that other people don't notice... And all these little things feel like much worse than they actually are, ended up confirming my discontent, 'you see this is why I don't want to be here'

Additionally, participants observed that a high degree of conformity is required to be considered as an in-group member. For example, Yuri commented with surprise at the pressure to look and behave alike in the job-search process, just like Naomi who observed the same at a job fair in the U.S.,

> I was really surprised! The large convention floor [where a job fair was taking place] was filled with people in the same kind of suits, carrying the same kind of bags, with the same kind of hairstyle! When I saw this, I felt, "Wow, I don't want to be part of this", realizing that I won't be selected unless I'm like everybody else.

Once included in the group, participants may benefit from built-in social support but at times can feel a lack of freedom. For instance, three participants referred to the workplace norm where colleagues (especially women) spent their lunchtime together. When these participants expressed their desire to be alone, they were seen as antisocial or peculiar. Shiho reported,

> [My colleagues] always asked me to go for lunch together, which I appreciated most of the time. But once in a while I just wanted to be by myself…but there were really implicit ways of letting you know that you are not supposed to say that [you want to be alone].

In addition to conformity to group, participants also perceived pressure to conform to the linear developmental path, which was a factor for some participants' decision to leave Japan in the first place. This norm was embedded in the Japanese job search practice in which any gap year is perceived negatively, and in the standard Japanese CV and resume that require applicants to fill out their age, sex, and number of children. Several participants commented on their discomfort with having to reveal such personal information in their CVs. This was a particularly salient issue for Naomi, who did not go straight to university and took extra years to complete her study due to the birth of her child. When she looked for a job upon her reentry, she was a 27 year-old single mother. She explains that at the interviews:

> They asked me about my age a lot. I was asked, "how could you be a new graduate at your age?"…And I also checked off the question about having a dependent family member. So they asked me in the interviews, "how could it be that you have a dependent but are not married?" They talked to me frankly, but yeah, I was a bit shocked.

Hierarchical social structure. Participants reported that they struggled with hierarchical relationships in Japanese society. In the workplace, roles are defined in terms of age-based seniority and employment status (professional vs. support staff), and people in junior positions have little autonomy and decision-making power. For example, Naomi discussed how she could not go home until her boss had left the office, even when she had no task at hand.

Such dynamics are apparent in academia as well. Junko, who pursued a PhD upon her return, reported, "In the States, the climate was that each person in the lab proceeded with their research at their own pace. But my professor here likes to manage every detail. I am frustrated with how I cannot do research autonomously". Similarly, Kyoko, who was working as a

researcher, discussed how she and her colleagues, despite having doctoral degrees, had to assist the head researcher with errands and non-research tasks.

In part, this hierarchical structure is based on gender. Sachiko reported that as soon as she arrived in Japan, she noticed that "this is really a male-centered society here". As an example, she referred to TV news programs where a female newscaster plays only a supportive role to the main male anchor. She lamented that female newscasters are selected based on their physical attractiveness rather than intelligence and replaced by younger attractive women by mid-30's, whereas some seasoned female newscasters in North America remain in the forefront of journalism way into their 40's and 50's.

Several participants mentioned gender disparity at work: women are underrepresented in professional and managerial positions and overrepresented in support positions. Women are also less likely to be employed in fulltime, permanent positions. Maki, who temporarily worked as an office clerk before starting her master's degree, reported her first working experience in Japan as,

I got a glimpse of what it is like to work in Japan (*chuckle*). Most clerical positions were held by women. Well actually all of them were I think. So it was like, 'this is how women work in Japan, as men's subordinate… I wouldn't have liked it if I had intended to work there permanently.

Several participants were able to find a professional position, which afforded them responsibility and tasks that leads to skill development, as well as salaries far better than that of women in support positions. However, they had their own struggles as minority women in professional positions. For example, Naomi described how intimidating it is to speak up as the only woman in meetings filled with male employees and clients. Yuri discussed how the prevailing prejudice against women worked against her. She explained,

Basically, young women are not seen as competent at work, just by the image. People can

evaluate me whether I'm competent or not if they actually meet and talk to me. But on

the phone, some people assume that I'm just a receptionist. (Interviewer: Prejudice

almost?) It *is* prejudice. With my voice, they can tell that I'm a young woman. Then they

say, 'put your superior on the line', and I'm like, *really*?

In this male-centered hierarchy, Hanae, who chose to become a housewife, recognizes

that her social status is at "the bottom of society" holding "a dead-end occupation". She

described that others disregard her educational attainment "as if it did not happen (chuckle)"—

something irrelevant in the past.

Gender roles. In addition to male dominance in the hierarchal structure, participants

were faced with the same gender role expectations that made some of them leave Japan in the

first place. In fact, even the participants who did not refer to gender role as a factor for their

decision to leave Japan had a more acute sense of women's place in the Japanese society upon

their return, because they now had North American society as a reference point.

Two participants stated that being women, in some ways, made their reentry adjustment

to Japan easier. Junko, who pursued a PhD in computer science, explains that there is "scarcity

value" in being a woman in a male-dominated field. She discussed the newly established

research funds for and preferential hiring of women researchers, which are aimed at promoting

the advancement of women in academia. Although she had not personally benefited from these

policies, they formed the basis of her positive outlook for her future academic career. Maki, who

embarked on a master's degree in Fine Arts at a Japanese university, argued that it would be

difficult for men to pursue unstable careers as artists like her, because of the societal pressure for

men to be breadwinners.

However, the majority of participants expressed that gender role expectations prevalent in

Japanese society disadvantaged them. At work, participants observed implicit norms for female

fulfilling caretaking roles, such as serving tea and providing emotional care, regardless of their

professional positions. For example, Junko, despite her perceived advantage as a women

scientist, also discussed how other graduate students and her supervisor placed her in the 'big

sister' role (姉御). The expectation of this role was to take care of other students' experiments

and emotional needs. She explains,

> Just because I'm doing research [as a woman] and a little older, I'm treated like a big
>
> sister… Well, looking after their experiments is part of my job [as a senior doctoral
>
> student], so I can accept that. But I'm uncomfortable being treated like that in normal
>
> interactions too.

 Furthermore, participants described societal expectations for their roles as a wife and a

mother. For example, Midori discussed her discontent that the majority of housework fell on her

shoulders despite the fact that she and her husband both worked fulltime. Yet, she felt that she

could not complain because her husband still did housework "100 times more than the average

Japanese husband".

Naomi experienced incompatible expectations as a mother and worker. When her son

became sick and needed brief hospitalization, she asked her boss to reduce her long work hours,

which were beyond nine hours a day. Her boss then told her that mothers and fathers are

different and that mothers should stay home with sick children. Further, he contended that having

a child as an unmarried, workingwoman is nothing but a "demerit" or "handicap".

In the end Naomi's boss agreed to modify her contract so that she could maintain her

position with full benefits but go home at 6 o'clock, although her pay was reduced. However, his

reluctance to reduce her work hours while condemning her for not spending as much time with

her son, was both confusing and demoralizing. Moreover, Naomi sensed in these comments a

judgment toward divorced women. Indeed, her friends also made judgmental comments about

the impact of her divorce on her son (e.g., "poor child" 可哀想), despite that Naomi believed that

divorce was the best decision for them both. As the only divorcée and single mother, Naomi is an

'outlier' among the participants. However, her experience in many ways reflects the societal

pressures to conform to traditional family life and gendered division of labour, which was a

source of stress for other women as well.

Although the pressure for men to be the breadwinner limits their choices, this same

expectation in turn contributes to the tendency to take women's career aspirations lightly. Eriko,

who worked for an American financial institution, reported a conversation she had with a male

colleague who shared an aspiration for a career in international development. When she

discussed her plan to work for an international NGO, he said, "[you can do that] because you are

a woman, you can afford to work for an NGO for little pay by getting married to a well-paid

husband."

Public Image of North American Educated Women

In addition to rigid societal norms and gender role expectations, participants' reentry

process was complicated by their new identity: women who earned their degrees in North

American universities. Having a North American degree, they were perceived as too assertive,

ambitious, and uncooperative—all of which goes against the ideal "image of cute and docile

Japanese women", as Reiko articulated.

The stereotypes of North American-educated women as outspoken and assertive is

illustrated by Sachiko, who described her shock at watching a Japanese news report on "the

Week Against Groping" (痴漢予防週間). In this report, it was recommended that women read an English newspaper as an effective strategy for protecting themselves from gropers on public transportation. That is, pretending to be a Western-influenced woman would give the groper an impression that she would not be silenced by this transgression.

Participants reported that they were stereotyped as ambitious, high-achieving women. Midori sensed that others see her through a "colored lens", an image of an American educated woman as "a pretentious, career-minded, ambitious go-getter", which makes others, especially men, feel intimidated. This perception was often expressed through people's comments of *sugoi*––the comment Hanae received from her friends before her departure; Tomoka from the female support staff she interacted with at headquarters. Similar to Tomoka and Hanae, participants who received this comment upon their reentry interpreted it as an expression that conveyed a double meaning of both admiration and jealousy. Further, this image of ambitious, career-minded women affected both Hanae and Midori, who come to prioritize family life over career. They struggled with the mismatch between their value and others' perception of them. Hanae described, "When I said that I was getting married, my grandmother said to me, 'But I was expecting that you will be a great achiever'. I think that this statement captures [the image of women educated abroad]".

Participants were also assumed to be uncooperative and difficult to work with in a Japanese work culture that demanded a high level of conformity. Reiko discussed how she was stereotyped by her supervisor and colleagues as being assertive and *namaiki* (i.e., impertinent), despite the fact that she was an introvert. Likewise, Maki, who had great difficulty securing employment, was later told by her employer that he was initially reluctant to hire her because he had the image of foreign educated Japanese women as being disobedient and uncooperative.

Career

Given that career was a major factor that led participants to seek a North American education and to return to Japan, it is not surprising that participants extensively described their career life upon their return. In the context of the aforementioned gender-based hierarchal structure and the stereotypes of North American educated women, their English language proficiency served as both advantages and disadvantages. They also experienced difficulty obtaining employment, workplace discrimination and bullying, as well as challenges in work-life balance. In response, they employed various career-related coping strategies.

English language proficiency. Seven participants, especially those who found employment in multinational companies or Japanese branches of foreign companies, reported that their North American education was perceived positively during their job search process. Tomoka discussed how employers perceived her degree as "quality assurance" of her English proficiency, which domestic job seekers who spent only a year abroad as exchange students did not have. Eriko, who secured a job at a multinational financial institution, recognizes that her degree afforded her the status of a global elite:

> People who have spent all of their lives in Japan and went to Japanese universities belong in the same league. But once you have a degree from abroad, then you are not in the same playing field. Organizations like my company, or people who also have degrees from abroad, recognize you and value your degree.

Even in settings that did not require English proficiency, North American degrees were valued because of the prestige they could bring to the organization. As Naomi reported,

When I serve a cup of tea to a client who comes to the office for the first time, my boss would introduce me to the client "She can speak English"…It is like "our company hires people who are fluent in English".

However, the advantage of being proficient in English also led to disadvantages as it evoked jealousy and a sense of inferiority in others. Both Chiharu and Tomoka referred to the conflicting sense of admiration and inferiority that Japanese people have toward those who can speak English. Chiharu described this dynamic as "allergic to foreign countries" (外国アレルギー), while Tomoka invoked the psychodynamic concept a "(inferiority) complex", the term that has permeated everyday Japanese language. Tomoka explains,

I think that Japanese people have a 'complex' toward English language. That's why English conversation schools do such good business everywhere in Japan… they feel they are being left out [in global economy] as they are unable to make use of English as a communication tool. I think this is why they react like "wow" to people who come back from places like United States and Canada.

Shiho provided an example that illustrates how English proficiency triggers a sense of jealousy in others—in this case, senior male colleagues who graduated from Japanese universities. When she started working, they avoided her or treated her "as if I came from a different world" (別世界の人って感じ). They eventually opened up to her, but often told her self-deprecatingly "we are not as smart as you are". Later, one of them explained:

He told me later that he felt inferior, saying that he can't speak English even though he works for a so-called 'global company'. He wants to improve his English proficiency but he doesn't know how, and his efforts had not been fruitful. And that's when I came in. He said that he was jealous of me, and at the same time afraid that I would look down on him.

Difficulty obtaining employment. Despite their English proficiency, several

participants experienced difficulty obtaining employment, due to their status as women, their

age, and employers' prejudice toward women educated in North America. For example, Maki

reported, "I was turned down more than ten times. Having studied abroad really worked against

me. …Once I was asked, "You've been studying abroad, but can you handle customer relations

in Japanese?" It appears that this employer judged her as lacking sufficient Japanese proficiency,

probably confusing her with *kikokushijo* (i.e., Japanese returnees who grew up overseas).

Kyoko, who had obtained a PhD in the U.S., had great difficulty finding an academic

position in Japan. She reported, "I was a woman over 40 years old with a PhD from an American

university. I think that alone deemed me out of the question as a candidate". Although letters of

rejection noted her outstanding track record, they concluded that she was overqualified for the

positions. Kyoko however had a different interpretation. She continued,

> It's just lip service. I think that they were actually thinking, "you won't adjust [to our
>
> organizational culture]" (laughed cynically). I received letters and I read in between the
>
> lines, "let's not hire her because she seems like a difficult person to manage.

> Similar to Kyoko, age added another layer to Reiko's difficulty in finding a job. She

reported,

> If I had been much younger, they would have taken a chance in investing in my potential.
>
> But so many times I was told at interviews, "well, you are 37 years old, and you are a
>
> woman… You have working experience only in the United States but not in Japan".

Furthermore, a unique employment practice in Japan disadvantaged participants who did

not have previous work experience. In Japan, job postings are clearly divided into positions for

new graduates (新卒採用) and for those who already have work experience and want to change

their careers (中途採用). Typically, the selection process for entry positions is notoriously long.

Japanese university students typically start 'registering' (エントリー) with companies in their

third year. To be hired, they must attend information sessions and go through multiple interviews

and written exams, which take place over a two-year span. Although this practice is emotionally

taxing for domestic students as well, participants who did not have previous work experience

described how residing outside Japan led them to 'miss the boat' for this selection process. Yet,

without work experience, they were not competitive for mid-career positions either.

Discrimination and workplace bullying. Participants in professional positions reported

difficult relationships at work, both with their male supervisors and female colleagues, which

took the form of discrimination and workplace bullying. For example, Tomoka, who worked for

a company where all professional positions had traditionally been reserved for men, reported

how her boss treated the minority of women in professional positions differently from male

counterparts:

> When [my boss] makes important decisions, he asks opinions only from certain members
>
> of the team. Of course they are all men. And in his remarks you can tell he looks down on
>
> women. Like, if a male employee is staying late, for sure he would say, 'you're working
>
> hard', but if I stay late, he would say, 'you are so slow that you couldn't finish on
>
> time'…. There are two of us who are women in sales positions, but our work never gets
>
> complimented, not even the slightest bit.

Consequently, when Tomoka achieved 300% of her monthly sales target, her boss reduced her

commission to that of 150%, saying "you didn't accomplish this on your own". She felt that he

would never do this to his male subordinates.

Likewise, when Reiko tried to discuss an issue with her supervisor, he verbally attacked her despite her best effort to express her perspective as politely and gently as possible. She described,

He criticized me for having a superior attitude and for being impertinent. He even said, "you can speak English, but you don't have substance as a person". I've been told how hard it is to come back to Japan, but this was beyond my expectations.

Furthermore, women were divided into hierarchical job standings, which create tension among them. For example, Tomoka reported that the female support staff bullied her because she held a well-paid, professional position. She recounted how they ignored Tomoka when she first started. With time, they stopped ignoring her, but they continued to treat her in a distant and uncooperative manner. As a result, Tomoka had to do the paperwork that they were supposed to do—an additional burden when she already had to do more than her male counterparts to get her boss' recognition. Tomoka explains how she made sense of these women's attitudes,

They're probably feeling, 'how dare you, you are a woman like us but went to the United States and now you work with men'. These women were unsatisfied with their salaries, so I think they took out their frustration on me, because I'm getting the same salary as men.

Unfortunately, Tomoka's only female peer did not serve as an ally. When she first started working at the company, she said to Tomoka, "you have to work harder [than male colleagues] because you are getting the same salary as men". She came to understand this comment and her supervisor's discriminatory attitude as a reflection of Japanese work culture. She explains,

It made me realize that there is only one model for workers in the Japanese society, and that is for middle-aged men [who dedicate themselves to their companies]…the

prevailing belief at least at the time was that the only way for women to get ahead is to work like middle-aged men.

Unlike Tomoka, Yuri maintained an amicable relationship with the female support staff, but she was uncomfortable with how these women were discriminated against. Moreover, the fact that these women did not share Yuri's perception and discomfort created an emotional barrier. For example, Yuri described how they (including those in their 30's) were referred to as "girls" (女の子) in office conversations (e.g., "I'll get one of the girls to pick up the document"). She also observed that temporary office assistants (who are almost always women) were referred to as "Miss Temp Worker" (臨職さん), and not by their names. Yuri described her reaction to these practices and the other women's indifference:

> I'm not the one who is referred to like that [because of my professional status]. But I question why this kind of things is accepted in the workplace. Isn't it sexual harassment? I think so. But when I talked to [the support staff women] about how it upsets me, everyone says, 'oh no they are not ill intentioned'. That hurts me, that they themselves don't mind it much. But I think that [not caring about these practices] actually perpetuates their status. You know, there are women who are fighting with this, but there are other women who accept it, like 'I don't care"…. That's how women ended up being looked down on…. It's not healthy, you know, you are looked down on but don't care about it. It's probably not my business because I'm not the one who is looked down. But I think it's wrong.

Although raw and unarticulated, this quote reveals her multilayered feelings all at once. That is, she feels (a) ubiquitous sexual harassment at workplace unacceptable, (b) uncertain if she has the right to have strong reactions toward injustice even though she herself is not directly targeted (c),

betrayed by women who are not concerned with the maltreatment impinged on themselves, and

that (d) frustrated with, or perhaps slight contempt for, these women who unwittingly

perpetuated their subordinate position. Tomoka expressed a similar feeling toward women who

complain about their employment status but do not make the effort to advance their careers,

when she hesitantly remarked, "I became less and less tolerant to these women, although I know

[seeing them this way] is problematic". As will be discussed in a later section, the lack of support

from these female colleagues contributed to Yuri's sense of alienation.

Challenges in work-life balance. Several women discussed the challenges of

maintaining a work-life balance and the subsequent decisions that they took to resolve them

which resulted in underemployment. For example, as discussed previously, Naomi's challenge of

balancing work and childcare responsibilities forced her to accept a lower-paying contract.

Similarly, Midori, who was previously a "corporate fighter", purposefully chose to work for an

American company as a contract worker on an hourly wage without benefits, because she had

come to value family life during her sojourn. Nonetheless, with her skills and English

proficiency, she was given increasingly more responsibility and repeatedly asked to take on a

permanent position. Fearing to return to the work-focused life she had had before her sojourn,

Midori quit her job. She had come to the conclusion that she could not manage work and family

life while her husband's job hindered his capacity to do domestic chores.

This work culture affected the career outlook of younger participants. Both Yuri and

Eriko, who held demanding professional positions, were foreseeing difficulty in maintaining

their career and family life. After Yuri described the inadequacies of social policies that fail to

protect women's career during maternity leave, she recounted,

If you get pregnant and mention going on maternity leave, [the issue] immediately goes

to the place of forcing you to quit. I'm sure a lot of pressure will come. Right away they

will turn around and say, "well then, we'll hire someone else". Women can't survive….

So, if I get married and have children, it'll be when I feel okay to give up my career.

Career-related coping. Participants reported having engaged, or plans to engage, in

strategies to cope with their career-related challenges. Most commonly, participants discussed

purposefully seeking international work environments that are more likely to value their

education and not be governed by traditional Japanese societal norms. In fact, Midori explained

how she intentionally avoided Japanese companies upon her return, because of her fear of being

stereotyped as a North American educated woman. This strategy worked well for her and Eriko,

both of whom worked under American superiors and with colleagues who were also educated

abroad. They experienced less workplace challenges than others. By contrast, Reiko, Tomoka,

and Yuri, despite all working for international/multinational companies, worked under Japanese

superiors, whose traditional mindset still contributed to their difficulties.

Some participants pursued or were planning to pursue further education or training to

overcome their career related challenges. For example, after two years at a hostile workplace,

Tomoka pursued an MBA from a Japanese university while working fulltime, with the hope that

it would help her obtain employment in an other organization. Both Eriko and Shiho discussed

their plan to pursue master's degrees in their specialty to advance their careers.

At times, career aspiration served as a source of hope and motivation to carry on in the

face of various challenges. For example, Chiharu discussed how she had struggled throughout

her life with people's perception of her as weak, because she was much shorter than the average

Japanese woman. Moreover, Chiharu was diagnosed with cancer several months after her return,

which interrupted her career development. However, once her cancer went in remission, she

found herself more motivated than before. She recounted,

> People often perceive me as weak, well, in a bad way of speaking, they make light of me.
> I've always lived with that sense… So when I see someone in a socially powerful
> position but is in fact incompetent, I tell myself, 'I'm like this (*pointing at her height*),
> and I suffered a major illness, but I'm strong, I'm competent, and I'll earn more income
> too. I've become quite career-minded.

Since then, Chiharu obtained IT-related certificates, and has been given challenging projects that

she found meaningful.

Similarly, Yuri discussed how entertaining the idea of starting up her own company

helped her persevere in a hostile work environment. Although she did not have a concrete

business idea, she felt that starting her own business would help her re-experience the sense of

absorption (i.e., "into it") that she experienced during her study in Canada. In addition, she

explained that her desire to create a workplace that is free of sex discrimination and seniority-

based hierarchy was in part her motivation for starting her business.

Social Network

Just like their career domain, participants' social network both posed challenges and

served as a resource for coping.

Challenges in social network. Participants reported disruption of social networks,

difficulty finding a partner, disconnect with other women, and tense relationships with parents.

As for their dislocated social network, they discussed the sense of loneliness due to their lack of

a social network in Japan. The support system that they had established during their study abroad

was left behind, while their pre-departure friendship circle had been lost or fragmented during their sojourn. Eriko discussed how she was confronted with the gap between her and her high school friends' perceptions of the importance of their friendship.

> I was reminded that I had no friends… that's what I really didn't like. [I had friends from high school], and for me they were high priority, close friends that I would make the point of seeing *every time* I visited home. But for them, I was just a friend they would see once a year.

Similarly, Shiho explained, "When my colleagues talk about going out with their college friends, I was jealous. I can't go for a drink with my college friends after work. I get a little lonely".

> Five participants (Midori, Chiharu, Reiko, Tomoka, and Shiho) explicitly discussed the challenge of finding a romantic partner. For instance, Midori reported her experience of registering with a dating agency,

> First of all, men reject me just by looking at my profile. It's like, a woman who went to a grad school in the States, no way, you are too good for me! I got to meet several men, but they say "you are *sugoi*", "you are not compatible with me" and they don't try to see me beyond that… They perceive me with awe and probably fear too. Like [she is probably] too ambitious.

Likewise, Reiko described how the stereotypes of foreign educated women rendered her undesirable as a potential partner. The same dynamic operated for Shiho, who was 23 years old at the time of her return. She reported, half-laughing, "I am so unpopular at drinking parties". She described how men get intimidated and retreated from her as soon as they find out that she had graduated from an American university. By contrast, she observed that men who studied

abroad did not get the same treatment. Her girlfriends told her that men who had studied abroad were more attractive than other Japanese men, which she felt was unfair.

In addition to their difficult relationships with women at work, participants' discussed their feelings of disconnect from women in their social network due to their diverging orientation to gender roles. For example, Sachiko described a difference in her and her friends' views on 'women's happiness (女の幸せ)'. She reported that her present concerns lie in advancing her career and attaining financial stability, whereas her friends are concerned with finding a high-earning husband who can support them financially. She explained,

> Not that they don't respect my perspective…But even in innocuous, everyday
>
> conversations, they would say things like "(*in a high-pitched voice*) Oh, let us wish that
>
> we'll find someone great", you know, their beliefs show. Even everyday conversations
>
> ended up going there. So that's when I feel like I can't connect.

Similarly, Tomoka, who was single and held a professional position, described how she felt disconnected with her female friends outside of work.

> Most of my female friends in Japan [from pre-departure period] are all married and have
>
> kids. They are housewives. And I feel uncomfortable when they assume and say things
>
> like, "you've decided to live for your career". It's not that I've chosen career over family
>
> life. I'm just scrambling to sustain myself as an independent adult.

Several participants discussed the challenge of moving back to their parents' house. For example, Maki, Reiko, Eriko, and Yuri discussed how their return disrupted the space and routine their parents had established during their absence, which created a stressful environment for both the participants and their parents. Maki elaborated,

> My parents aged, and had established a pace and routine. And then I moved back in. I
>
> would come home late sometimes. My belongings took up extra space in the house. So
>
> they got irritated and angry with me. I felt this was unfair. You know, I've been used to
>
> my life [in the U.S.] with a lot of freedom.

Although such sentiment is common to adults moving back with parents, the parents of these participants interpreted that any tension or different values between them and their daughters were caused by their daughters having became too 'Westernized'. For example, Yuri discussed how she and her mother had different values and perspectives, which could have been attributed to a generation gap, was interpreted as follows,

> Whenever there was a clash between us, she would say, 'this is because you lived in
>
> Canada, you are different from me'. So she spoke negatively, attributing everything to the
>
> fact that I lived in Canada, like 'this is what happens if you live abroad'

Social support. Despite the above interpersonal challenges, most participants mobilized support from their social network to cope with reentry challenges. For many participants, friends in North America were the major source of support especially in the early phase of reentry. Video chat technology and social media facilitated their effort in maintaining ties with friends in North America. For example, learning what her Fine Arts friends were working on through social media gave Maki motivation for her own projects. Sachiko wrote her negative reactions toward Japanese society on her blog, and received sympathy and validation from friends in the North America, which was comforting to her.

For others, people with international backgrounds living in Japan served as an important basis of their social support. For example, Eriko, whose attempts to fit in with "ordinary Japanese" had failed, came to socialize almost exclusively with non-Japanese nationals working

in Tokyo and Japanese people who had lived abroad. She explains, "When I'm hanging out with them, I can act as if I'm still abroad. They have values similar to mine, so it's very comfortable"

By contrast, some participants were able to establish new relationships based on interests and activities unrelated to their North American backgrounds. Maki's life in Japan improved significantly overtime as she got connected with artist friends whom she collaborated with on different projects. Likewise, Midori, whose master's degree from the U.S. worked against her in her attempts to find a romantic partner, eventually found a partner who shared common interests in music. She reported with a smile,

> My husband didn't care about [my educational back ground]…We met at a party organized by a dating service agency. I made my American educational background explicit in my profile, but he didn't see it at all. All he cared about was I play flute!"

Several participants discussed their family as an important source of support. For example, Naomi's parents provided her with both emotional and instrumental support for her to raise her child. Hanae, who felt conflicted between her desire to become a housewife and the social expectation of North American educated women as career-minded, was able to come to terms with her decision because of her parents' words. She recounted,

> Then my parents said to me. 'We sent you to Canada not because we wanted you to find employment in a prestigious company or to find a glamorous global career. It was because we wanted you to earnestly explore different possibilities and find your own answer to the question of how you want to live your life meaningfully. If getting married and supporting him as a housewife is the answer you derived…, then it was worthwhile for us to send you to Canada'.

Reflecting on her journey, she expressed her appreciation for her parents and her husband's support,

> I've always lived with stress and internal conflicts. For the first time, I've come to feel a hundred percent that it's ok to be who I am. I appreciate my family for supporting me to get to this point, this past year, where I've been feeling absolutely content with my life".

(Non)Conformity and Corollary Intrapersonal Processes

In response to the above challenges in their career and social domains, participants variously positioned themselves along the continuum of conformity to non-conformity. Conscious or unconscious, this positioning accompanied intrapersonal processes: self-scrutiny and self-silencing; self-othering and self-pathologizing; alienation and withdrawal; acceptance or resignation; and a desire to return to North America. At first glance, these processes appear to be negative psychological effects of reentry. However, they in fact represent these women's agency-—their attempts to cope with, survive, or resist various pressures that they experienced upon reentry, as well as their resiliency.

(Non)Conformity. On one end of the continuum, Akiko reported little difficulty with reentry adjustment, explaining that the key to her smooth transition was her flexibility at adapting to different environments. She explained, "I can conform wherever I am, really. In a way, I don't have a fixed-self. I can change myself to fit into anything."

Conformity worked for Akiko, but not for others. Eriko explained her choice of the phrase "trying to fit in" in her timeline, explaining: "I didn't have friends, so I tried to fit in to get along with Japanese friends. But it was too difficult". For Yuri, conformity is not a choice but an imperative for her survival. She explains,

> So from here (pointing at the reentry phase in her timeline), I've been trying hard to
> protect myself. It is like I'm trying to arrange myself a bit, you know, by coating myself
> or filing off a bit of myself…to protect my position, or to adjust to the society. But lately
> it's becoming a new normal, you know. I was 100% who I am [during my sojourn]. As
> time passes, it's become my nature to work hard to forcefully remodel myself.

In this quote, Yuri metaphorically discusses her selfhood as an object that she can strategically

manipulate, by coating or filing its surface. At the same time, in the latter part of the quote, she is

beginning to realize the unexpected consequence of her strategy—the habitual alteration of the

surface began to change its core.

At the other end of the continuum, Kyoko continuously asserted herself and protested

those implicit norms that she felt were discriminating to women. These nonconforming

behaviors repeatedly resulted in harsh responses from others and compromised her career

advancement. During the interview where she chose "dissatisfaction, frustration, stressful" for

her timeline, she came to realize what underlies her nonconformity.

> Kyoko: Well, I think, ah, I had, and I still have, (*silence*) a strong volition that I
>   don't want to adjust to Japanese society.
>
> Researcher: Ah I see, I can see that. Then, hypothetically speaking, what would it
>   mean to you if you did adjust to Japanese society despite, ah, your
>   determination not to?
>
> Kyoko: Ah, (*silence*) ah, (*silence*). How do I say… If I decided to adjust to
>   Japanese society at this point, then, it would mean a sort of defeat, a
>   failure. You know, my life was not always smooth, but I've managed to

refuse to do anything I absolutely did not want to do. If I have to change

the way I've lived at this point of my life, then that's how I understand.

Researcher: If you compromise, that means you are defeated. Defeated against what?

Kyoko: Against…ah, (*silence*). I wonder (*silence*). Well, for one thing, it is this

Japanese society, norms, social system. I left Japan in the first place

because I questioned it, I rejected it, so if I get assimilated into it after all,

it means a defeat I think.

In other words, nonconformity in her reentry process meant a continuation of Kyoko's lifelong

resistance, which had already started when she protested working on home appliance projects

just because she was a female engineer.

Self-scrutiny and self-silencing. Participants who engaged in conformity strategies

described how they became conscious of their behaviors and came to scrutinize themselves. For

example, Reiko described that she had become self-conscious after receiving comments from her

boss and colleagues about her "Americanized" behaviors. She explained, "I'm never sure if I'm

doing things right or not. I get anxious, you know. I'm doing things in certain ways thinking that

they are right, but maybe I'm doing things wrong and no one is telling me". For Hanae, her need

to scrutinize herself arose from the fact that she lived in a remote city. She explained, "A place

like [name of the city] is quite conservative and not accepting of people who are different. So I

have to be careful…. I have to select words carefully and refrain from speaking my thoughts".

In addition to self-scrutiny, the above quote indicates Hanae's self-silencing, an attempt

to suppress or conceal certain thoughts, feelings, or an aspect of identity. Akiko, who reported

little reentry difficulties due to her willingness to conform, described the following strategy,

> [Having studied in Canada] hasn't had any impact on my social interactions. That's
> because I only mention that I went to Canada, but I *really, really* don't talk about having
> obtained a degree there unless I was asked specifically…. I don't want to be seen as being
> overly foreign-influenced.

Another example of self-silencing is how both Tomoka and Hanae did not stand up to workplace bullying, because they feared that doing so would confirm other's perception of them as too assertive and impertinent.

Alienation and withdrawal. Many participants, whether they engaged in conformity or non-conformity, discussed a sense of alienation and out-of-place-ness, expressed in words such as lonely (寂しい) or lack of *ibasho* (居場所, a place to belong). Sachiko, when asked to choose in her timeline an English word to describe her life since reentry, responded, "It would be 'loneliness'. How shall I say, there is no *ibasho* for me. That's why I feel lonely". To the same question, Kyoko answered, "Vague anxiety. Keep wondering if I will ever adjust to life in Japan, and what if I'll never be able to go back to the U.S. There will be no *ibasho* for me anywhere. That kind of anxiety."

Some participants discussed how alienation and out-of-place-ness led to their voluntary withdrawal, which then only intensified their sense of alienation. Sachiko explained,

> I don't have a social life. Because I didn't want to be here in the first place, and plus I
> don't feel like reaching out to people who won't understand me…I have little in common
> with people who have never left Japan, not much to share. So just for that, I've already
> given up on establishing meaningful relationships.

Later in the interview, Sachiko highlighted that this kind of negativity is uncharacteristic of her, explaining, "I was much more open and would talk to anyone when I was in New York. But now,

on top of the fact that I've been very negative…I'm closing myself off to others". A similar

sentiment is shared by Yuri, who reported,

> I don't go out much anymore. That's partly because I'm so tired [from overwork] that I
> want to relax at home. But when I was in [Canadian City where she studied]… I always
> wanted to hang out with someone else. But now I don't feel that way at all. Being by
> myself doesn't bother me anymore. For example, I feel like 'I'll be okay if I'm alone the
> rest of my life'…Sounds like such a lonely person.

Self-othering and self-pathologizing. Those who engaged in non-conforming strategies

exhibited the signs of placing themselves in the margin of society as a result of being treated as

the other. An example is several participants' use the term "ordinary Japanese" (普通の日本人) to

denote Japanese people who do not have extensive international experience, which distinguishes

themselves from the majority. Another example is seen in Sachiko, who have to come to find

comfort in other's comments such as "you are no longer Japanese", "you are so American". She

described three instances, one of which involved her mother and childhood friend,

Sachiko:	Their reaction [to my complaints about life in Japan] is like "Yup, you are no longer Japanese *(chuckle)*"
Researcher:	What is it like for you when they said that to you?
Sachiko:	It doesn't bother me.
Researcher:	Rather it sits well with you?
Sachiko:	I'm like, 'yup that's right', I am no longer as Japanese as I thought I was.

Related to the notion of self-othering, some participants come to view their difficulties as

resulting from their deficits. For example, Chiharu talked about the "depression" and "lethargy"

she experienced in the first year, when she was yearning for relationships and the lifestyle that

she had left behind. Likewise, when asked about her support system, Kyoko, who rejected

adjusting to Japanese society, reported,

> I have a friend who [also studied in the U.S.]. She returned to Japan halfway through her
>
> PhD, but things are not so great for her. So yes, I have a friend who, if you will, has the
>
> same adjustment disorder [that I have].

Acceptance and resignation. As most participants shifted between conformity and non-

conformity, they experienced the gradual process of coming terms with life in Japan, either in the

form of acceptance or resignation. As for acceptance, both Chiharu and Midori recognized the

strengths of Japanese workers' diligence and loyalty to their employees. Hanae discussed her

appreciation for the natural beauty of the Japanese countryside. Shiho reported that she had

gotten used to her life in Japan over time, describing, "I'm fundamentally Japanese after all…. I

think there's part of me that has just accepted that this is how Japanese people live today". Maki

reported how she changed over the two years since her return:

> I stopped thinking like I used to, like 'it wasn't like this in Canada, why is it like this in
>
> Japan'. I've come to understand there are reasons why things are the way they are in
>
> Japan. As I understood more about Japan, and I've come to accept that Japan is different
>
> from Canada in many ways and that's okay. I don't get frustrated anymore.

> By contrast, some participants came to terms with Japanese society through the process

of resignation. Reiko expressed, "I've come to think that…it is a place like this, and it won't

change no matter what I think of it…I've given up. Nothing changes". Similarly, feeling

disappointed with other women's lack of consciousness about discrimination at work, Yuri came

to think that, "Rather than me fighting it, I think of running away from here. Rather than fighting

squarely with women's status, it's like, it's not my job, it's ok to move on to somewhere else".

Desire to return to North America. Regardless of their position regarding conformity, the majority of participants (nine out of 14) reported that they had entertained the idea of moving back to North America. However, the meaning of this desire varied.

For participants like Sachiko, Kyoko, and Chiharu moving back to the U.S. has been a concrete plan that they saw as a way to find *ibasho,* a place to belong, or to escape from their difficult lives in Japan. For example, Sachiko discussed how her sense of resignation fed her desire to return to North America; "if Japanese people don't question [how things are], it is a peaceful place. If it's just me who doesn't fit in, then I shouldn't be here". Consequently, she had actively searched for employment in the U.S. and had secured a job that sponsored her for a work visa. While anxiously waiting for her work visa, she found herself once again in a situation where a piece of paper would decide her fate. She described her desperation:

> If this fails, my [American] gay friend said he would marry me [for green card]. I'm so tempted to consider his offer seriously…. After all, this may be a self-fulfilling prophecy, but I don't think I can ever be happy here.

Similarly, Kyoko reported that she was thinking of pursuing her second PhD as a last resort. Chiharu, who was aware of the slim likelihood of securing employment in the U.S., was job searching in other Asian countries such as Singapore. When asked about why she wanted to move out of Japan, Chiharu referred to bad *igokochi* ——the discomfort of living in the Japanese society (日本社会の居心地の悪さ).

Others were not as determined to move back to North America, but had considered returning as an option. Tomoka, who revealed that she intends to apply for the green card lottery, explained.

Just like when I came back to Japan, I will face adjustment issues if I go back to the

U.S.… But maybe there will be a day where I get to the point of wanting to dump

everything that I've established here and move back to the U.S. In the meantime, I

thought of applying for the lottery half-jokingly. If I win, then I'll have another option to

think about.

For other participants who are more oriented toward settling down in Japan, the option of

moving back served as a coping strategy and a source of hope. For example, Naomi described

her fantasy of moving back to the U.S. as, "it's like 'dreaming in a dream' but it helps me keep

going". Similarly, Yuri, while aspiring to start her own company that is free from gender barriers

and hierarchy, holds on to the idea of coming back to Canada. She explains:

That idea always stays in my mind, and it really helps me when things are hard. You

know, there is place I could return to if I have to. That helps me so much that I might

never go back, or I might go back someday. In either case, it gives me hope. The hope

that I have a choice in my life. Without that, I could have jumped in front of a train. You

know, life is tough (*chuckle*).

Reflections: Stories to Live By

Toward the end of the interviews, participants were asked to reflect on their paths, and

how they might have changed as a result. Despite numerous challenges that they experienced

throughout their journeys, some of which are still continuing, no participant regretted their

decision to seek education in North America. On the contrary, participants reported that their

experience changed them positively: they gained confidence in themselves, and were freed from

internalized standards and ways of thinking that limited their potential. In fact, these changes

themselves represent not only their internal source of resilience in the face of various reentry

difficulties, but also their guiding principles to live by. That is, in the act of recapping their

stories of the past, participants talked about how they want to live their future.

As for the notion of increased self-confidence, Naomi, who went through her journey as a

single mother, described,

> I was insecure about myself when I was a high school student, but once I came back, I
>
> gained confidence in myself. Having lived in the U.S. and graduated from a university
>
> there… Like, I can say that I am this kind of person [who can accomplish something].

Similarly, Kyoko, although still struggling to establish her research career, declared that through

her journey she had become a person who decides and shapes one's path (自分で切り開く). Maki

reported, with unwavering strength, that having completed her study with a chronic illness

"proved that I could handle any challenges of that magnitude that may come along in my life".

Additionally, participants reported that they were liberated from the fixed ideas about

what one should and shouldn't do, as a result of stepping out of Japan and coming into contact

with different worldviews. For example, Eriko explained, "By stepping out of the societal rail, I

became liberated from the idea that you must stay on that rail. Rather than conventional ways of

thinking about things that bind you, I learned to see different possibilities". Tomoka, who

entered the workforce as a high school graduate, is now a high-earning MBA; she talked about

how her internalized conventions used to limit her. As a girl with an underprivileged family

background, no one talked to her about the possibility of going to university. She stated,

> When I was in Japan, I didn't even think about [getting a university degree]. I thought it
>
> was unsuited for me, something I don't even deserve to desire it, period. But once in the
>
> U.S., I learned something really important while fumbling my way forward: I can get
>
> what I want, but first I have to desire it, say that I want it, and then after that, I just work

hard at it. That's something I learned from experience, and I will always keep it in mind

even in Japan.

Is it this kind of indomitable strength that deems these women perceived as *namaiki*? If so, how

would the same attitude be construed if exhibited by men?

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The central question of the present study was: how do Japanese women, who completed a university degree in North America, construct their stories of the process of pursuing a degree and returning to Japan? Specifically, through a feminist standpoint epistemological lens, the study aimed to understand Japanese women's experience of returning to Japan after completing a degree in North America, with particular attention given to the role of gender and sociocultural factors that influence the reentry experience. This discussion chapter will examine the story that emerged from participants' narratives in light of the literature. As discussed, feminist standpoint theory hinges on the epistemological advantage of knowledge that emerges from the unique social locations of the researched. Thus, in order to make sense of participants' narratives, this discussion is organized around layers of their intersecting identities. Furthermore, strengths and limitations of the study will be discussed, followed by implications for research and practice.

Intersection of Being Women, Japanese, and Western-educated

To begin, there is a clear link between being women, Japanese, and the pursuit of a North American education. Participants in this study were feeling constrained by norms in the Japanese educational and work settings prior to moving to North America. These sociocultural factors were also interlocked with gender. Through their direct experiences or observation of other women (e.g., older female support staff, mother), they were aware of endemic sexism, limited opportunities for women, and the pressure to conform to gender role expectations at work and in the home.

With this awareness of Japanese sociocultural values and contexts, the desire for alternative lifestyles and better career prospects served as a catalyst for these women's decision to pursue a North American education. These findings are consistent with the studies on

Japanese women studying in higher educational institutions in Britain (Habu, 2000) and

Australia (Ichimoto, 2004), which highlighted push and pull factors underlying women's

motivation for international studies. That is, limited opportunities and the pressure to conform to

gender role expectations 'pushed' them out Japan, while they are 'pulled' to the West

specifically given the idealized image of Western culture and life style, as well as career

opportunities that comes with acquiring the English language. However, the salience of push

factors was more pronounced for participants in this study. Instead of pull factors being

publically stated reasons that "come out first in discussion" (Ichimoto, 2004, p. 255), several

women in this study reported push factors outright at the beginning of the interviews as the

primary factors that made them leave the country.

In fact, these same factors led many participants to extend their sojourn. Participants in

this study sought to extend their sojourn for reasons such as increased comfort from living in

North America and a desire for further growth. This finding is consistent with the literature on

international students' career decision-making (e.g., Arthur & Nunes, 2014), which documented

that the majority of international students preferred to remain in the host country after graduation

(Musumba, Jin, & Mjelde, 2011; Spencer-Rodgers, 2000). However, unique to this study is the

link between the initial push factors for international education and decisions to stay in the host

culture. Participants were reluctant to go back to the gender-based hierarchal society from which

they escaped.

Perhaps the salience of push factors in this study may be the result of the timing of the

interview. Since the participants in Habu's (2000) and Ichimoto's (2004) studies were

interviewed during their sojourn, aspects of Western education may have been more salient for

the participants in those studies. However, an alternative explanation can be offered from a

perspective of narrative construction, which Sarbin (1986) captured as following:

> The narrative is a way of organizing episodes, actions, and accounts of action; it is an
>
> achievement that brings together mundane facts and fantastic creations; time and place
>
> are incorporated. The narrative allows for the inclusion of actors' reasons for their acts, as
>
> well as the causes of happening (p. 9).

That is, this salience of push factors for the participants in the present study represents the

essential role that these factors play in the way they understand and make meaning of their

sojourn and reentry experiences. When time (pre-departure to reentry) and place (Japan, North

America, and then Japan) were incorporated, the narrative that emerged in this study illustrates

that rigid cultural norms and gender roles explain their reasons for leaving, reluctance to return to

Japan, as well as their reentry difficulties.

Awareness of oppressive social structures and practices

Participants in this study were acute observers of social practices, such as Japanese

people's indifference to strangers, norms to conform to groups, and gender-based hierarchical

social structures and expectations. Employment practices that require a high degree of

conformity and sexist practices at work are some of examples. Although some of these factors

were the same ones that led them to leave the country, re-experiencing them again and again in

different developmental stages and contexts was difficult for participants, especially when their

motivation for a North American education was to circumvent these social practices.

In addition, these practices bothered the participants even when they were not directly

implicated, and noticing these practices was enough to evoke distress. This finding is consistent

with Pedersen (1990) who argued that reentry difficulty involves moral values that may not be

honored in the home environment. Indeed, participants' views were often invalidated by people

who had little international experience as was the case of a participant who was frustrated with

other women's lack of consciousness at being targets of sex discrimination at work. This

dynamic further contributed to their frustration and alienation.

Newly Acquired Identity as North American Educated Women

In addition to the same challenges that existed prior to their international education,

participants in this study struggled with contradictory messages about their North American

education. On the one hand, a North American education and English proficiency are prized in

the global economy and discourses on the internationalization of education (Johnstone & Lee,

2014; Sidhu, 2006), to the point that Japan has adopted "all Japanese acquire a working

knowledge" as a national goal for the 21st century (Prime Ministers' Commission, cited in

Kobayashi, 2007). On the other hand, English proficiency is not an important criterion for career

advancement except for "mostly male elite business and engineering employees" who "are

already in good standing regardless of their English levels" (Kobayashi, 2007, p. 64). Thus,

although a handful of women in this study succeeded to secure a career as a global elite, for

others, variables such as their sex, age, lack of Japanese work experience impeded the realization

of their career aspirations.

Furthermore, women in this study equivocally talked about the public perception of

Western-educated women as *namaiki*—too assertive, ambitions, and impertinent. The effects of

this perception is best understood in light of social psychology literature on stereotyping and

discrimination (Fiske, 1998). That is, these negative stereotypes were assigned indiscriminately

to North American educated women, regardless of their individual variations. As such, those

participants who were introverted or wanted to prioritize family roles over their career, did not

fall under these stereotypical characteristics; yet, people in their lives only saw their educational

background and did not try to learn about their unique experiences and characteristics. Once

labeled, the ambiguous benefits of their North American education and English proficiency

stimulated jealousy and a sense of inferiority among those around them. As a result, some of the

women experienced discrimination and bullying at work, while these negative stereotypes

affected how men saw their desirability as a potential spouse.

Additionally, once assigned, stereotypes are notoriously resistant to change (Fiske, 1998).

This characteristic was illustrated by the dilemma of women who experienced workplace

bullying and discrimination. If they stand up for themselves against unfair treatments, they end

up confirming the stereotype that they are too assertive; if they remain silent, they end up

perpetuating these practices and stereotypes by rendering themselves invisible.

Professional Women

The present study also revealed contradictions that are inherent in being a professional

and a woman in Japan. On the one hand, professional positions traditionally reserved for men are

now slowly opening up to women, and North American educated women are well placed to fill

them. However, as one of the participants aptly noted, the work culture remains aimed at

"middle-aged men" who can devote long working hours to show their loyalty to their companies

while their wives take care of their basic physical needs.

On the other hand, while working like middle-aged men, professional women were

simultaneously expected to perform tasks in line with gender roles, such as serving tea and

taking care of subordinates' emotional needs. Akiko's quote, in which her employer bragged

about her English proficiency while having her serve tea to a customer, shows a striking

resemblance to a quote from Ichimoto's study (2007). In this quote, a Japanese woman who was

a pursuing postgraduate degree in Australia talked about what it means to be a professional and a

woman in Japan:

> 'Professionalism' here in Australia doesn't mean something different for men and
>
> women. Both have to be 'thoroughly professional' in every sense. In Japanese society, on
>
> the other hand, wherever we are and whatever we do, 'being a woman' makes things
>
> different. For example, when my clients need me as an interpreter for a dinner occasion, I
>
> will also be seated at the dinner table and eat with them. If my clients are men, then I will
>
> be definitely expected to pour *Sake* (Japanese rice wine) for them, which is not part of my
>
> work as an interpreter. I tell you why…because I am a woman and they think 'serving' at
>
> the dinner table is part of women's job even though I am a professional interpreter. If I
>
> refuse to do this, I am not likely to get any more contracts from them (Ichimoto, 2007, p.
>
> 261).

This contradiction reminds us how Kelsky (2001) described Japanese women who seek

international study as "ambiguously empowered"—marginalized as women but have the

privilege to pursue international education. It seems that North American educated Japanese

women continue to reside in this contradictory state, where they are privileged enough to hold a

professional status but marginalized as women. Pointing to this contradiction, Aronsson (2014)

stated that the Japanese workplace did not get "de-gendered but re-gendered" by neoliberalism

and globalization (p. 230). Therefore, their reentry experience is inherently tied to mixed

messages and impossible expectations borne out of these contradictions.

Age

In addition to gender, age played a significant role in participants' process of pursuing

their international education and returning to Japan. The impact of age on their motivation for

leaving Japan was particularly pronounced for those who left Japan around the age of 30. This is

consistent with other studies on Japanese women seeking international education, which

highlighted that women felt "pressed for time" (Kobayashi, 2007, p. 67) as they had the sense of

the imminent "marriageable age" and their expendability at work (Ichimoto, 2007, p. 253).

The current study extended the literature by elucidating that age was not only a push

factor, but a factor that 'pulled' them back to Japan. That is, some participants gave up on

extending their sojourn because they felt pressed for time to reestablish their career and to enter

into the 'marriage market' in Japan. Despite that Japanese women are in general getting married

later and remain in the labour force longer, explicit ageism existed in Japanese hiring practice,

which was clearly intersecting with sexism. Furthermore, age added another layer of challenge

for women in this study in light of existing stereotypes of North American women; the older they

were and the longer they stayed in North America, the more likely they were seen to be as

namaiki and non-moldable to Japanese society.

Family Role

The Japanese model of working, which is designed for middle-aged men, made it

difficult for women in this study to maintain or envision having family roles while holding

professional positions. Those who adhered to their family values choose to leave work or work

under financially unfavorable conditions, resulting in underemployment. Recent statistics confer

this point. According to the report by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2012), 54% of

Japanese women who gave birth to their first child quit work immediately before or after giving

birth. "I wanted to keep my job but maintaining work and childcare was difficult" was the

second highest reason (35.3%) endorsed by these women followed by "I wanted to focus on

childrearing" (40.7%).

Resistance, Resilience, and Growth

Despite numerous challenges, participants in this study constructed their stories as that of resistance, resilience, and growth. In fact, the notion of conformity and non-conformity runs as the undercurrent of the plotline. Participants in this study described their reason for seeking an international education as an act of resistance to a gendered life course in Japan. This is consistent with literature that described international mobility for women as "transgressive and transformative" (Kelsky, 2001, p 4) and "biographical solution" (Doherty & Singh, 2007, p. 119). The present study expands on the literature by showing that many of them continued this resistance by trying to extend their sojourn.

Further, once participants returned, their reentry experience was characterized by their continuing negotiation with societal norms. They engaged in a variety of coping strategies that fell along the continuum of conformity and nonconformity. On the side of non-conformity, a few participants willingly accepted backlash to adhere to their values, while others chose to disengage and withdraw from the reentry environments. Many of them sought further career development opportunities and relied on support systems in both host and home countries. The desire to return to North America was both an internal resource to sustain themselves in Japan and an actual strategy to yet again exit the country. Close to the end of the continuum, some participants chose to keep their educational attainment hidden in an effort to fit in to their reentry environments. Reentry literature focuses on the psychological effects of these various ways women chose to position themselves along the continuum—depression, anxiety, frustration, and disengagement. Rather than treating them as characteristics that reside within individuals, this study illuminated the dynamic interactions between individuals' values and identities, feedback from their environments, and societal factors.

The acts of resistance and the accompanying struggles came with valuable personal growth. When participants were asked to reflect on their entire journey of intercultural experience, they equivocally reported positive impacts on their development. Specifically, consistent with other studies (e.g., Tannenbaum, 2007: Uehara, 1986), participants in this study reported changed worldviews, as they came to value diversity and appreciate family and friendships. Additionally, participants gained self-confidence by successfully meeting demanding academic requirements as international students, whereas the North American educational environment was a haven for those who felt constrained by the Japanese educational system. A similar finding was reported by Ichimoto (2007), who described Australian higher education as "confidence-building" (p. 13) and in essence "therapeutic" for Japanese women (p. 14). In fact, it is this confidence that later helped them to withstand various reentry difficulties, and become the story they live by.

The fact that women attain personal growth and resiliency through international education, which they framed as an act of resistance, confronts how reentry 'adjustment' is defined in the literature. In fact, the literature continuously fails to address the issue of adjustment *to what*, and the absence of this discussion makes conspicuous the underlying assumption that the adjustment to the dominant society is desirable. By contrast, feminist psychologists have long critiqued this type of assumption prevalent in mainstream psychology literature, which contributes to perpetuate the status quo (Sprague, 2005). Thus, maladjustment in feminist psychology is signs of strength and the goal of feminist psychotherapy (Enns, 2004; Wyche & Rice, 1997). The present study revealed that women fought the pressure to adjust to traditional gender role expectations and a hierarchical society from which they tried to escape. An example of a participant who had the "strong volition" not to readjust to Japanese society is a

case in point. Although she self-diagnosed as having an adjustment disorder, what might have

underlined her self-label is her vehement rejection of an unjust society, an act of *dis-order*. Then,

any attempts that purportedly aimed to assist her adjustment would undermine her whole

journey.

Studying Up: The View of Contemporary Japan

According to standpoint theory, gaining understanding of a particular group of women is

only a means to an end, which is to 'study up'. That is, a good standpoint theory goes beyond

ethnographical account of women's experiences, but to use their insights to map out social

practices and relations that maintains power relations (Sprague, 2005). Then, what is the view of

contemporary Japan seen from the standpoint of North American educated women? Through the

reading and rereading of their narratives, unspoken stories of Japanese men and women surface.

Although these stories are partial and told in the subtext of the experience of the protagonist (i.e.,

participant in this study), they are informative in understanding the mechanisms that design and

maintain social hierarchy.

The first story is that of men living under the constraints of traditional masculine roles.

They are pressured to follow the 'societal rail', which socializes them into becoming a 'corporate

fighter' and 'breadwinner'. They are intimidated by North American educated women as a

subordinate, coworker, or potential spouse. Consideration of rapid social changes put these

men's lives in context. According to Suzuki, Ito, Ishida, Nihei, & Maruyama (2010) the inflows

of individualism, neoliberalism, and globalization in the mid 1990's led to the collapse of

traditional social safety nets such as seniority-based employment and extended family systems.

As a result, the career path for 'salaried men' becomes unstable and unpredictable (Aronsson,

2014). Simultaneously, more corporations started to require English proficiency for managerial

positions, and to determine employees' salaries based on skills and performance instead of

seniority (Keizer, 2010). Thus, it could be argued that those men, who saw North American

educated women as a threat, might have felt that their career and social roles were in jeopardy.

Another story is that of Japanese women without North American degrees. This study

revealed how employment practices divide women into professional and support staff, and that

support staff positions afford little opportunities for career advancement. That they turn to

traditional gender roles in married life is reasonable in a society where one-third of single

dwelling women live under the poverty line (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2011).

Participants in this study perceived these women's life course as one to avoid and subvert, and

yet sought their support and solidarity for emancipation. However, women who were educated in

Japan either did not see the inequality impinged on themselves without the vantage point that

North American educated women had, or they saw North American educated women as being

unfairly privileged. In response, North American educated women came to regard them with

disappointment, perhaps with slight disdain, which only widened the rift between the two groups.

Is there any common ground between these two groups of women? A hint can be found

in the accumulating evidence indicating that turning to the 'West' for emancipation is a common

phenomenon not only for participants in this study but also for the rest of Japanese women. It has

been documented that a high proportion of Japanese women engage in learning English

regardless of their occupational status, and that English language schools in Japan effectively use

gendered marketing strategies that conflate the West with the images of an alternative life and

career path (Kelsky, 2001; Kitamura, 2011). Kobayashi, (2007) studied some of these women

who embarked on a short-term English study in Canada, not necessarily for career advancement,

but to seize a once in a lifetime opportunity before returning to a gendered life course in Japan.

The sociocultural factors underlying their anxiety and discontent is the same as those that affected the lives of participants in this study.

The prevalence of the longing for the 'West' and English language among Japanese women cast doubt on an alternative, essentialist way the results of this study could be potentially interpreted; namely, only the women who are innately rebellious and *namaiki* desire and seek North American education that further reinforces their predisposition, therefore it is natural that they are judged to be *namaiki* and experience difficult reentry to Japan. If this interpretation is true, then the syllogism goes that that the majority of Japanese women is latently rebellious and *namaiki*. Certainly, this viewpoint further disputes the prevailing, also essentialist view of Japanese women as docile and submissive (Charlebois, 2013).

Despite their common struggles and desires, women are divided based on other identity categories (Lorde, 1984), The new category that is emerging may be the one that divides between those who succeed and "fail to ride the wave of English study for personal empowerment" (Kobayashi, 2007, p. 70). The present study revealed how this new category, along with traditional ones that split women (e.g., support staff vs. professional staff), divert their attention from an underlying inequality and prevent them from working together for social change that benefits all.

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

The proposed research responded to a number of calls within the discipline of counselling psychology. First, in their review of the literature on counselling international students, Yoon and Portman (2004) identified areas that warrant future research, including reentry to home countries and female students' experiences. Second, Nilsson et al. (2007) argued that as a

profession that is rooted in and dedicated to vocational psychology, counselling psychologists should conduct more research on international careers in order to respond to an increase in international mobility and the globalizing workplace. Lastly, a number of authors have highlighted the greater need for understanding sojourners' reentry experiences in order to provide pre-reentry programs that accommodate their needs (Arthur, 2004; Martin & Harrell, 2004; Yoon & Portman, 2004).

In particular, narrative inquiry's attention to chronology allowed the researcher to identify threads that run through the participants' entire journey of pursuing international education and returning to Japan. Although research using such retroactive accounts is often critiqued when evaluated from a positivist epistemology, Riessman (2002) stated that narrative inquiry attests not to the truths of facts, but truths of experience. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) further explained that "experience grows out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences (p. 2). The present study elucidated how participants' reentry experience grew out of their pre-departure and sojourn experiences, which also led to other experiences that are intertwined with their intersecting identities. Meanings that they ascribe to these experiences have real effects on their cognition, affect, and behavior.

Another strength of this study is the use of a critical lens informed by feminist standpoint epistemology. Grounded on the critical-ideological paradigm, this study had explicit orientation to social justice. According to Morrow (2005), there are two types of validity by which critical-ideological qualitative research needs to be evaluated. *Consequential validity* refers to "the success with which research achieves its goals of social and political change" by "increasing consciousness about issues of power and oppression", whereas *transgressive validity* lies in "the ability of the research to incite discourse and contribute to a more critical social science" (p.

253). Therefore, this study's strengths lie in the extent to which it succeeded at shedding light on gender and power relations embedded in the contexts of international study and reentry experience, a discourse that is critically lacking in the literature.

Relatedly, the goal of standpoint epistemology is to expose "the context or set of practices that produce and reproduce taken-for-granted social categories" (Sprague, 2005, p. 187). A rich description gathered for this study exposed such contextual factors and practices. For example, not only did this study make visible a public perception of Western-educated women as *namaiki*, it also delineated a set of practices, including workplace bullying and stereotyping, that renders this socially constructed category as natural and generalizable to all North American educated women.

The last strength relates to member checking. The majority of participants—ten out of 14—responded to the researcher's request for member checking and they verified re-storied narratives composed by the researcher. This process aimed to ensure the quality of data analysis and translation, and also to safeguard against misrepresentation of their experiences. Participants' responses indicated that not only did the narratives capture their experience, but reading them was in and of itself an empowering process.

Limitations

Despite its strengths, this study is not without limitations. First, half of the participants were interviewed via Skype. Although this mode of data collection allowed access to a participant pool that would have been otherwise inaccessible, their timelines were constructed by the researcher. Participants who were interviewed face-to-face seemed to have enjoyed this interactive component; however, participants interviewed on Skype did not have the opportunity to comment on their timelines during the interviews. However, the fact that an equal number of

participants from two groups responded to the researcher's request for member checking

suggests that she succeeded at establishing a reasonably good relationship with participants

interviewed on Skype.

Second, although feminist standpoint theory's premise of knowledge arising from

intersecting identities, all participants in this study were heterosexual and social class was not

explicitly addressed. Although demographic information collected for this study included

parents' educational attainment and participants' annual income prior to and after their sojourn, a

systematic consideration of social class proven to be difficult. Participants' class is not limited to

these indices of socioeconomic status, but also influenced by other social capitals such as

whether or not they live with their parents, reside in cosmopolitan or suburban areas, or have a

spouse to support them.

Third, as standpoint epistemology claims that situated knowledge is partial and historical,

the results of this study may not be applicable to other populations. Women who returned to

Japan over 5 years ago, or North American educated women of different nationalities who

returned to their home countries, may have unique perspectives. Furthermore, the data collection

for the present study took place several months before the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami

disaster. This event might have changed Japanese international students' reasons to return or not

to return to Japan (e.g., desire to stay to close to family, to stay away from the nuclear disaster

zone), at least immediately after the incident.

Lastly, participants in this study spent their school age prior to or around the mid-1990's.

Since then, Japan saw the rise of individualism, neoliberalism, and globalization (Suzuki et al.,

2010). The educational system has also seen considerable reform since 2002, producing a new

generation who grew up in a more laissez-faire, less competitive school culture (Takayama,

2008). Consequently, the results of this study may not be generalizable to this younger generation.

Implications and Recommendations

To be clear, the findings of this study should not be interpreted as evidence to discourage women from pursuing international studies. Although this study exposed gendered sociocultural barriers that existed before and after their international studies, it is not the researcher's intention to take away their valuable means to resist gendered expectations and life course. On the contrary, the present study indicated that these women, through their struggles, gained personal growth and saw their international experiences as turning points in their lives. Thus, the recommendations that follow are aimed at assisting individuals to turn this important means of resistance into an empowering and transformative strategy for social change.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

Although the present research did not aim to test the validity of existing models of reentry adjustment, the results raised several questions. For example, expectation model rests on the assumption that reentry is hard because "information on and preparation for reentry are not available" (Kostohryz et al., 2014, p. 317). On the contrary, participants in this study did have some expectations of what it would be like to go back to Japan. These expectations were formed based on their experience of visits home and pre-reentry job searches, or what they heard from friends who had returned to Japan. Future research should investigate a more nuanced examination of the type of expectations sojourners had and did not have. Specifically, future studies should pay attention not only to expectations about potential challenges but also expectations about how they might cope with them and from where they can draw support.

In addition, future research on reentry and acculturation will be enriched by incorporating gender, sociocultural factors, and analysis of power. In particular, the impact of push and pull factors on cultural identities and acculturation strategies one espouses during their sojourn and subsequent reentry adjustment periods should be examined. Further, rather than assuming adjustment as adaptive and healthy, future research should investigate how individuals negotiate power with their environment during the course of cross-cultural transitioning.

The present study revealed the prevalent desire for participants to return to North America. Anecdotally, during the recruitment for the present study, four women who had actually moved back to North America contacted the researcher, eager to speak of their difficult reentry experience and decision to return to North America. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is only one study that investigated individuals whose return to their home countries led them to move back to the United States, where they originally pursued their international studies (Christofi & Thompson, 2007). Given that the present study illuminated Japanese women's sense of being 'out of place' underlying their desire to return to North America, future research should look into how their continuing search for a place of belonging will unfold.

Furthermore, future study should also investigate the stereotypes of North American educated women that this study elucidated. Social psychology studies on general population' views of women and men who studied in North America might be helpful to determine the extent to which the stereotypes reported in this study are gender-based.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

This research has a number of implications for practitioners in both the host and home countries. As for professionals who work with international students in the host institutions, the

role of gender, societal factors, and their intersecting identities should be inquired when they try

to understand their decision to seek international studies. In accordance with Arthur and

Popadiuk (2010), this understanding is essential in assisting them to navigate their educational

experience, acculturation process, career development, as well as their decision to stay or return

after their studies are completed.

The findings of this study were consistent with various estimates suggesting that a

significant proportion of international students desire to stay in North America upon completion

of their study, though the majority of them eventually return to their home countries (Arthur &

Nunes, 2014; Leung, 2007). Then, as Spencer-Rodgers (2000) suggested, career guidance for

international students should concomitantly address two tiers of their career needs: the

immediate goal of gaining work experience in the host country and the distant goal of

transporting their international experience to their home countries.

As for the immediate needs, the present study indicated that returning to the home

country out of choice could set up a vicious circle of difficult reentry adjustment. Thus, helping

international students to secure a work visa and employment is of paramount importance for

those who wish to gain work experience in the host country. For the long-term needs, Arthur

Nunes (2014) recommended that career counselors assist international students to explore ways

to present their international experiences meaningfully to employers in the home country. The

present research demonstrated that this exploration should take into consideration the

intersection of gender role expectations and public perception of North American education in

their home countries.

Although several authors have articulated the need for reentry training, the results of the

present study raised a question about what that training should entail. While existing models lack

a solid theoretical and empirical foundation, common reentry training tends to focus on individuals' expectations, career planning, and interpersonal relationships (Szkudlarek, 2010). Instead, the present research suggests that effective reentry training should involve helping sojourners to understand the effect of power structures and relations on their reentry experience and to identify allies and support, as well as coping strategies. One promising method of supporting their reentry experiences is a narrative-based intervention that attends to sociocultural factors (Combs & Freedman, 2012). Participants in this study resoundingly appreciated how the interview afforded them an opportunity to reflect on and tell stories about the process of pursuing international education and returning home, thus allowing them to make meaning of their journey.

Finally, the findings of the present study have implications for policymakers, employers, educators, and career professionals in Japan. Many scholars in different fields have long problematized traditional employment practices that no longer fit with the needs of changing economic and social realities (Keizer, 2010; Kimura, 2007; Watanabe & Herr, 1993). These practices include: the value placed on the prestige of universities instead of unique skills and expertise that individuals possess; prolonged process of new graduate hiring; and the clear division of new graduates (新卒採用) and mid career positions (中途採用); the unforgiving perception of the gap years; and barriers to maintain work and family roles. Moreover, while these practices are still present, new trends such as the increase of non-permanent workers serves to enlarge economic disparity. These practices affected participants, but they also put a strain on both men and women in a rapidly changing society. Therefore, a concerted effort for social change is needed.

Original Contribution

Historically, the literature on international students has neglected the role of gender on their intercultural experience. Additionally, compared to the initial adjustment to the host country, little attention has been paid to sojourners' reentry experience. The present study contributed to the literature by filling these gaps. In particular, by attending to contextual factors and the chronology of their experiences, this study shed light on how their pursuit of an international education and reentry experience was inextricably intertwined with their social locations and gendered sociocultural practices.

Moreover, consistent with bell hooks (2004), inquiring into the border-crossing and re-crossing experience of these Japanese women provided a site for "radical openness and possibilities" (p. 159), that help us understand many contradictions that exist in the Japanese society in the era of globalization. Speaking of feminist standpoint theory, bell hooks (2004) used a metaphor of 'home' to illustrate how her own struggles of living in the margin as a black feminist scholar-activist gave her a critical view of social relations. This metaphor of home captures strikingly well the experience of women in this study.

> I had to leave that space I called home to move beyond boundaries, yet I needed also to return there…. Indeed the very meaning of "home" changes with experience.... At times, home is nowhere. At times, one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes seeing reality, frontiers of difference. One confronts and accepts dispersal and fragmentation as part of the construction of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become, an order that does not demand forgetting…. (p. 155).

Participants in this study left home to move beyond the boundaries that limit their choices and opportunities. In this process, they struggled with many challenges in both home and host countries, through which they negotiated new identities and searched for a place to belong. The stories that they constructed also offered us insights into how social relations and power structures operate in the contemporary Japan. In sum, this study offered a radically new way of looking at reentry experience, with corresponding implications for future research, practice, and social change that goes beyond the lives of women studied.

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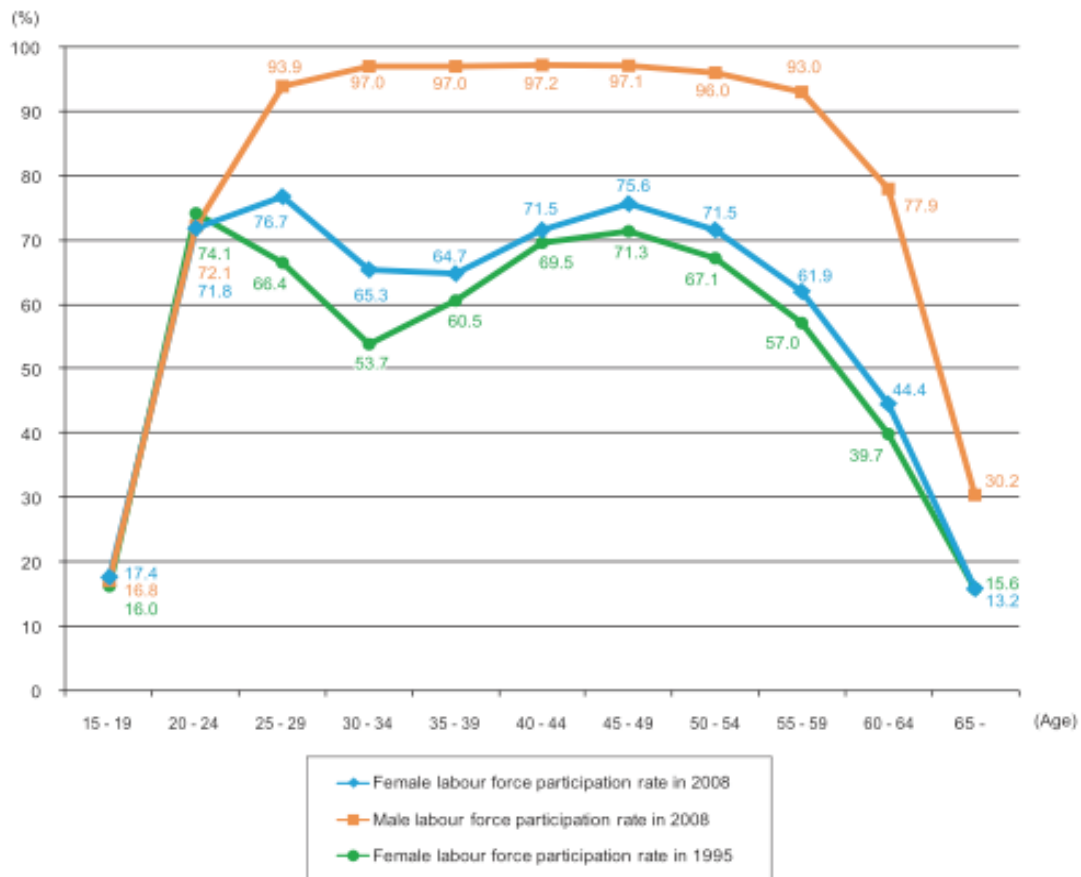Yoshida, T., Matsumoto, D., Akiyama, T., Moriyoshi, N., Furuiye, A., Ishii, C., & Franklin, B.

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Appendix A: Labour Force Participation Rate by Gender

Note: From "Labour Force Survey" by Ministry of Internal Affairs (2008)

Appendix B: The Application for Ethics Approval for Human Subject Research

HB 35·0610
CB

🦫 McGill

Application for Ethics Approval for Human Subject Research
(please refer to the Application Guidelines (www.mcgill.ca/researchoffice/compliance/human/) before completing this form)

Project Title: Japanese women's reentry to Japan after studying in North America: A Narrative Inquiry

Principal Investigator: Kaori Wada   **Dept:** Educational and Counselling Psychology

Phone #: 514-608-4716   **Fax #:** 514-398-6968   **Email:** kaori.wada@mail.mcgill.ca
                                                           (Students must provide their McGill email)

Mailing Address (if different than Dept.):

Status: Faculty ___   Postdoctoral Fellow ___   Other (specify) _____
         Ph.D. Student _X__   Master's Student ___   Undergraduate ___

Type of Research: Faculty Research ___   Thesis _X__
                     Honours Thesis ___   Independent Study Project ___
                     Course Assignment (specify course name and #)_____
                     Other (specify) _____

Faculty Supervisor (for student PIs): Ada Sinacore, PhD   **Email:** ada.sinacore@mcgill.ca

Co- Investigators/Other Researchers (list name/status/affiliation):

List all funding sources for this project and project titles (if different from the above). Indicate the Principal Investigator of the award if not yourself.

Awarded:
Social Science and and Humanities Research Council of Canada
Fonds québécois de la recherche sur la société et la culture Bourse de doctorat en recherché
Margaret Gillett Graduate Research Award (Institute for Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies, McGill University)

Pending: N/A

Principal Investigator Statement: I will ensure that this project is conducted in accordance with the policies and procedures governing the ethical conduct of research involving human subjects at McGill University. I allow release of my nominative information as required by these policies and procedures.

Principal Investigator Signature: _____   Date: _9 · June 2010_

Faculty Supervisor Statement: I have read and approved this project and affirm that it has received the appropriate academic approval. I will ensure that the student investigator is aware of the applicable policies and procedures governing the ethical conduct of human subject research at McGill University and I agree to provide all necessary supervision to the student. I allow release of my nominative information as required by these policies and procedures.

Faculty Supervisor Signature: _____   Date: _9 June 2010_

Submit to Lynda McNeil, Research Ethics Officer, McGill University, 1555 Peel Street, 11ᵗʰ floor, Montreal, QC H3A 3L8
tel:514-398-6831   fax:514-398-4644   email :lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca   (version08/08)

Respond directly on this form below each question. Do not delete the text under the question. Do not omit or reorder any questions. Answer each question.

1. Purpose of the Research

Describe the proposed project and its objectives, including the research questions to be investigated (one page maximum). What is the expected value or benefits of the research? How do you anticipate disseminating the results (e.g. thesis, presentations, internet, film, publications)?

In the age of globalization of higher education, North American universities are exerting increased efforts and resources to the recruit international students, capitalizing on the perceived prestige of North American degrees and the English language (Sidhu, 2006). Meanwhile, the trend in student mobility has shifted from elite male students sponsored by their home countries to an expansion of female students, who embark on North American degrees as "biographical solutions" in the hope of realizing imagined future careers and new identities (Doherty & Singh, 2007).

Although discourse on female international students in North American universities is emerging, little is known about what happens to these women when they return to their home countries. Whereas reentry transition is known to accompany significant distress and identity crises regardless of gender, evidence suggests that female international students experience more reentry difficulties than male students (e.g., Brabant et al, 1991; Yoshida et al. 2002). As a result, it has been theorized that women's changed values and behaviors (e.g., independence and assertiveness), as well as their acquired foreign education and language skills, are perceived as threats to traditional male dominant hierarchy in their home countries (Gama & Pederson, 1977; Ono & Piper, 2004). However, gender and social contexts have largely been ignored in the reentry literature, and no research to this date specifically investigated how a North American degree impacts the lives of women upon reentry to their home countries.

Thus, the proposed dissertation investigates one particular group's experience of returning home after completing a higher education degree in North America: Japanese women. It has been well documented that a variety of gender barriers exist in the area of education and work in Japan (Suzuki, 2007). By studying this group, the proposed research aims to illuminate the role of gender and social contexts in the reentry experience of foreign educated Japanese women. Narrative inquiry will be used to address the following question: how do Japanese women, who completed a university degree in North America, construct their stories of the process of pursuing their degree and returning to Japan?

The proposed research aims to respond to a number of recent calls within the discipline of counseling psychology. First, in their review of the literature on counseling international students, Yoon and Portman (2004) identified areas that warrant future research, including reentry to home countries and female students' experience. Second, Nilsson et al. (2007) reviewed articles on career development with an international focus published in four counseling journals. As a profession that is rooted and dedicated to vocational psychology, the authors argued that more research on international careers is needed in order to respond to an increase in international mobility and the globalizing workplace. Although there is some research that investigated international students' career needs during their study (e.g., Reynolds, & Constantine, 2007; Shen, & Herr, 2004) none has looked at their career outcomes. Third, a number of authors have highlighted the greater need to provide pre-reentry programs that accommodate the needs of returning international students (Arthur, 2004; Martin & Harrell, 2004; Yoon, & Portman, 2004). Gaining a clear understanding of international students' reentry experience will advance knowledge in multicultural counselling and help counselling service providers to better serve international women students.

2. Recruitment of Subjects/Location of Research

Describe the subject population and how and from where they will be recruited. If applicable, attach a copy of any advertisement, letter, flier, brochure or oral script used to solicit potential subjects (including information sent to third parties). Describe the setting in which the research will take place. Describe any compensation subjects may receive for participating.

Submit to Lynda McNeil, Research Ethics Officer, McGill University, 1555 Peel Street, 11ᵗʰ floor, Montreal, QC H3A 3L8 ;tel:514-398-6831 fax:514-398-4644 email:lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca

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Participants recruited for this study will be Japanese women who (a) have not lived outside of Japan for more than one year prior to the age of 18; (b) have lived in North America during which time they started and completed at least one university degree; and (c) have returned to Japan for at least one year but not more than five years.

Approximately 12-15 participants will be recruited for through the distribution of recruitment materials and a snowball sampling technique, in which the researcher contacts individuals who can identify potential participants (Creswell, 2007). Specifically, the researcher will contact by email international students offices and Japanese student associations at various North American universities (see the email message in Appendix A), asking them to forward the attached recruitment flyer to their Japanese alumna (see the recruitment letter in Appendix B).

In addition, the researcher will make use of virtual communities by posting a recruitment message (Appendix C) on the websites of Japanese communities in major North American cities, and on social networking services (SNS) such as Facebook and Mixi (a popular Japanese SNS that is similar to Facebook). These SNS host a number of virtual 'groups' or 'communities' for Japanese people who are studying or have studied abroad. The recruitment letter and message will contain an email address specifically created for the study (reentry@gmail.com) so that potential participants can directly contact the researcher. A McGill email account will not be used due to technological problems in converting written Japanese text. The researcher will respond the potential participants who contacted her through SNS with a detailed email message that describe the study (Appendix D) and procedures for scheduling an interview.

Furthermore, at the end of each interview, the participants will be asked if they know of others who might be interested in participating in the study; if they do, the researcher will provide them with her cards containing my contact information and ask them to have the potential participants contact her directly. Participants will receive a 2000-yen gift card (approximately $22) as compensation for their time.

3. Other Approvals

When doing research with various distinct groups of subjects (e.g. school children, cultural groups, institutionalized people, other countries), organizational/community/governmental permission is sometimes needed. If applicable, how will this be obtained? Include copies of any documentation to be sent.

N/A

4. Methodology/Procedures

Provide a sequential description of the methods and procedures to be followed to obtain data. Describe all methods that will be used (e.g. fieldwork, surveys, interviews, focus groups, standardized testing, video/audio taping). Attach copies of questionnaires or draft interview guides, as appropriate.

Methodology: In order to Japanese women's experience of reentry, a quantitative methodology will be employed. In particular, narrative inquiry was selected as the method for the proposed study. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research approach that is best suited for gaining an understanding of people's lives and the meanings that they ascribe to their storied experiences. In addition, recognizing the social and interpersonal nature of people's lives, narrative inquiry attends to contexts in which the story unfolds (Cladinin & Rosiek, 2007).

Procedure: Once the informed consent (Appendix E) has been completed, the participants who meet the criteria for the study will be asked to complete a demographic information sheet (Appendix F). Then, the participants will be asked, with the help of the researcher, to create a timeline that chronologically depicts their educational and occupational history (Appendix G). Interviews will be carried out face-to-face from the summer of 2010, in Japanese cities that the researcher is planning to visit. With those participants for whom face-to-face interviews are not possible due to the location or schedule, interviews will be conducted via Skype. An interview guide (Appendix H) was developed for the purpose of this study, which was designed in English and then translated into Japanese. All interviews will be conducted in Japanese.

5. Potential Harms and Risk

a) Describe any known or foreseeable harms, if any, that the subjects or others might be subject to during or as a result of the research. Harms may be psychological, physical, emotional, social, legal, economic, or political.

There are no significant foreseeable risks. Participants may experience a certain level of psychological discomfort when answering questions about their experiences.

b) In light of the above assessment of potential harms, indicate whether you view the risks as acceptable given the value or benefits of the research.

Given the minimal harms that may arise, the potential risks of this research are deemed acceptable considering the potential benefits.

c) Outline the steps that may be taken to reduce or eliminate these risks. If deception is used, justify the use of the deception and indicate how subjects will be debriefed or justify why they will not be debriefed.

It is clearly stated in the informed consent form that participants may decline to answer any questions that make them feel uncomfortable or withdraw from the study at any point. Debriefing questions were included in the interview guide in order to process the participant's reactions to the interview. In case of any unforeseen psychological discomfort, the researcher has experience in psychological interviewing and thus will have the necessary skills to address problems that may arise. If necessary, the researcher will make a referral to an appropriate counseling service.

6. Privacy and Confidentiality

Describe the degree to which the anonymity of subjects and the confidentiality of data will be assured and the specific methods to be used for this, both during the research and in the release of findings. This includes the use of data coding systems, how and where data will be stored, who will have access to it, what will happen to the data after the study is finished, and the potential use of the data by others. Indicate if there are any conditions under which privacy or confidentiality cannot be guaranteed (e.g. focus groups), or, if confidentiality is not an issue in this research, explain why.

All the data, including audio recordings of the interviews, hard copies of interview transcriptions, and electronic files of the transcriptions, will be kept in a locked cabinet in the primary researcher's office at McGill University. Consent forms and demographic forms, which contain identifying information, will be secured separately and only the primary investigator will have access to them. The demographic forms and interview data will be number coded, and all identifying information will be removed from the interview transcripts. For member checking, the researchers' summaries of participants' narratives will be emailed to the participant in a password-protected attachment. The totality of the data will be kept in storage, with the exception of the audio files, which will be erased upon the completion of transcription.

7. Informed Consent Process

Describe the oral and/or written procedures that will be followed to obtain informed consent from the subject. Attach all consent documents, including information sheets and scripts for oral consents. If written consent will not be obtained, justification must be provided.

Face-to-Face Interviews: At the onset of the interview the researcher will explain the goal of the research, voluntary nature of the participation, and confidentiality. The researcher will then invite them to ask me any questions they might have about the research process or about the researcher. Once the participants understand the nature of the study, they will be asked to fill out a consent form and a demographic information sheet. Then, they will receive a compensation of 2,000 yen (approximately $22) for their participation in the study. At this point, the researcher will also reiterate that they can withdraw from the interview at anytime or decline answering any questions with which they are not comfortable, without jeopardizing their compensation. Once all this is done, the researcher will start audio recording and ask the opening question that invites their stories. In adherence to narrative tradition, the researcher will give much

Submit to Lynda McNeil, Research Ethics Officer, McGill University, 1555 Peel Street, 11ʸ floor, Montreal, QC H3A 3L8 :tel:514-398-6831   fax:514-398-4644   email :lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca

(version08/08)

latitude to the participants by respecting their flow in storytelling (Murray, 2008) and use the interview guides flexibly and complementarily, rather than in a rigid, sequential manner. Once the interview is completed, the researcher will ask debriefing questions to invite the participant's reactions to the interview.

Interviews via Skype: The researcher will first schedule a brief phone or Skype interview in which I will explain the goal of the study, the voluntary nature of the participation, and confidentiality. It is also during this unrecorded conversation the participants' questions will be answered. After the meeting, the researcher will send the participants a consent form and a demographic sheet via fax or email, based on a method of their choosing, which they will fill out and return to the researcher via fax or as email attachments. For those who prefer to send them as email attachments, I will set up a password for the demographic information sheet, and they will be instructed to scan a signed consent form. As soon as the forms are secured, a Skype meeting will be scheduled. At the onset of the interview, the researcher will inform them that they can withdraw from the interview at any time or choose not to answer any questions, but they will still receive a gift card by mail later day. The subsequent interview procedure is the same as the face-to-face interviews, except that the researcher will use the Skype feature that allows me to audio record the interviews. After the interview, the compensation will be promptly mailed to the participants.

8. Other Concerns

a) Indicate if the subjects are a captive population (e.g. prisoners, residents in a center) or are in any kind of conflict of interest relationship with the researcher such as being students, clients, patients or family members. If so, explain how you will ensure that the subjects do not feel pressure to participate or perceive that they may be penalized for choosing not to participate.

The individuals who will participate in this study do not represent a captive population and will not be in any kind of conflict of interest relationship with the researcher or research assistants.

b) Comment on any other potential ethical concerns that may arise during the course of the research.
N/A

There are no foreseen additional concerns that will arise during the course of this research project.

Appendix C: The Approvals from Research Ethics Board

McGill

Research Ethics Board Office
McGill University
1555 Peel Street, 11th floor
Montreal, QC H3A 3L8

Tel: (514) 398-6831
Fax: (514) 398-4644
Ethics website: www.mcgill.ca/researchoffice/compliance/human/

Research Ethics Board II
Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans

REB File #: 35-0610

Project Title: Japanese women's reentry to Japan after studying in North America: A Narrative Inquiry

Principal Investigator: Kaori Wada   **Department:** Educational and Counselling Psychology

Student Status: Pd.D. Student   **Supervisor:** Prof. A. Sinacore

Expedited Review ___x__
Full Review   _____

This project was reviewed on 30 June 2010 by

Ronald Stringer, Ph.D.
Chair, REB II

Approval Period: June 30, 2010- June 29, 2011

This project was reviewed and approved in accordance with the requirements of the McGill University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Subjects and with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.

* All research involving human subjects requires review on an annual basis. A Request for Renewal form should be submitted 2-3 weeks before the above expiry date.
* When a project has been completed or terminated a Final Report form must be submitted.
* Should any modification or other unanticipated development occur before the next required review, the REB must be informed and any modification can't be initiated until approval is received.

McGill University

ETHICS REVIEW
RENEWAL REQUEST/STUDY CLOSURE FORM

Continuing review of research involving humans requires, at a minimum, the submission of an annual status report to the REB. This form must be completed to request renewal of ethics approval. If a renewal is not received before the expiry date, the project is considered no longer approved and no further research activity may be conducted. When a project has been completed, this form can also be used to officially close the study. To avoid expired approvals and, in the case of funded projects, the freezing of funds, this form should be returned 2-3 weeks before the current approval expires.

REB File #: *# 35 - 0610*
Project Title: *Japanese women's reentry to Japan after studying in North America: A Narrative Inquiry.*
Principal Investigator: *KAORI WADA*
Department / Email: *Educational & Counselling Psychology / kaori.wada@mail.mcgill.ca*
Faculty Supervisor (if student PI): *Ada Sinacore, PhD.*

1. Were there any significant changes made to this research project that have any ethical implications? ___Yes ✓No
   If yes, describe these changes and append any relevant documents that have been revised.

2. Are there any ethical concerns that arose during the course of this research? ___Yes ✓No. If yes, please describe.

3. Have any subjects experienced any adverse events in connection with this research project? ___Yes ✓No
   If yes, please describe.

4. Is this a funded study? ___Yes ___No. If yes, list the agency name and project title and the Principal Investigator of the award if not yourself. This information is necessary to ensure compliance with agency requirements and that there is no interruption in funds *Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada: Doctoral Fellowship*
   ＊FQRSC Bourse de doctorat en recherche
   ＊Margaret Gillett Graduate research Award, McGill University

✓ Check here if this is a request for renewal of ethics approval.

_____ Check here if the study is to be closed and continuing ethics approval is no longer required. A study can be closed when all data collection has been completed and there will be no further contact with participants.

Principal Investigator Signature: _____ Date: *May 17, 2011*

Faculty Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: *18 May 2011*
(if PI is a student)

For Administrative Use	REB:	___REB-I	X REB-II	___REB-III

_____ The closing report of this terminated project has been reviewed

X The continuing review for this project has been reviewed and approved

X Expedited Review   _____ Full Review

Signature of REB Chair or designate: _____ Date: *June 5, 2011*

Approval Period: *June 15, 2011* to *June 14, 2012*

Submit to Lynda McNeil(lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca), Research Ethics Officer, James Administration Building, 845 Sherbrooke Street West suite 429, fax: 398-4644 tel: 398-6831. Electronic submissions with scanned signatures are accepted but must come from the PI's McGill email.

(version 10/10)

McGill University

ETHICS REVIEW
RENEWAL REQUEST/STUDY CLOSURE FORM

Continuing review of research involving humans requires, at a minimum, the submission of an annual status report to the REB. This form must be completed to request renewal of ethics approval. If a renewal is not received before the expiry date, the project is considered no longer approved and no further research activity may be conducted. When a project has been completed, this form can also be used to officially close the study. To avoid expired approvals and, in the case of funded projects, the freezing of funds, this form should be returned 2-3 weeks before the current approval expires.

REB File #: 35-0610
Project Title: Japanese women's re-entry to Japan after studying in North America: a narrative inquiry
Principal Investigator: Kaori WAda
Department / Email: Educational and Counseling Psychology, kaori.wada@mail.mcgill.ca
Faculty Supervisor (if student PI): Ada Sinacore, PhD

1. Were there any significant changes made to this research project that have any ethical implications? ___Yes ✓ No
   If yes, describe these changes and append any relevant documents that have been revised.

2. Are there any ethical concerns that arose during the course of this research? ___ Yes ✓ No. If yes, please describe.

3. Have any subjects experienced any adverse events in connection with this research project? ___ Yes ✓ No
   If yes, please describe.

4. Is this a funded study? ✓ Yes ___No. If yes, list the agency name and project title and the Principal Investigator of the award if not yourself. This information is necessary to ensure compliance with agency requirements and that there is no interruption in funds. *SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship, (2008-2010)*
   FQRSC Bourse de doctoral en recherche (2008-2011)
   ✓ Check here if this is a request for renewal of ethics approval. *McGill Margaret Gillett (2010)*

   ____ Check here if the study is to be closed and continuing ethics approval is no longer required. A study can be closed when all data collection has been completed and there will be no further contact with participants.

Principal Investigator Signature: _____ Date: *April 27, 2012.*

Faculty Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: *1 May, 2012*
(if PI is a student)

For Administrative Use   **REB:** ___REB-I ✗ REB-II ___REB-III

____ The closing report of this terminated project has been reviewed

✗ The continuing review for this project has been reviewed and approved

____ Expedited Review   ____ Full Review

Signature of REB Chair or designate: _____ Date: *May 15, 2012*

Approval Period: *May 15, 2012* to *May 14, 2013*

Submit to Lynda McNeil (lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca), Research Ethics Officer, James Administration Building, 845 Sherbrooke Street West suite 429, fax: 398-4644 tel: 398-6831. Electronic submissions with scanned signatures are accepted but must come from the PI's McGill email.

(version 10/10)

Appendix D: Recruitment Message and Flyer Sent to International Students Offices and

Japanese Student Associations

Dear: [Insert Director's Name]

My name is Kaori Wada, a doctoral candidate from the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology at McGill University, Canada. I am presently conducting a dissertation study entitled; *Japanese women's reentry to Japan after studying in North America: A narrative inquiry,* under the supervision of Ada Sinacore, PhD (Associate Professor in the Counselling Psychology Program at McGill University). This study aims to investigate the experience of Japanese women who returned to Japan after completing a university degree in North America. The results of this study will help to understand the experience of returning to a home country after studying abroad and the role of international education on women's lives.

I would greatly appreciate your help in recruiting participants for this study by forwarding the attached recruitment flyer to Japanese alumna from your university. Individuals who participate in this study will be asked to complete a confidential interview about their reentry experience. The interviews will be conducted either in person in Japan or via Skype, and will take approximately 1.5 hours. Participation is voluntary, and participants will be compensated with a ¥2,000 gift card (approximately $22).

If you have any questions about this research project, please do not hesitate to contact Kaori Wada, M.A. via email at .

Sincerely,

Kaori Wada, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate
Counselling Psychology Program
Department of Counselling Psychology
McGill University

Are you a Japanese woman who has returned to Japan after completing a university degree in North America?

Research Participants Needed

Japanese women who have returned to Japan after completing a university degree in North America are wanted for a study aimed at understanding the experience of reentry to Japan. The results of this study will help to understand the experience of returning to a home country after studying abroad and the role of international education on women's lives.

You are eligible to participate in this study if:
- You have not lived outside of Japan for more than one year prior to the age of 18
- You have lived in North America during which time you started and completed at least one university degree
- You have returned to Japan for at least one year but not more than five years

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a demographic information sheet and participate in a confidential interview about your reentry experience. You will be also asked, with the help of the interviewer, to create a timeline that depict your educational and occupational history. The interview will be conducted either in person in Japan (between mid July to the beginning of August) or via Skype. The interview will be conducted in Japanese, and will be audio recorded. The interview is confidential, and your privacy will be protected. The interview will take approximately 1.5 hours. Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

****Participants will be compensated with a ¥2,000 gift card.*

If you are interested, please contact me at reentrystudy@gmail.com to schedule an interview. You are welcome to write me in Japanese.

Kaori Wada,
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Counseling and Psychology,
McGill University, Montreal, Canada
reentrystudy@gmail.com
REB File #: 35-0610

This study is conducted under the supervision of Ada Sinacore, PhD (Associate Professor in the Counselling Psychology Program at McGill University).

Appendix E: Recruitment Message Posted on Japanese Social Media

北米で学位を取得し、日本に帰国した女性
Research Participants Needed

カナダ・マギル大学の博士課程の学生が、カナダ・アメリカの大学で学位を取得したあと日本に帰国した女性の、日本社会への再適応（Reentry adjustment）をテーマに研究をしています。この研究は、留学後の日本社会への再適応の課程、現代日本人女性における大学留学の役割を明らかにすることを目的としています。

そこで、現在、１時間半ほどのインタビューに参加してくれる日本人女性を募集しています。参加いただいた方全員に 2,000 円のギフトカードを謝礼として差し上げます。

参加条件
本研究の対象になるのは、次の条件を満たす方を対象としています。

1. 18 歳になる以前に日本以外の国に一年以上住んだことのない方
2. 北米に在住しつつ、北米の大学または大学院で１つ以上の学位を取得した方　（北米の大学の日本キャンパスや、日本に在住したまま学位を取れるプログラムで学んだ方を除きます。）
3. 卒業後、日本に帰国して１年以上５年未満の方。

参加の内容

本研究に参加していただく方には、次のことをお願いすることになります。
1. Demographic information sheet の記入。滞在した国、取得した学位、職歴などをおききします。
2. １時間半ほどの個人面談。インタビューは、研究者の７月１４日から８月７日の日本滞在中に日本各所で行いたいと考えています。遠方の方、日程の会わない方は、８月後半以降、Skype でのインタビューが可能です。インタビューは後のデータ分析のため録音させていただきます。（Skype の場合、ビデオイメージは録音されず、音声だけの録音となります）
3. インタビュー中、インタビュアーのガイドにより、留学から帰国に至るまでの Timeline（年表）を作成していただきます。

上記の条件に当てはまる方で、インタビュー（confidential）への参加に興味がある方は、reentrystudy@gmail.com まで直接ご連絡ください。

また、お友達で該当者を知っているという方、ぜひ本文をコピー&ペイストして広めてくださると助かります。学位のレベル、専門は問いません。

Kaori Wada,
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Counseling and Psychology,
McGill University, Montreal, Canada
reentrystudy@gmail.com
Supervisor: Dr. Ada Sinacore
REB File #: 35-0610

Appendix F: Informed Consent Form to Participate in Research

This form states that I _____ agree to participate in the research project entitled *Japanese women's reentry to the home country after studying in North America: A narrative inquiry.* This dissertation study is conducted by Kaori Wada, M.A. (doctoral candidate in the Counselling Psychology Program at McGill University) under the supervision of Ada L. Sinacore, PhD (Associate Professor in the Counselling Psychology Program at McGill University).

The Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study is to understand the experience of Japanese women who returned to Japan after completing a university degree in North America. The results of this study will help to understand the experience of returning to a home country from a foreign study and the role of foreign education on women's lives. The results of this study are intended for publication in academic journals and presentations at psychology conferences.

Eligibility
You are eligible to participate in this study if:
1. You are a Japanese woman who is 18 years or older
2. You have not lived outside of Japan for more than one year prior to the age of 18
3. You have lived in North America during which time you started and completed at least one university degree
4. You have returned to Japan for at least one year but not more than five years

What to Expect If You Participate in the Study
Your participation will involve the completion of a demographic information sheet, as well as an approximately 1 ½ hour-long interview in which you will be asked to share your experience of pursuing your North American education and returning to Japan. You will be also asked, with the help of the interviewer, to create a timeline that depict your educational and occupational history. The interview will be conducted in-person at a mutually agreed location in Japan (between mid-July to the beginning of August, 2010), or via Skype. The interview will be audio recorded. In the case of a Skype interview, only the audio will be recorded but not the video image.

After the interview, you will be given an opportunity to review a summary of the interview and to add or correct any information. You are welcome to request a summary of the findings of the study once the data have been analyzed.

Potential Risk
There are no foreseeable risks involved in this study. Your participation is voluntary, and there will be no pressure to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable answering. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, and any information you provided up to that point will be removed from the database. In case of any unforeseen psychological discomfort, the interviewer has experience in psychological interviewing and thus will have the necessary skills to address problems that may arise. If necessary, the interviewer will make a referral to an appropriate counseling service.

Confidentiality and Privacy

After the interview, the data will be transcribed and all identifying information will be deleted from the transcript to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of data. Only the researchers on this study will have access to the data. Your consent form and demographic form will be stored separately from the transcript in a locked cabinet. All the electronic files will be password protected. No identifying information will be used in the publication of this study. Once the transcription is completed and identifying information is removed, the audio recording will be destroyed. Only the transcribed data will be kept for further academic purposes.

Compensation

To thank you for your time, you will be offered a 2000-yen gift certificate as compensation for participating in this study.

Contact Information

Please contact us if any questions or concerns:

Kaori Wada   1 (514) XXX-xxxx   reentrystudy@gmail.com or kaori.wada@mcgill.ca

Dr. Ada Sinacore   1 (514) XXX-xxxx   ada.sinacore@mcgill.ca

I have read and understand all the above conditions. I freely consent and voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

Name: _____

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Appendix G: Demographic Form

Participant ID:_____

General Information:

1. Year of birth   _____

2. Your current relationship status (Please check all that applies)

	Single		Divorced
	Married		Widowed
	In relationship		

3. Do you have any children?   Yes / No

   a. If Yes, how many   _____

4. Sexual Orientation (Please check one)

	Heterosexual		Transgender
	Lesbian		Transsexual
	Bisexual		Questioning

5. Where are you born? _____

6. Where did you grow up? _____

7. Which one best describes the location where you grew up. (Please check one)

	Inner-city
	City suburb
	Rural area

8. When did you move back to Japan?   Year_____ Month_____

Educational History:

1. Starting with highest degree backwards, please indicate all the programs and institutions you studied *after high school.* Also, please indicate how you financed your study for each degree (Please check all that applies).

Degree 1

Degree	PhD Master's Bachelor's Other _____
Years of study	Year stated _____ Year completed_____
Name of University	
Location of University	City_____ State/Province_____ Country_____
Name of Program	

	Support from parents		Loans
	Support from spouse/partner		Worked while studying
	Scholarships		Other
	Personal saving		

Degree 2

Degree	PhD Master's Bachelor's Other _____
Years of study	Year stated _____ Year completed_____
Name of University	
Location of University	City_____ State/Province_____ Country_____
Name of Program	

	Support from parents		Loans
	Support from spouse/partner		Worked while studying
	Scholarships		Other
	Personal saving		

Degree 3

Degree	PhD Master's Bachelor's Other _____
Years of study	Year stated _____ Year completed_____
Name of University	
Location of University	City_____ State/Province_____ Country_____
Name of Program	

	Support from parents		Loans
	Support from spouse/partner		Worked while studying
	Scholarships		Other
	Personal saving		

Degree 4

Degree	PhD Master's Bachelor's Other _____
Years of study	Year stated _____ Year completed_____
Name of University	
Location of University	City_____ State/Province_____ Country_____
Name of Program	

	Support from parents		Loans
	Support from spouse/partner		Worked while studying
	Scholarships		Other
	Personal saving		

Occupational History:

1. What are the occupation(s), if any, that you have held up to the present date? Please indicate all.

Year	Location	Occupation

2. What is your current occupation?

3. Which one best describes your current annual income?

	Under ¥1,000,000		¥4,000,000 – ¥5,000,000
	¥1,000,000 – ¥2,000,000		¥5,000,000 – ¥6,000,000
	¥2,000,000 – ¥3,000,000		Over ¥6,000,000
	¥3,000,000 – ¥4,000,000		

4. Which one best describes your annual income prior to your foreign study?

	Under ¥1,000,000		¥4,000,000 – ¥5,000,000
	¥1,000,000 – ¥2,000,000		¥5,000,000 – ¥6,000,000
	¥2,000,000 – ¥3,000,000		Over ¥6,000,000
	¥3,000,000 – ¥4,000,000		

Information about your family of origin:

1. What is your father's occupation? _____

2. What is your mother's occupation? _____

3. What is your father's highest level of educational attainment?

	Junior high school		2-year Junior college
	High school		Bachelor's degree
	Technical college		Graduate degree

4. What is your mother's highest level of educational attainment?

	Junior high school		2-year Junior college
	High school		Bachelor's degree
	Technical college		Graduate degree

Appendix H: Interview Guide

<u>Opening Question</u>
I am interested in your experiences starting from how you decided to leave Japan to attain your Canadian/American degree to how you experienced reentry to Japan. One way to begin is perhaps to start with the time you decided to leave Japan.

今回お話を伺いたいのは、日本を発ってカナダ・アメリカで学位を取得すると決められてから、日本に帰って日本の生活に再適応されるまでの○○さんの経験についてです。日本を発つと決められた頃のことからでも、どこから初めてくださっても構いません。

<u>Pre-departure</u>
Can you tell me your story about the time before you left to study abroad? What stands out in your memory?

出発前の頃のことを聞かせてもらえますか。その頃のことで、なにが印象に残っていますか。

- What attracted you to study in Canada/US?
  何にひかれて、カナダ・アメリカに留学しようと思われたのですか？

- Was there anything happening in Japan that may have contributed to your decision to leave Japan?
  そのころの日本の状況や日本での生活で、日本を離れようというきっかけになったことはありますか？

- Can you describe for me your thoughts about leaving Japan? Did you have there any concern?
  日本を離れるにあたって、考えたことを教えてください。何か心配事などありましたか。

- In what ways were your decision supported or discouraged?
  ○○さんが留学の決意を決意されて、どのように周りから賛成や反対されましたか？

- What kind of expectations did you have about your future after getting a Canadian/American degree?
  ○○さんの、カナダ・アメリカの学位を取得した後の将来にどんな期待・展望を抱いていましたか。

<u>Sojourn</u>
Can you describe for me the time during your study abroad? What was studying in Canada/US was like for you?
留学中のことを教えてください。留学中の生活はどんなかんじですか？

- What did you find difficult about living in Canada/US?
  つらいことや困難だったことはありますか。

- What did you enjoy about living in Canada/US?
  どんなことが楽しかったですか？

- What significant factors contributed to the experience?

どんなことが、○○さんの留学生活に影響を与えましたか。

- When you were studying, were you thinking of returning to Japan after your study?
留学中、卒業後は日本に帰るつもりでしたか。

- When you were studying, how often did you visit home? How was your experience of visiting home?
留学中、どのくらいの頻度で日本に一時帰国しましたか。一時帰国の経験はどんな感じでたか。

Re-Reentry
Can you tell me about the time you are leaving Canada/US? What stands out in your memory?
カナダ・アメリカを去る頃のことを聞かせてください。何が印象に残っていますか。

- How did you make the decision to return to Japan? What factors influenced your decision?
日本に帰ると決めた過程について教えてください。どんな要因があって日本に帰ることになりましたか。

- What kinds of expectations did you have about your life after returning to Japan (e.g., in terms of career, family life, social and intimate life)?
日本に帰った後の生活のことで、どんな期待や展望を持っていましたか。

- Do you remember what it was like for you when you were just about to move back to Japan?
いざ日本に帰るというときは、どんな気持ちでしたか？
    - Were you excited? Worried? 楽しみでしたか、それとも心配でしたか？

Reentry
Tell me about the time you came back to Japan.
日本に帰ってきてからのことを聞かせてください。

- Once you actually moved back to Japan, how did you experience life back in Japan?
いざ、日本に帰って、久しぶりの日本での生活はいかがでしたか？

- Have you experienced any kind of "reverse culture shock"?
なにか逆カルチャーショックのようなものを経験しましたか？

- How have people in your life (e.g., family, colleague, friends, intimate partner) reacted to you as a woman with a North American university degree?
○○さんが北アメリカの学位を持つ女性になって、周りの人の反応はいかがですか？

- You said earlier that before you came back to Japan, you had expected…[reflect answer from questions above]. How was your actual experience? Were these expectations met?
先ほど、日本に帰る前・・・・という期待を抱いていたとおっしゃいました。期待に対して、実際はいかがでしたか。期待は叶いましたか。

- What are the ways in which having foreign education worked for you? Was there anything that worked against you?

北米の大学の学位を持っていることで○○さんにとって有利になるのはどのような面ですか。逆に、不利になることはありますか。

- How do you believe the fact that you are a woman impacted your reentry?
  - What makes you feel that way? Was there any specific incident that made you feel that way?

○○さんが女性であることは、日本への再適応の過程に影響を与えたと思いますか？（どうしてそう思うのですか。何か具体的にそういう印象を与えた出来事がありましたか）

Present/Future

- After # years since you came back, what is it like for you to be living in Japan right now?

日本に帰ったから○年がたった今、日本での生活はいかがですか。

- Is anything different compared to when you just came back?

帰ってきたばかりの頃と比べて、何かかわりましたか。

- (If participant reports a change) What made that change?

変化の原因は。

- How do you think your experience of attaining Canadian/American degree has changed you?

カナダ・アメリカに留学して学位と取得された過程で、○○さん自身はどのようにかわりましたか？
  - How do you feel about that change? その変化をどう思われますか？

- In two or three years from now, what changes would you like to see in your life?

○○さんの今から２年か３年後の将来、どんなふうになっていたらいいなとおもいますか？

Debriefing Questions

- What was this interview like for you?

インタビューに参加してみてどうでしたか？

- What else would you want to say that I didn't ask that would help me understand this important experience?

なにか、私が聞き忘れたことで、大事なことや加えたいことはありますか？

- What would have been like if we did this interview in English?

もしもこのインタビューを英語でやったとしたらどのような感じだったでしょう。

Post-Interview Procedure (After turning off the recorder)

- Do you have any other questions?

他に質問は。

- Ask is she knows anyone who could be a potential participant in this study?

○○さんのお知り合いで、インタビューに参加してくれそうな人はいらっしゃいますか。（もしいれば、私の名刺を渡す）
  - (If yes, ask to give my contact information)

Appendix I: Example of Timeline

Note: This fictitious timeline was created by the researcher for the purpose of demonstrating what a typical timeline looked like. The researcher decided not to attach a real timeline obtained from participants; these timeline reveal such details of their life that making them public seemed incongruent with the ethical attitude in narrative research (Josselson, 2007).

Year	1997	2001	2003	2006	2008		
Age	18	22	24	27	29	30	Present
Location	Tokyo	Nagano	Montreal	Toronto	Nagoya	Tokyo	
Educational or Occupational Activity	BA in Eng. Lit Waitress	Clerical position in a department store	BA in Commerce	MBA Taught Japanese	Job hunting Temp jobs	Consulting company	
2-3 words that characterize your experience in this period	Carefree Fun Pressure for future	Work stress Conflict with parents Plan to go to Canada	Independent lifestyle Language difficulty Meeting w. friends from different countries	Competitive Studying hard Financial difficulty	Lack of job Frustration Isolation	Meaningful job Gender discrimination Pressure for future	

Appendix J: Example of Coding

JWRS002 Coding 1

Pre-departure

1-101	I:	えーと、じゃああの今日聞かせてもらうのは、あの日本を発って、まあカナダであの学位を取りいくって決めた辺りからあの帰ってきて、今の生活、あの日本に日本の生活に再適応されるまでの、えーと、Pさんの経験について伺いたいんですけど、うん、どっから初めてもらってもかまわないし、もうなんか最初っから始めてもらってもかまわないんで、うん、好きなように始めてもらってSSSください。
	P:	好きなように、
	I:	あの、もうなんか多分一番やりやすいのはなんかいつ頃カナダに行こうって決めたとか
	P:	順番でSS。多分、もう高校2年生の半ば位に行こうかなって思いました。
	I:	はい、高校生から「.......」で、高校生っていうと17くらいかな。
	P:	17くらいですね。17だったかなと思います。
	I:	うーんSS、行こうって決めたのはなんか、あのー、どんな理由とか
	P:	えーと、
	I:	何に惹かれてとか。
	P:	外国にひかれてというよりは（笑）、あんまり小中高適応できなかったので、ちょっとまた大学に行って適応できなかったって思うのが嫌やなと思って、それなら違う学校のシステムがあるところをさがしたいなっていうのが
	I:	あ、なるほど、
	P:	最初で、で、国を決めるにあたってはまあ、英語しか勉強してこなかったし、役に立つ言語だろうとは思ったので、英語圏に行こうって決めて、で、その中で国はどうしよっかなっていうので、それぞれの国の一応お金、金銭的な面と学校のシステムと調べてるうちにカナダSにしようって決めました。
	I:	なるほど。じゃあ高校の2年、2年ごろ。Sx8じゃあその一、じゃあどっちかといえば、なんか日本から出たいっていう感じで。
	P:	そうですね。
	I:	あのー、日本のなんか適応できないって言ったけど、なんかこういうところが合わないっていうのは。
	P:	あー、嫌やと思ったら言ってしまうので（少し笑いながら）SS、先生と対立するとか
	I:	あー、なるほど、結構はっきり言ってしまうタイプで。
	P:	なんか衝突が結構多くて、 それはカナダに行ってからも変わらず言ってたんですけど、でもむこうの先生は割りと受け入れてくれて改善策とかも出してくれたことも何回かあったので。

Kaori Wada 2012-2-12 12:41 PM
Comment [1]: P decided to go to Canada when she was 17 years old (2nd year in High School)

Kaori Wada 2012-2-12 12:42 PM
Comment [2]: P decided to go to Canada, not because she was attracted foreign countries, but because she did not adjusted well to Japanese school system.

Kaori Wada 2012-2-12 12:44 PM
Comment [3]: P then chose Canada, based on the language spoken, cost of living, and school system.

Kaori Wada 2012-2-12 12:45 PM
Comment [4]: She wanted to get out of Japan.

Kaori Wada 2012-2-12 12:47 PM
Comment [5]: P used to have conflicts with teachers since she would express herself.

Kaori Wada 2012-2-12 12:48 PM
Comment [6]: She continued express herself in Canada, but teachers there were willing to listen to her and make accommodations accordingly.

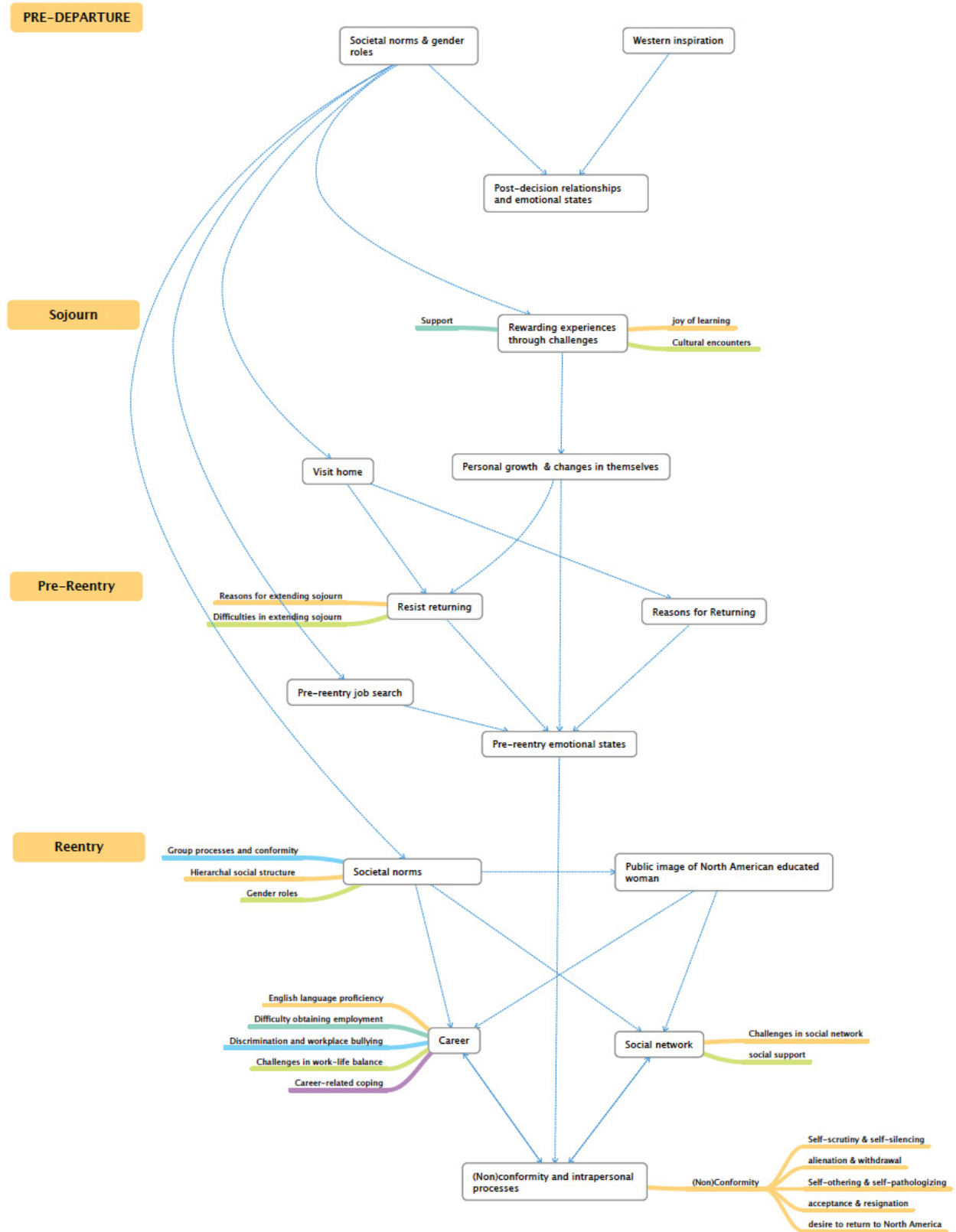**Appendix K: Example of Three-Dimensional Data Chart**

JWRS002 3-dimention

Pre-Departure (Osaka)

Place/Situation	Personal	Social
High school in Osaka	• did not adjusted well to Japanese school system. • P used to have conflicts with teachers since she would express herself. • P would questions school rules and norms • She wanted to get out of Japan.	• Rigid school rules and norms • teachers could not give her logical answers to her questioning, respond to her by saying "because you are still a student" "because that's how it's been"
Deciding to go to Canada (17 years old, 2nd year in High School)	• not because she was attracted foreign countries, but because she wanted to get out of Japan. • chose Canada, based on the language spoken, cost of living, and school system.	• P's parents respected her choice, giving her financial support and autonomy. • Aside from her grandmother who was overly concerned of P moving far away, no objection from others.
Leaving for Canada (Vancouver)	• Undetermined whether she only take ELS courses, finish 2 year certificate, or pursue 4 year university degree.	• Community college offered a flexibility, leaving her choice for transferring to a 4-year university

Sojourn

Place/Situation	Personal	Social
Community college in Vancouver for a year (18 yrs old)	• Taking ESL and credit courses • 'exploring' and 'comparing' to describe her initial reaction to life in Canada • By comparing between Canada and Japan, P gained better understanding of Japan.	• Host family treated her well, accompanying her to a family trip. • P laughingly recounts how her home stay family was not at all punctual. • P enjoyed living with others
Moving to New Brunswick (August 2005, at the age of 20 years old.)	• because (a) its admission came before any other schools she applied (b) it gave her an entrance scholarship.	• She moved in a resident hall, later in a rooming house. • P enjoyed living with others
Studying Fine Art in NB	• She continued express herself in Canada • Worked as a coordinator of a student gallery • [trl] P struggles to find an English word that describes the continuity/fulfillingness of her lively days. (a sense of one exciting event leading to another) • No word to adequately describe how 'fun' it was	• Teachers there were willing to listen to her and make changes • Living in a small community facilitated P and her friends to spontaneously organize art events.
Developing a chronic pain	• Started in Vancouver, did not get diagnosed for 2 years • 'anxiety' of living with an unknown illness	

Appendix L: Concept Map

PRE-DEPARTURE

Societal norms & gender roles

Western inspiration

Post-decision relationships and emotional states

Sojourn

Support — Rewarding experiences through challenges — joy of learning / Cultural encounters

Visit home

Personal growth & changes in themselves

Pre-Reentry

Reasons for extending sojourn / Difficulties in extending sojourn — Resist returning

Reasons for Returning

Pre-reentry job search

Pre-reentry emotional states

Reentry

Group processes and conformity / Hierarchal social structure / Gender roles — Societal norms

Public image of North American educated woman

English language proficiency / Difficulty obtaining employment / Discrimination and workplace bullying / Challenges in work-life balance / Career-related coping — Career

Social network — Challenges in social network / social support

(Non)conformity and intrapersonal processes — (Non)Conformity — Self-scrutiny & self-silencing / alienation & withdrawal / Self-othering & self-pathologizing / acceptance & resignation / desire to return to North America

Appendix M: Sample Translation

Page	English Translation	Japanese Original
Authenticity		
63	P: I feel like I'm being myself now…(*silence*). Ah, when I was at [my former workplace] I was performing, in a very controlled way. Ah, yeah! I was acting a false self, yes! I: I see, like going along with others. P: Wow, I never thought this way! Very interesting. Yes, yes, it was definitely like that…. I was acting, for sure	P: 凄い自分が自然なのが分かります。はい。Ssss あ、確かに K にいた時結構演じてるなーって、思いましたね。そのコントロールって部分で演じてるって、あー、そう（はっとしたような様子）、なんか Acting してる感じでした、嘘の自分を。 I: あーなるほど。そうやって周りに合わせるっていうこと。 P: 面白いこれ！（笑）なんか凄い。（笑）そうそう、凄いそんな感じでした。はい、Acting してました。はい。
64	As I read it, my heart was filled with emotions at times. Looking at how my feelings, internal conflicts, and my personal history were put together in writing, I felt like I gained another treasure [that I can carry forward with me]. I will print it out and hold on to it preciously… I believe your study will encourage women with different backgrounds and experiences. As well, starting from where I can, I would like to take part in making a society that is more compassionate and easier for all people to live in.	インタビューの要約を読みながら，当時の葛藤を懐かしく思い出しました。時々読みながら胸が熱くなりました。 特に違和感があったり間違った解釈をされているような箇所もなく，私の分かりにくい表現も的確に要約されていて，とても読みやすかったです。改めて文字になった自分の思いや葛藤や歴史をみて，一つ宝物が増えたような気持ちです。プリントアウトして，大切にとっておこうと思います！…和田様のこの研究が，様々なバックグラウンドや経験を持つ女性たちの励みになることと思います。日本だけでなく，人として生きて行く社会がより温かく生きやすい社会になるよう，お互いできることから力を尽くしていきたいですね。
Pre-departure		
69-70	Watching this, I kind of did not want to be like my mother (*whispering*)	それを見てて、お母さんみたいになりたくない[囁く]っていうのが、ちょっとあって。
71	I think many women around 30 wonder about their future, like wanting some kind of change or questioning how one has lived so far…. It is not one definite thing. Perhaps it was a vague anxiety related to marriage, work, and all of those things. It's like all of a sudden you want to turn over the table completely and change everything.	こう何か変えたいっていうか、このままでいいのかなっていうのとか、多分その３０前後の女の人ってあると思うんです…、たぶんひとつとかじゃない、結婚もあるだろうし、仕事もこのままでいいのかなだったりとか、あともう漠然とした不安感とか、なんかこうテーブルをひっくりかえすような全とっかえしたいみたいな.
74	No one came out and said, "you are different", so everyone said to me "*sugoi*" instead. But that phrase meant that you are doing something that they wouldn't dare. I'm sure some people were genuinely envious of me. But they were mostly saying this because they learned that it is sort of a convenient phrase that wouldn't offend anyone. Yeah, I just sensed that they weren't saying it to compliment me wholeheartedly.	みんな、XX ちゃん変わってるねとは言えないので、さすがに。口を揃えて、「凄いね」って言うんです。でもその凄いねっていうのは、自分達はしないことをしてると。で、もちろんそれを羨ましいという気持ちの人もいるんでしょうけど、凄いねって言っとけば角が立たずに収まるなっていうのを学んできてる人達なので、うん、それは心から私を認めてくれてる言葉じゃないなっていうのは感じました。
Sojourn		
77	The Japanese educational system rarely allows you to express your opinions. You just take notes of what teachers say, summarize, and reproduce it in a precise manner. You learned to be always passive. But at least the university that I went to in Canada wasn't like that…. It was a place	まず自分の考えを言える教育現場って日本に殆ど無いですよね。まず先生が言ったことをメモにとって、まとめて、で、いかにそれを正確に表現できるか。常に受身の教育現だと思うんですけど、そのカナダの少なくとも私が行ってた大学は、あの受身じゃなかったんです。…自分で能動的に行動していかないと絶対に認められない場所だったし、

	where you wouldn't get acknowledged unless you took an active role in your own learning, and being a proactive learner served as an impetus for my growth.	その能動的にあるっていうことが、自分自身を成長させていける原動力になる様な場所だったんですね。
80	I was such a corporate fighter [in Japan]. When I was living in the U.S., I realized how much I had neglected my family and friendships. So once I realized that, then I began to desire a lifestyle that prioritizes these relationships. You know, my values were changed completely	まさに自分が企業戦士だったし。いかにそれで友達とか家族とかそういうのを犠牲にしてきたのかなっていうのすごいアメリカにいたときに感じてたんですね、で、そう思ったときに、なんかそういうものを大切にしてこれから暮らしていきたいなって。…すごい、なんか、自分の価値観がぐらぐらになりましたね。
82	I was feeling better at this time than when I had been doing what everyone else was doing (during high school). I got the sense that I'm living a fulfilling life.	人と同じことをしてた時の自分よりも楽しいし、「あー、ちゃんと生きてるな」っていう実感があったんですね。
Pre-reentry		
84	Because I'm rather assertive, I express my opinions. And also the advancement of women is behind in Japan… There is a pressure to go with the majority [in Japan]. But in the U.S., it is accepted that everyone is different so no one criticizes you, judges you, for doing something different or just being different. That's why I thought it is more comfortable for me to live in the U.S. [than in Japan].	やっぱり自己主張とかもするし、自分の意見とかも言って、その、言う方なので、でやっぱ日本だと女性の社会進出とかも遅れてるし。…メインストリームを行ってないといけないみたいな感じがあるけどアメリカだと別に、何、みんな違って当たり前だから自分が違ってることをしたり、自分が違った人間になっても人から何非難されない、判断されない、だからアメリカだと生きやすいなと思って。
89	Certainly, I knew I wanted to get married. But I was being told [by my parents], "the older you get the harder it will be [to find a partner]"…. And you know, with the visa issues, it is just hard to keep a job in the U.S. They often told me, "if you have to come back eventually, the sooner the better, while you are still young". So I thought they are probably right. But I was feeling very anxious. By this time, I was so used to living in the U.S. that part of me just did not want to leave.	やっぱり結婚はしたいなあと思っていたんですよね。それで、だんだん年齢いってくると難しくなってくるし、だから結婚したいんだったらやっぱ早く帰ったほうがいいよって言われたんですよね。それとあとやっぱり就職もアメリカでずっとやってくっていうのも大変だし、ビザのこともあるんで。それでいずれ帰るんだったらやっぱり若くて早いほうがいいってよく言われてたんで、あーそうなのかなーってすごく思って不安はすごくあったんですが、だけどやっぱりそれと同時にでもやっぱりアメリカ慣れちゃったし、帰りたくないっていうのはあったんですね。
89-90	This whole process hit the deepest part of me. …It was so hard that I had to leave this place that is good *igokochi* because of a visa. I had never found such a place that gives me good *igokochi*. But just a piece of paper decides whether I can stay or not, that was really hard.	これは結構自分のこう、深いところにきましたね。この居心地のいい場所をビザのせいで離れなくてはいけないというのがすごくつらかった。今までここまで居心地のいい場所なかったのに、それがこの紙切れ一枚のせいで、それがいられるか分からなかったのがすごくつらかったですね
Reentry		
92	These incidents were the beginning of a vicious circle. I left Japan in the first place because I did not like living in this country. So I probably noticed minor things that other people don't notice... And all these little things feel like much worse than they actually are, ended up confirming my discontent, 'you see this is why I don't want to be here'	そういうことが、ネガティブな始まりというか、まあ国がいやで出た人間なので、最初からそうだったんですけど、やっぱりそうだったのかって再確認というか、そういう人の言動でちっちゃなところで、多分普段なら気にならないところが目につくっていうか。なんか、ちっちゃな嫌なことが何十倍も見えたり感じたりしている自分が、ここにいたくないからって思いました。
93	They asked me about my age a lot. I was asked,	年齢のことについてすごく聞かれましたね。なんでこ

	"how could you be a new graduate at your age?"…And I also checked off the question about having a dependent family member. So they asked me in the interviews, "how could it be that you have a dependent but are not married?" They talked to me frankly, but yeah, I was a bit shocked.	んなにいってるんかなって、聞かれましたね。新卒なのにって。 …それで、扶養家族のところにもピッって丸つけたので、扶養家族がおって結婚はしてないっていうことはどういうことって、そんなこともインタビューできかれて。フランクには話してはいただけたんですけど、うん、なんかそれにちょっとショックはありましたね
95	Basically, young women are not seen as competent at work, just by the image. People can evaluate me whether I'm competent or not if they actually meet and talk to me. But on the phone, some people assume that I'm just a receptionist. (Interviewer: Prejudice almost?) It *is* prejudice. With my voice, they can tell that I'm a young woman. Then they say, 'put your superior on the line', and I'm like, *really*?	日本って基本的に若い女性は仕事できないと思われてる。まあ、見た目ですよね。だから、実際に人と会って、自分をアピールできるんなら、あ、この人できるとかできないとか、実際に会って話せば分かることも電話だと、受付のねーちゃん、みたいな、言い方をしてくる人もいますし。（I: 偏見みたいな。）偏見ですよね。声を出したら若い女性って分かりますから。上だせとか。えーっみたいな。
99	People who have spent all of their lives in Japan and went to Japanese universities belong in the same league. But once you have a degree from abroad, then you are not in the same playing field. Organizations like my company, or people who also have degrees from abroad, recognize you and value your degree.	日本で過ごした人とか日本の大学に行った人は同じ土俵で日本人とは戦うけど、日本の、海外の学位を持ってるとちょっと普通の日本人と同じ土俵にいない。学位の価値を認識してくれる人とか組織とか、ま、私の会社だったり、同じ様な海外の学位を持ってる人達からは recognize される、価値を理解して評価してもらえる。
104	I'm not the one who is referred to like that [because of my professional status]. But I question why this kind of things is accepted in the workplace. Isn't it sexual harassment? I think so. But when I talked to [the support staff women] about how it upsets me, everyone says, 'oh no they are not ill intentioned'. That hurts me, that they themselves don't mind it much. But I think that [not caring about these practices] actually perpetuates their status. You know, there are women who are fighting with this, but there are other women who accept it, like 'I don't care'…. That's how women ended up being looked down on…. It's not healthy, you know, you are looked down on but don't care about it. It's probably not my business because I'm not the one who is looked down. But I think it's wrong.	私がその女の子なわけじゃないけど、どうしてそれが受け入れられてるのかな、職場でっていう。それこそセクシャルハラスメントじゃないかな、私に言わせると。でも、気になるんだよねーって言うと、みんな、そんな深い意味で言ってるんじゃないよーって言うんですけどね。私はちょっとぐさっとくるんですよね。だから言われている女性も、そんなに嫌だと思ってないんでしょうね。だからその女性が自分の立場をそういう風にしているっていうのもあるんでしょうね。戦っている人もいるんでしょうけど、それを受け入れてる。別にいいよーみたいな。だからこういうことすることで見下されてるんだろうなっていうのは、ありますよね …健全じゃないですよね、そういうのって。見下されていても気にならないって言うのが。まあ、自分が見下されてるわけじゃないから、いいんでしょうけど。そうあるべきじゃないと思いますね。
107	People often perceive me as weak, well, in a bad way of speaking, they make light of me. I've always lived with that sense… So when I see someone in a socially powerful position but is in fact incompetent, I tell myself, 'I'm like this (*pointing at her height*), and I suffered a major illness, but I'm strong, I'm competent, and I'll earn more income too. I've become quite career-minded.	私って背も小さいし、結構弱者に見れらる方が多くて、あの、悪い言い方すれば、なんかなめられるというか。そういうの感じながら人生生きてきたってのが少しあったっていうのがあって。…そうすると、世間的には立派なのに、実際は何もできない役立たたない人とか見ると、自分はこんなんだけど[手を頭の上に置く仕草]、病気もしたけど、強いし、仕事もできるし、収入だって、どんどん上げるんだからみたいな感じで。それでキャリア思考になってやってましたね。
108	First of all, men reject me just by looking at my profile. It's like, a woman who went to a grad school in the States, no way, you are too good for	まず書面で断られるんですよ。アメリカの大学院を出てる人だからそんなそんなみたいな。会った人とかもいたりとかするんですけど、そうするとみんなすごい

	me! I got to meet several men, but they say "you are *sugoi*", "you are not compatible with me" and they don't try to see me beyond that… They perceive me with awe and probably fear too. Like [she is probably] too ambitious.		ですね、私にはとても、みたいな感じで、自分をみてくれないんですよね。…尊敬と多分恐怖。ギラギラしてるみたいな。
113	So from here (pointing at the reentry phase in her timeline), I've been trying hard to protect myself. It is like I'm trying to arrange myself a bit, you know, by coating myself or filing off a bit of myself…to protect my position, or to adjust to the society. But lately it's becoming a new normal, you know. I was 100% who I am [during my sojourn]. As time passes, it's become my nature to work hard to forcefully remodel myself.		だからここ[タイムラインの reentry の箇所]は、本当に自分を守ろうとしてる。ここが 100%自分だったらここはもうちょっと 100%の自分にコーティングしたりやすりかけたりして、ちょっとアレンジした感じ。…自分のポジション守るためだったり、社会に適応するためだったりとか。だけど最近はそれが普通になってきて、ここは本当に自分のやりたい放題 100%自分でやってて自然だったけど、だんだんこう、ここが長くなるにつれて（I:この帰ってきてからの期間）無理やりこう、改造して頑張ってる自分が普通になってくる。
113-114	Kyoko:	Well, I think, ah, I had, and I still have, (*silence*) a strong volition that I don't want to adjust to the Japanese society.	K： あの多分自分の中であのー、うーん SSSS 未だにこの日本の社会に適応したくない！って（強調）、ないという強い意志が多分あるんだと思いますね。
	Researcher:	Ah I see, I can see that. Then, hypothetically speaking, what would it mean to you if you did adjust to Japanese society despite, ah, your determination not to?	R： うん、なるほど。そうですね、なんかそんな感じがちょっとしますね。うん。P さんの中で、例えばもし、あの日本に順応したくないっていう気持ちを持ちながらも 順応してしまったとしたら、それはどういう意味があるんでしょう。
	Kyoko:	Ah, (*silence*) ah, (*silence*). How do I say… If I decided to adjust to Japanese society at this point, then, it would mean a sort of defeat, a failure. You know, my life was not always smooth, but I've managed to refuse to do anything I absolutely did not want to do. If I have to change the way I've lived at this point of my life, then that's how I understand.	K： うーん Sx 4 そうですね、うん Sx 6 なんでしょう 今の時点でそのえーと日本の社会にもうこれで順応して生きていきましょうというふうに決めたんだとしたらそれはやっぱりなんかま、一種敗北というか、一種挫折というか。なんか、これまでなんか人生の中で、その大成功じゃなかったにしても、多分あのやりたくないことはやらないで過ごして生きてきたのに、ここでここで初めてやりたくないことを余計やらなければいけないのかっていう、そういう意味合いだと私は思いますけれども。
	Researcher:	If you compromise, that means you are defeated. Defeated against what?	R： コンプロマイズしてしまうことは負け、敗北感。それは何に対しての負けですかね。
	Kyoko:	Against…ah, (*silence*). I wonder (*silence*). Well, for one thing, it is this Japanese society, norms, social system. I left Japan in the first place because I questioned it, I rejected it, so if I get assimilated into it after all, it means a defeat I think.	K： 何に対して。うーん SSS 何に対してでしょうね。うーん、まあうん、1 つは SSSSS なんかこの日本の社会とか、しがらみ、社会システムとかがあの SS 嫌だっていうか、おかしいわって思って出ていったのに、結局はそのシステムに取り込まれるのかと言ういうことで結局そういう意味合いでまあ日本に負けたかなみたいな感じですよね。

117	I stopped thinking like I used to, like 'it wasn't like this in Canada, why is it like this in Japan'. I've come to understand there are reasons why things are the way they are in Japan. As I understood more about Japan, and I've come to accept that Japan is different from Canada in many ways and that's okay. I don't get frustrated anymore.	なんでカナダではこうなのに日本ではこうなのっていう感じの考え方をよくしてたので、そういう風に考えないようになった、っていうか、日本ではこう、こういう理由があってこうなんだっていうのが理解できてきて。理解してくる、できてくるので、そんななんで違うねんってとらえなくてよくなったので...なんだろう、違うから嫌だっていう風にはとらえなくてよくなった。
119	That idea always stays in my mind, and it really helps me when things are hard. You know, there is place I could return to if I have to. That helps me so much that I might never go back, or I might go back someday. In either case, it gives me hope. The hope that I have a choice in my life. Without that, I could have jumped in front of a train. You know, life is tough (*chuckle*).	それは常に頭にあって、つらいときにすごく助けられる。その、いつでも帰ろうと思えば帰れるていうのが。帰らないのかもしれないですけど、このままずっと助けられて。残るのかもしれないけど、その、希望ですよね。こういう選択肢も自分にもあるっていう希望。多分、それがなかったら、電車に飛び込んでる。死ぬほどつらくて（軽く笑いながら）。

Reflection

120	By stepping out of the societal rail, I became liberated from the idea that you must stay on that rail. Rather than conventional ways of thinking about things that bind you, I learned to see different possibilities	レールから外れたことによって、固定観念をちょっとから抜けることができた。あまり縛られ、固定観念に縛られて物事を考えるんじゃなくって、色んな可能性を自分探しだすことができるようなった
120-121	When I was in Japan, I didn't even think about [getting a university degree]. I thought it was unsuited for me, something I don't even deserve to desire it, period. But once in the U.S., I learned something really important while fumbling my way forward: I can get what I want, but first I have to desire it, say that I want it, and then after that, I just work hard at it. That's something I learned from experience, and I will always keep it in mind even in Japan.	日本にいた時は初めから考えもしない、もうそんなものは私にとって分不相応だわじゃないですけど、ほんとに望んでもいけないんだって思ってたんですけど、あのアメリカに行って、でまあ最初はまあおどおど手探りで行きながら、でも、望んでみて、欲しいっ言ってみて、それに向かって努力してみて結果って得られるんだっていうのが身をもってあの、わかったことだし、これからもそれを絶対なくしたくないなっていうのがアメリカでの一番大きい