Japanese Female Border Crossers: Perspectives from a Midwestern U.S. University

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ABSTRACT

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This research is a phenomenological study that seeks to understand the challenges Japanese female graduate students face while adjusting to speaking English and socializing with peers in a U.S. university. Because they crossed the border out of Japan and crossed the border into the United States of America I termed them “border crossers.” In this research, I focused on what kind of coping and adjustment strategies they utilized at a Midwestern U.S. university. The study investigated language-related challenges. Respondents felt fearful when they first experienced American living styles and using English in American educational settings. The study also explored on- and off-campus experiences, and this section revealed difficulties interacting with American roommates and public service members. In addition, this study examined academic challenges on U.S. campuses.

The design of this research was a case study to critically examine social reality and to describe in-depth analysis. Adopting a qualitative research, this study was conducted in a Midwestern U.S. university where there were few networks of international communities. Participants for this study included nine Japanese graduate female students purposively sampled. Data analysis focused on the interview transcripts and observational descriptions, while coding categories and finding themes. Based on each research question, categories and themes were described based on patterns.

The examinations of this study disclosed six findings based on participants' voices and observations. These include fear of living in a new country, challenges of intercultural communications, identity development, anxiety in the classroom, and impact from Japanese education and gender roles. Fearful feelings paralyzed students' fluency in English and this commonly happened in public service settings. The study also revealed the necessity of understanding and accepting different communication styles to avoid misunderstanding between Japanese and Americans. While Japanese used polite speech and exhibited care about others, their behavior and speech were seen as rude and with no curiosity about other cultures. Due to these differences, my border crossers struggled with having moderate self-esteem and with settling their social identity in the U.S. Similarly, they were overwhelmed by different expectation of students and faculty in the U.S. educational system.

Approved: _____

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

As I crossed the border into the U.S., I was immediately faced with challenges that were more than I had expected. A competent, established, and accomplished person can suddenly feel inadequate in a new culture because she has crossed borders from the familiar to the strange and become like a baby in the new culture. The challenges Japanese females experience as border crossers when they take the decision to study in the United States are explored in this study. The metaphor of border crossing relates to intercultural educational needs. The border crossers are usually outside the hegemonic group, and they experience the cultural dissonance of outsiders in a new environment, in terms of culture, power, performance and language (Georgiadis & Apostolos, 2008; Girox, 1992). In addition, the crossing of borders within the academic world is another form; Giroux (1992) defines it as “border pedagogy” (p. 28) which is a combination of individual capability and transformations of knowledge and subjects.

My journey of cross-cultural adjustments had just started when I arrived in the U.S. in the academic year of 2003/2004. With over a decade of studying English as a foreign language in Japan and then completing a teacher-training course in a bachelor’s program, I had gained enough confidence about my English skills to muster the courage to attend a U.S. university. However, in the U.S. I felt very uncomfortable on the many occasions when I failed to participate in classes or interact with English speakers. When I encountered countless cultural challenges in the U.S., I sincerely thought that all my efforts of learning English had been a waste of time, money and energy.

First of all, I scored low on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and I was required to take a full-time intensive English course at Ohio University. I was sincerely disappointed by my score in the first quarter; and I was surprised by the high expectations at the university. Although I planned to attend academic classes, the program did not allow me to do so. Instead, I started learning about reading, writing, listening and speaking in the English in a Second Language (ESL) program. As time went by, the program allowed me to take undergraduate and graduate classes as a part-time student. However, I experienced continuous academic challenges at the university, including challenges related to the socialization processes as well as language. Academic challenges in the graduate program happened on many occasions. I had rarely experienced presentations and discussion-style classes in Japan, so I was not able to speak up on anything. Therefore, I had to develop my self-esteem in order to talk about critical ideas and participate in discussions in English. Through experience in class and encouragement from professors and peers, I eventually was able to participate more in class. However, it took approximately two years for me to participate in a class discussion without feeling my blood pressure rise.

With respect to socialization, I had to face several situations of intercultural communication in the U.S. and Japan, and accept these differences. A Japanese female graduate student, Aya, in Ohio invited a Zambian student, Joe, and me to her house to have dinner. When we arrived at her place at the designated time, Joe phoned her to ask if we could come in. Aya said, “Well, I don’t know…Could you wait for 15 minutes because my room is still messy?” Joe and I agreed, and we waited for a while in the car. When Aya had not called back after 20 minutes so Joe called her again, Aya said, “Well,

but my room is still messy and I am not ready." Without a doubt, the two of us did not care if her room was messy. We just wanted to go inside because it was very cold at the end of December. Joe was irritated by the situation because he did not know what she really meant and told her to just let us enter. Finally, Aya welcomed us to her house and we were surprised that her house was perfectly clean. Joe was upset and asked why she said that her room was messy. She hesitated to tell us that the food was not ready because she was ashamed that she did not start cooking on time. She wanted to invite us with perfect conditions in terms of her room, the food, dishes, music and dress because we were her first guests. However, her statements confused Joe and it took a while for him to understand what Aya really meant when she did not let us in. At that time, I was not able to explain to Joe why she behaved this way, that it was a common habit among persons of her age in Japan. I thought that Joe had a very short temper. However, I noticed that this was another challenge of intercultural communication.

Apart from my concerns about my English proficiency, my limited cultural experiences in the U.S. interfered with my class participation and interactions with others. I felt embarrassed about my knowledge and English skills, which were mainly gained from reading, not from daily communication practice. Although I had developed my English skills for over a decade, the American English I learned and used in Japan was entirely different from the language actually spoken by Americans. Additionally, American culture overwhelmed my linguistic competence and my social behavior. Then, I realized that I am from a different culture, with beliefs, values and norms that did not function perfectly in this new environment (Liu, 2001). This observation and my other experiences studying abroad made me question if there might be possible coping and

adjustment strategies for people like me, a female Japanese graduate student living in the U.S. As I pursued graduate studies and progressed through my courses, especially those focused on power, linguistics and gender, my interest in understanding the challenges facing these students while they participate in classes and socialize with others intensified.

Experiences of border crossings strike social and emotional chords that impact a person's confidence and physical and linguistic sense of self. Therefore, borders are not just geographical but also cultural and academic; borders are social, linguistic and emotional (Premnath, 2007). Furthermore, this highlights the ways knowledge, acts, and subjectivity associate with social relations based on judgment that defines otherness (Giroux, 1992). The group of border crossers in this study are Japanese female graduate students who are living in the U.S. in order to pursue masters' programs and learn about a new culture.

The number of international students in the United States increases every year. Many non-English-speaking students are willing to undertake degree work, take internship programs, and learn English. According to the Institute of International Education (IIE) Network (2008), the total population of registered international students in U.S. higher education institutions was 582,984 for the 2006-2007 academic year. Of that number, 157,178 were newly admitted to institutions of higher education and other professional schools, while only 142,923 students had been admitted in the previous year (See Table 1.1). This indicates an approximate ten percent increase in new enrollments. It can be assumed that international students' enrollment in the U.S. universities will rise in coming years.

Table 1: Report on International Educational Exchange: Institute of International Education

NEW INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ENROLLMENT, 2004/05 and 2005/06					
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/2007	06/07 % of Total	% Change from 05/06
	Number	Number	Number	Percent	Percent
Total	131,945	142,923	157,178	100.0	10.0
Undergraduate	59,943	61,342	63,749	40.5	3.9
Graduate	61,350	64,235	72,726	46.3	13.2
Other	10,653	17,346	20,703	13.2	19.4

Source: http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/page/113138/

The largest international student population in the U.S. is Indian with 83,833, followed by Chinese with 67,723; Koreans with 62,392; Japanese with 35,282; Taiwanese with 29,094; Canadians with 28,280; Mexicans with 13,826; Turkish with 11,506; Thai with 8,886; and Germans with 8,656. Among all regions, Asia sends the most international students, 59% of total U.S. foreign enrollments. Even though the sharpest rates of decline in the 2006/2007 academic year are shown due to the low birthrate, Japanese students still maintain fourth place, down nine per cent to 35,282, totaling 6.1% of all international students (IIE Network, 2006).

The number of Japanese students on U.S. campuses was 33, 974 in the 2007/2008 academic year; the population was 5.4% of the total international students in the U.S. According to the 2001 report, 63% of Japanese female students and 37% of Japanese male students enrolled on U.S. campuses. Additionally, 62% of the college-seeking population in Japan hoped to study in the U.S. and planned to apply for graduate programs in 2007 (JUSEC, n.d.).

Based on a survey done in the 2006/2007 academic year, the top ten reasons among Japanese graduate students to study on U.S. campuses are: 1) to acquire a cosmopolitan outlook and broader perspectives, 2) to improve English skills, 3) to turn experiences of studying abroad to advantage for future jobs, 4) to experience learning at U.S. universities, 5) to create networks with several types of people, 6) to receive a degree, 7) to study in a particular field in which a U.S. university is perceived to excel, 8) to learn in academic programs where there are many types of learning strategies, 9) to work at foreign-affiliated companies or in foreign countries in the future, or 10) to learn professional fields which are not offered in Japanese universities (JUSEC, n.d.).

Most Japanese students studied English in Japan for over ten years before they attended intensive English courses in this country. From the first year of middle school, all students are required to take three hours of English classes a week for three years. In high school, four hours a week of English classes are mandatory for another three years, and the requirement will increase to five or six hours a week when students participate in classes designed to prepare to them for entrance examinations. When students major in English-related programs at higher institutions, they attend English classes once a day. Including their four years in college, Japanese students will be learning English for at least ten years.

Japanese students are usually surprised that U.S. teachers expect and even grade on active participation in classroom discussions. According to the report of the Center for Teaching Learning (1997) at the University of North Carolina, most international students come from educational backgrounds that value lecture-style presentations over a class-discussion model. Accordingly, it may take these students a number of months to

find the courage to speak in class and successfully meet the expectations of their new learning environment. They do not automatically understand what will be required of them in an American classroom environment (Center for Teaching Learning, 1997). A serious problem faced by international students is the marginalization they feel in American classrooms by “misrecognition” (Goodland & Riddell, 2005, p. 52). Misrecognition means that one considers others as different, which can be a source of injustice. This often happens when they are explicitly singled out as foreigners by the instructors or when their classmates ignore them because they do not understand how to relate to other students. In both situations, international students feel that no one in the class has made an effort to get to know them as individuals. Consequently, they feel that simply coming from a different culture or part of the world has doomed them to constant isolation (Center for Teaching Learning, 1997).

The Japanese language differs from American English in terms of vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, structure, writing, reading, and speaking styles. In Japanese, there are three types of alphabet, including 52 hiragana letters (the Japanese cursive syllabary), 52 katakana letters (the square form of kana) and approximately 6,000 Chinese characters. In terms of grammar, the structure is completely different, and creates complicated puzzles when one compares the two languages. In Japanese, a sentence starts with a subject, and is followed by a preposition, an auxiliary noun, an object and, finally, a verb while in English sentences begin with a subject, followed by a verb, object, preposition and an auxiliary noun. For instance, in English, the sentence structure is as follows: “Sumiko (subject) bought (verb) an (article) apple (object) at (preposition) the (article) farmer’s market (auxiliary noun),” while a Japanese sentence is,

“Sumiko (subject) farmer’s market (auxiliary noun) at (preposition) apple (object) bought (verb)” without any article or plural use.

Furthermore, one reads from left to right and top to bottom in English while one reads from top to bottom and from right to the left in Japanese. At the bottom of each column, the reader in Japanese continues to the top of the next column to the left (See Figure 1). According to Allen and Ingulsrud (2005), the less important details are at top of the page, while the more important ones are in the lower part in Japanese. On the other hand, the first sentence is the theme of the paragraph in English; as a result, readers require different cognitive processes for reading the two languages because of the different reading patterns (Tomioka & Paradis, 2002).

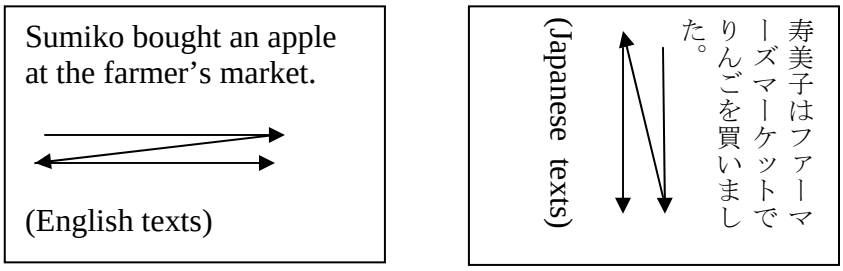

Figure 1: English and Japanese Writing Styles

Needing to adjust from a collective society in Japan to an individual society is another challenge for Japanese students at U.S. universities. Due to societal differences, there are different expectations for students in U.S. universities. In individualistic educational systems, educators often criticize students who do not speak up in class when educators raise questions (Hofstede, 2001). If students do not contribute to classroom discussions, they are thought to not follow or understand the lectures. Meanwhile,

according to Hofstede (2001), students from collective cultures believe that it is inappropriate to speak up unless they are called on by their professors. When educators in Japan want students to share their opinions, they will personally address students using their surnames. Therefore, sharing ideas and speaking up in class is not a high expectation in Japanese schools. In addition, assertive behavior and shows of confidence should be avoided in collective educational systems because the main educational philosophy is to maintain harmony in a group. Conversely, in individualist educational systems students are encouraged to perform assertively and to display confidence when expressing their ideas. This matter of speaking out in class provokes cultural dissonance and presents challenges to Japanese students in U.S. classrooms.

Moreover, historically, a type of hegemony, which is confrontation between power and the powerless within people (Scott, 1992), controls Japanese society in terms of age, status and gender. As a philosophical view, Japanese history and people's lives are based on Confucianism. The Confucian system focuses on a peaceful community and is hierarchically structured and controlled. This philosophy instructs people to be faithful and have respect for seniors and authorities. Confucianism emphasizes integrity, righteousness, and warm consideration as well. Furthermore, it highlights subordinates' obedience to superiors and men's dominance over women and children (Sugihara & Katsurada, 2002). Not only does gender inequality continue within the society, it is reinforced in school (Weiler, 2003). The situations usually become hidden agendas so students do not perceive them as forms of oppression because the situations occur naturally and historically (Lather, 1991; Scott, 1992). Americans tend to consider Japanese female graduate students too quiet, too modest, too polite and less capable

individuals if they use Japanese speech styles in U.S. classrooms. Though these omnipresent manners may not be their nature, historical Japanese society norms oppress their speech patterns and behavior. This postmodern critical feminist theory and insightful examination of Japanese female graduate students' experiences form the research questions in this study. Educational philosophy, gender roles and language in Japan are significantly different from those of the U.S. Japanese female graduate students need to realize the expectations in educational settings in the U.S. and learn about different speech patterns when they speak English in addition to improving their English proficiency.

Statement of the Problem

Regardless of these gender disparities, numerous Japanese youths are willing to go abroad every year in order to pursue higher education and to gain cross-cultural experiences. Through direct interaction, however, I have heard that those who do not attain sufficient English proficiency for higher institutions, in particular, have been expelled from U.S. schools or felt compelled to leave on their own. These students often struggle with psychological problems caused by pressure and anxiety from language issues and barriers. Interestingly enough, the female Japanese students I studied had to confront different cultural expectations.

In the recent past, a Japanese female graduate student at a Midwestern U.S. university became depressed and attempted suicide. She had received a two-year full scholarship from the Japanese university where she completed her bachelor's degree. She was a very serious and hard-working student; and, because of her personality, tended to be quiet and shy around strangers. She had difficulty managing cultural differences in the

U.S. after her Japanese friends at the U.S. university had graduated. She could not make new close friends and did not talk with her advisor, either. She failed in her suicide attempt, but she still struggled with finishing her degree. Another example was a Japanese female student who could not leave her house because of the anxiety surrounding her language ability. She had not used English from the time she left high school until she came to the U.S. because she planned only to accompany her husband during his graduate studies. However, she decided to pursue her own Master's degree. When she started using English, she felt that all English speakers treated her like a baby, based on her speaking tone and speed. Gradually, she lost confidence in her competence in English, and then became afraid to communicate with English speakers.

Research Questions

Based on previous investigation and my own experiences, I am interested in understanding the challenges Japanese female graduate students encounter adjusting to life in their new environment. In this research, I focused on what kinds of coping and adjustment strategies these students utilized at a Midwestern U.S. university. Here are the research questions:

1) What are Japanese female graduate students' language-related experiences?
2) What are the on-campus and off-campus living experiences of Japanese female graduate students?
3) What academic difficulties do Japanese female graduate students experience?

Purpose of the Study

The main objective of this research is to understand the challenges Japanese female graduate students face while adjusting to speaking English, participating in

classrooms, and socializing with peers at a Midwestern U.S. university. In addition, this research explores why these problems occur. This research studied particular patterns of cognitive and pedagogical elements (Liu, 2001). Communication patterns during classroom discussions, behavior in the classroom, learning styles, and interaction with professors and peers may illuminate some of the coping strategies students use when studying in foreign universities. Study focused on nine female students who stayed at a selected university up to two years. The time frame was critical to capture the early adjustment processes of the students. I anticipated, based on my own experiences, that the longer person stayed in a community, the higher the likelihood of cultural adjustment. Therefore, selecting participants who had stayed up to two years provided opportunities for learning about the early adjustment process, frustrations and contention.

Significance of the Study

The first significance of this study is to contribute research dealing with Japanese female graduate students on U.S. campuses. Little research data explores the strategies Japanese female students use in coping in the new culture. Although I was able to find some dissertations and research that investigated issues of Asian students in the U.S., there was only a limited number of studies regarding experiences specifically of Japanese female graduate students in particular environments. This research could amplify this area of study, which needs to be explored from several perspectives.

My research could benefit Japanese female students and institutions dealing with them on U.S. campuses. Having been a student for six years at a Midwestern U.S. university, I have experienced and been informed that Japanese female graduate students who come from different backgrounds strive to adapt to cultural differences (i.e.

negotiation skills, cultural sensitivity, flexibility, and communicative skills). Moreover, these students often struggle with recognizing who to ask for help and accessing various university communities, including academic professors, American classmates, other international students, administrative assistants, and professional materials (Liu, 2001). U.S. institutions include international student offices and counseling centers, which Japanese female graduate students may utilize.

Finally, this research could create awareness about why Japanese female students behave in particular ways. This study is for those who work with Japanese female graduate students in U.S. universities and colleges. Although all Japanese female graduate students of U.S. universities encounter different kinds of issues at college, their professors barely know the real situations. This research is not only for professors and instructors, but also for teaching assistants, administrative assistants, and student advisors who work with Japanese female graduate students to understand that these students may have distinct ways of responding to particular disciplines and tend to expect rules to be strictly enforced. Moreover, this research could help those who are interested in understanding how Japanese female graduate students can become comfortable and confident in terms of the classroom environment.

Delimitations of this Study

This research is a narrow exploration, focusing on the challenges that Japanese female graduate students face as second-language learners. Analyzing the experiences of such students may not directly help domestic and other international students to discover possible solutions of their academic and socializing challenges. Although I interviewed nine Japanese female graduate students and gathered information about several unique

experiences, these cases may not be applicable to other research and reports. However, this study provides a deep understanding of a particular group, Japanese female graduate students, for those who research Japanese culture or are unfamiliar with it.

Definition of Terms

The definitions of key terms in this study are as follows:

Border crossing: Shifting across borders resulting in different cultures, power and knowledge. The experience creates a cultural dissonance and leads to feelings of being outsiders. Academia combines different fields of study and leads to border crossers feeling even more different from others (Georgiadis & Apostolos, 2008; Girox, 1992 Premnath, 2007).

Hegemony: The dominance of one social group over another occurs through rules and authoritative power. The power relation creates inequality (Scott, 1992).

Misrecognition: Individuals consider others as different which contributes to injustice.

Banking education: Teachers become the main tool of communication while students patiently receive, memorize and repeat as passive learners (Freire, 2000).

Problem-posing education: Teachers constantly re-form students' reflections, and present the material to the students to let them consider and express their thoughts (Freire, 2000).

Juku: Primary, junior high, and high school students attend such a school for preparing entrance examination. It is also called a cram or cramming school.

Individualism: Personal goals are the first priority over ingroup goals. Individualists raise children to be self-reliant and independent. (Triandis, McCusker & Hui, 1990).

Collectivism: Collectivists pay much attention to a particular ingroup, and behave differently toward members of outgroups (Triandis, McCusker & Hui, 1990).

High Context (HC): Communication styles tend to be less verbal, written and formal. Decisions depend on personal relationships, and often center around a person who has authority (Hall & Hall, 1990).

Low Context (LC): Interaction contains explicit, public and external information. Interpersonal connections tend to be of short duration. Decisions and activities are made based on what needs to be done (Hall & Hall, 1990).

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One consists of the purpose and significance of the study. Chapter Two presents a literature review covering the following areas: Overview of the history of education in Japan, Japanese international students, collectivism/individualism, socialization process of women in Japan, and theoretical framework. Chapter Three demonstrates the research method of this study, including the design of the study, selection of participants, and data collection procedures. Chapter Four covers the discussion of findings results; it presents the themes that emerged from the participants, the interviews and the observations based on each research question. Finally, Chapter Five provides a summary, implications of theory and suggestions for future research and conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Rationale for the Selected Areas for Review

Cross-cultural issues are critical matters to discover and to be discussed in order to promote globalization. Many scholars have argued cross-cultural issues using multiple perspectives. Three important areas that may be explored based on previously done studies are: (1) the significant stages of the evolution of education in Japan; (2) how Japanese international students adjust their identities in the U.S., and (3) how the socialization process of women in Japan affects their academic life at U.S. universities. In the review, the first section discusses the critical stages of Japanese education. While examining situations of international students in higher educational systems of the U.S., the communicative performance of Japanese students in the U.S. is explored in terms of class participation, negotiation, and adaptation. Several researchers propose that decisive differences between Japan and the U.S. are social background and educational philosophy (Althen, 1988; Habu, 2000; Hofstede, 2001; Liu, 2001). The cultural orientation of the Japanese towards collectivism presents a challenge to them in adjusting to the U.S. culture which tends to stress individualism. These substantial differences create a challenge for Japanese female students as they adapt to their new academic environment.

The third category explores women's roles in Japan and their challenges in the U.S. environment. While analyzing the socialization process of women in Japan, this review discloses their language tools, communication styles, class participation and intercultural communications. In order to maintain academic achievements in the new country, they have to recognize different intercultural communication styles and

effectively practice them. These kinds of intercultural negotiations demonstrate decisive challenges for Japanese female students to achieve during their academic journey and socialization process in the U.S. For a theoretical framework, I utilize organization theory as the main framework and postmodern critical feminist theory in order to analyze cultural adjustment and false consciousness of gender. This theoretical framework combines the cross-cultural issues of this study and leads the data analysis.

Overview of the History of Education in Japan

Japanese education began in the Seventh Century. After the Taiho period began in 701, the government created schools for Samurai children. At the time, education mainly pursued notions of Confucianism, and students studied and memorized Chinese classics, including *Analects of Confucius* and the *Art of War* (Asian Info, 2000).

In the middle of the 17th Century, when the Tokugawa Period began, new types of schools were established. The Tokugawa Period began in 1600, after Ieyasu Tokugawa won the battle of Sekigahara. Named after Sekigahara Tokugawa, this era of power in Japan rested in a paramount feudal lord, a shogun, who ruled in the name of the emperor. The shogun delegated power in Japan's provinces to local warriors called Bushi or Samurai, typically small landholders. The first schools, formed in the middle of the 17th Century, were temple schools, the *terakoya*, which became the first common schools in Japan. Another type of school was Dutch studies, or *rangaku*, where young Samurai learned about modern arms, medicine, and other European sciences. The school of Dutch studies allowed students to gain outside knowledge only via the Dutch trading post in Nagasaki, Japan. Although Japanese education was separated from society and focused

on ancient texts, its system became one of the most advanced functions in the world at the time (Everything 2, 2002).

Because of a homogeneous population and Confucianism, a strong sense of national identity was created that would aid in the development of modern Japan. Confucianism, a regnant Chinese philosophy, emphasized harmonious social and political relationships and responsibility to authorities. Based on the combination of Confucianism with Bushido, the code of the warrior, the shoguns developed an educational philosophy that embraced learning classic Confucian and military skills. Although only two percent of the total population in Japan during the Tokugawa Period was Samurai, approximately 200 domain schools were established for the sons of the Samurai class and these schools became extremely successful. As a result, Japanese grew accustomed to the idea that schools were important in society, which created the infrastructure for the Meiji modernizers' educational program (Gutek, 2006).

The Meiji Period started when the last shogun, the Lord of Mito, voluntarily surrendered his power to the Meiji emperor in 1867. This young emperor and his modernizing Samurai group were in control of Japan. They utilized the infrastructure established during the Tokugawa Period to establish a centralized school system to modernize Japan. The new educational scholars were open to Western knowledge, such as a technically skilled workforce, and a Western-trained army and navy. However, they were determined to preserve Japan's Shinto-Confucianism tradition from Western imperialism because of several successful efforts from the modern Japanese national system of education (Stevenson, 1991).

In order for the Meiji Period to survive obstacles and thrive in the nation, the Meiji leaders applied a defensive modernization strategy with three emphases: 1) preserve the nucleus of Japanese ethical values, derived from Confucianism and Bushido, as the essential cultural core of national identity, 2) selectively borrow Western scientific and technological identity, and 3) graft new knowledge to inherited Japanese core values. Therefore, Japan used a strategy of selective borrowing and adaptation of Western science and technology that would be confined within a Japanese core value system (Gutek, 2006).

The construction of Japan's educational system and institutions began with the Meiji Fundamental Code of Education in 1872. Shimpei Ito created this system for Japan based on Western nations, including France and the U.S. Top-level decision-makers in the national Ministry of Education were given top-down authority over educational and cultural affairs. This Meiji Fundamental Code of Education was planned for a universal educational system based on a pyramid-like school system (Theodore, Gluck & Tiedermann, 2005).

Indeed, several Japanese leaders and intelligent scholars had started to adopt Western science while considering the possibilities of educational reform. The most critical figure during this movement was Yukichi Fukuzawa, who concluded, after traveling the U.S. and Europe, that the most meaningful system at that time was in Germany. He published a best-selling book, *Gakumon no Susume* (An Encouragement of Learning) in 1872. His idea that "Heaven does not create one man above or below another man. Any existing distinction between the wise and the stupid, between the rich and the poor, comes down to a matter of education," is still considered common sense in

modern Japanese society. Although the Japanese lacked the financial and administrative resources for universal education, by 1878, 41.3 percent of the school-age population was attending school (Everything 2, 2002).

In the 1880s, Japan's educational officials moved in a more nationalistic direction. Policymakers started to implement a Samurai and Shinto nationalistic and military heritage. When Arinori Mori became Minister of Education in 1885 he expounded his own principle that, "In the administration of all schools, it must be kept in mind, what is done is not for the sake of the pupil, but for the sake of the country" (Gutek, 2006, p. 340). Mori's philosophy was based on three pillars: 1) develop national power, 2) enlighten the general population, and 3) keep Japan free of foreign domination. As a result, Japan adopted Germany's concept of statistics (Beauchamp, 1998).

Japanese scholars were sent to study at German universities and were called upon to advise Japanese educators. They were attracted to the German education philosophy, especially the work of German realist Johann Friedrich Herbart, because it was a carefully constructed series of steps by which educators instructed their students. Moreover, Herbart's philosophy focused on moral education which fit well into the goals of Japanese Minister of Education Ainori Mori. Mori restructured the Confucian moral of filial piety, obedience to authority, the practice of social civility, and fidelity to tradition while applying Herbart's belief in the value of sincerity, integrity, will, justice, and reward (Gutek, 2006).

Kowashi Inouye, who succeeded Mori, emphasized vocational education and industrial training and prepared a highly productive workforce starting in 1893. Based on vocational training schools in Germany and the U.S, the Ministry of Education in Japan

provided school curricula, for agricultural schools, industrial schools, and commercial schools, as well as supplementary vocational and apprenticeship schools. In addition, imperial universities particularly established science, technology, law, medicine, literature, engineering, and agriculture as important fields (Beauchamp, 1998). The very first institution was the Tokyo Imperial University, now called Tokyo University. Other prestigious universities developed later, including Fukuzawa's Keio University, Waseda University, and Rikkyo University. Instead of focusing on Samurai nobility in higher education, the universities welcomed children of landowners and businessmen (Everything 2, 2002).

By 1903, 90 percent of the primary school-age group was attending school, and in 1907, the government required six years of compulsory primary school attendance instead of the previous four years. Enforcing primary school attendance by law was one of the successful elements in the Japanese educational system at the time. While primary schooling in Japan was becoming a mass system, middle schools and higher education remained selective (Gutek, 2006).

During the Imperialist Period from 1912 to 1945, changes happened in Japan and across the world. By 1920, industrial power developed in Japan, including textiles and, machine and chemical manufacturing, though the Japanese empire still lacked raw material for mass industrial production. In addition, Japanese education was extremely nationalistic and militaristic, stressing maximum central control from 1930 to 1945. In 1937, primary schools were national schools dedicated to creating basic skills and training in conformity to the principles of the Japanese Empire. Two years were added to compulsory primary training and it became an eight-year schooling program

(Beauchamp, 1998). Also in 1937, Japan joined with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in an Anti-Comintern Pact, directed against the Soviet Union. In 1941, the Japanese attacked the U.S. at Pearl Harbor, precipitating World War II. By 1943, the war was seriously underway, and the Japanese were decisively defeated and surrendered in 1945 after the devastating atomic bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima (Gutek, 2006).

After the surrender of Japan to the Allies on August 15, 1945, Japan was occupied and basically controlled by U.S. armed forces. The occupation authorities eliminated militarism and extreme nationalism from the school curriculum. In 1946, General Douglas Macarthur invited a U.S. education mission to Japan to advise occupation authorities on how to democratically reconstruct the Japanese education system. The commission recommended curriculum revision; underscoring of democratic principals and values; administrative and organizational decentralization to provide for local control of schools; establishing an institutional education ladder; and simplifying the Japanese language by using roman letters rather than Japanese script (Beauchamp, 1998).

The commission for democratization and decentralization created the Fundamental Law on Education in 1947, which implemented all the commission's recommendations except for replacing the Japanese script. The Fundamental Law of Education created a 12-year elementary through secondary school system modeled on the American and German styles. Finally, Japan created a 6-3-3-year system—primary school, secondary school, and high school respectively—applying Germany's educational system. As in the U.S., Japanese higher education was restructured into two-year junior colleges and four-year universities (Beauchamp, 1998).

The Fundamental Law of Education Act of 1948 decentralized the school administration and limited the powers of the Ministry of Education to issuing general guidelines. However, Japan abandoned decentralization after the occupation and reasserted the traditional pattern of education because it was consistent with its historical pattern of centralized educational control. Since 1950 Japanese education has drastically changed and developed. Critical changes and developments have led to the establishment of new colleges and universities, the general expansion of schools at all levels, social mobility through education, and the growth of *juku*, also called cram or cramming schools, which are supplemental schools where students prepare for entrance examinations and receive enrichment lessons (Beauchamp & Vardaman, 1997).

The modern Japanese society is often referred to as a nation that makes education a national priority. The terms *gakureki shakai* (educational path society) and *kogakureki shakai* (a society of long educational routes) demonstrate national respect and commitment to education. For the sake of historical and social foundations, Japanese education valued social cohesiveness and harmony. This national value produced unique personal behavior and socioeconomic expectations. The Ministry of Education essentially controlled the school system, and reinforced national uniformity and standardization, as well as organized curricula and standards (Gutek, 2006).

Traditionally, Japanese people clearly understood the expectations for schools and the role of schools in their society. For them, the school is an academic instead of a multi-functional institution where students learn the basic skills for the country's economic and social well-being. Japanese schooling emphasized conformity in order to develop collaborative group behavior. Therefore, educators and students alike had to understand

what conforms to and what violates acceptable behavior. These behaviors not only helped in school and at home, but also in the larger society and economy.

In terms of textbooks, the Ministry of Education, called the *Mombusho,* has to review them to confirm if they are appropriate for the educational curricula and standards in Japan. Through investigation by the Ministry of Education, the Japanese publishers follow specific standards. Additionally, the *Mombusho* ensures uniform national educational standards and outcomes. Japanese textbooks are used for memorization and retention of information to pass entrance examinations. Several Japanese textbooks show a structured description of basic information instead of expanding contents. Is one of the important controversies relating to textbooks: Japanese history textbooks became a major issue in 2005, as China and South Korea protested the books did not reveal Japanese aggressions and tragedies during World War II. Japan's Ministry of Education had authorized new textbooks of history that the Chinese claimed whitewashed Japan's invasion of China (1931-1945). The most painful contents, including sex slaves for Japanese soldiers and the Naking massacre, in which Japanese slaughtered 300,000 Chinese people, had been removed (*China Daily*, 2005).

The structure of Japanese education includes preschools, elementary schools, secondary schools, *juku,* and higher education. From age six to 15, school attendance is compulsory. Over 99 percent of these age groups attend school and students usually commute on foot to the schools nearest their homes. After lower secondary schooling, there are multiple choices depending on a student's goals (Gutek, 2006). There are special training schools, technical colleges, junior colleges, universities and graduate schools. To prepare students for competition to enter high school and colleges there are

juku, cram schools, which students attend after regular school hours for supplemental information (Everything 2, 2002).

About 75 percent of children ages three to five attend 15,000 schools, either nursery schools or day schools. Ninety-five percent of teachers in preschools are women. The students usually learn about cooperative attitudes by reading, conversation exercises, concentrating on tasks through drawing and sports, and showing respect for others. Although the Japanese tend to focus on long-term academic success, preschools usually have play-oriented schedules.

Elementary schools consist of six years of education, starting at age six. The Japanese elementary school curriculum involves Japanese language arts, literature, social studies, arithmetic, science, music, drawing and handicrafts, homemaking, physical education, moral education, and other activities such as field trips and excursions enrichment in nature. Due to the complexity of the Japanese script, students have to learn one thousand Chinese characters by the end of the six years of elementary school (Asian Info, 2000). Japanese teachers at all levels are much better prepared in mathematics than are their counterparts in other countries. All Japanese students are required to take advanced mathematics classes (Ellington, 2001).

The Japanese school year consists of three terms: April first through July first, September first through December first, and January first through March first. The school year is 240 days long compared with 180 in the U.S. (OECD, 2001). Classroom teachers are responsible for covering all subjects in elementary schools and must, therefore, be skillful in gymnastics, music instruments, particularly piano, and arts.

The average class size is 29 students per teacher in elementary school and 34 to one in lower secondary education. These large class sizes emphasize group behavior among children. Stevenson and Stigler (1992) provided the notion of group identification which encourages children's motivation for achievements in collectivist and individualist societies while analyzing the learning gap among U.S., Japanese and Chinese schools. In the collectivist societies, such as Japan and China, children often hesitate to express disagreements with other pupils or to ask questions or challenge teachers. In addition, when one student or subgroup in a class achieves a goal and is praised in school, the achievements reflect on the whole class or all members of the group. At the same time, individual achievements are respected. Therefore, children immediately understand how important it is for all members to cooperate and take responsibility towards particular goals (Stevenson & Stingler, 1992).

Secondary education in Japan includes the three-year lower secondary school from age 13 to 15 and the three-year upper secondary school from 16 to 18 years old. While attendance is compulsory in the lower secondary school, it is not necessary in the upper secondary school (Beauchamp & Vardaman, 1997). In modern Japanese education, the dropout rate among secondary students is very low and 91 percent of students complete school. Nearly 40 percent of the graduates pursue junior college or university education (MEXT, 2005).

The lower secondary school curriculum contains Japanese language, social studies, mathematics, science, music, the arts, health and physical education, industrial arts and homemaking, moral education, elective subjects and extracurricular activities. Students begin a foreign language, English, in secondary schools in Japan and about 10

percent of instructional time is spent on the language. In April of 2009, most elementary school children in Japan began to study English in order to encourage multicultural education (MEXT, n.d.). In lower secondary education, classroom teachers are responsible for managing the class routine, such as cleaning, opening, closing, and yearly goals for the class. However, they do not teach all subjects. Instead, each teacher is in charge of a particular subject on which she or he focused at college in the process of teacher training courses (Gutek, 2006).

Although some upper secondary schools consider students' grades and teachers' evaluations, most students take entrance examinations to get into upper secondary schools and higher education. Students have a variety of selections for entrance examinations nowadays. However, 80 percent of lower and upper secondary students attend private preparation, cram schools, the purpose of which is to prepare for the examinations. Students often face intense pressure as they prepare for the Joint Achievement Test that determines entry for colleges and universities (Asian Info, 2000).

Some universities, as well as some upper secondary schools, offer an option of admission besides examinations, including interviews and performance. In my case, when I entered college, I was allowed to take alternative examinations. My high school selected me as a potential student at the university, so my high school teacher wrote a recommendation letter mentioning my efforts, my academic grades, extracurricular activities, and events at the school. A few weeks later, I received an admission letter from the university.

Depending on their future goals, students are offered multiple choices in higher education raging from technical colleges, junior colleges, and universities, to graduate

schools. Technical colleges emphasize particular skills, including art, cooking, apparel design, and hair dressing. Junior colleges and universities offer a wide variety of majors, such as engineering, education, literature, language, mathematics, biology, social science, and medical education.

Finally, the decreasing birth rate has become a significant educational issue in Japan. The population in Japan is nearly 128 million but is expected to decline soon. Furthermore, over half of all Japanese women with children in school work outside the home and there are numerous single mothers. These mothers often give up sending children into higher education due to a lack of finances. Because of a lack of students, several colleges have closed in the recent past. With fewer students at school, many professors have to leave their jobs. Although the Japanese graduate enrollments at high schools and universities have increased recently, there are critical issues in education in terms of decreasing numbers of children in Japan (Ellington, 2001).

Philosophical Foundations that Influenced Education in Japan

Throughout Japanese history, the powerful Confucian beliefs have influenced and enhanced national life in all aspects of society and educational fields (Mungazi, 1993). Confucianism was introduced from China, and has been a powerful influence on Japanese culture, ethics, politics, and education. Confucianism is one of three influential philosophies from China, along with Taoism and Buddhism. When Prince Taishi Shotoku (547-622) enacted a 17 Article Constitution, which structured Confucianist models and Buddhist ethics as the moral foundations of the young Japanese nation, Japanese Confucianism was born. The Constitution contained: 1) the importance of harmony; and 2) sincere respect of the Buddha, the Law, and the Priesthood (Schumacher, 2008).

In the Tokugawa Period from 1600 to 1867, Confucian philosophy emphasized military warriors and the Samurai military code while stressing harmonious relationships for the society and politics, and responsibility to higher authority. A fundamental value in Japanese Confucianism focused on the need for a social and political hierarchy, harmony, and cooperation. In the Meiji Period from 1868 to 1912, interestingly, Japanese Confucianism started to borrow traditions from Western Europe and the U.S. While applying Western science, Japanese education kept Confucian classics, knowledge, and the military code of Bushido as a moral code. As a result, the Japanese society presented successful models in a modern national system of education (Gutek, 2006).

Japanese Confucianism in modern society has greatly influenced social behavior although people rarely pay attention to these influences in their everyday lives. A common influence of Confucianism in the present is that most Japanese keep ancestral tables and altars in their homes in order to record the posthumous names of deceased family members. In contemporary society, Japan demonstrates many characteristics of well-managed Confucian power:

1) Respect for elders

2) Loyalty and devotion (*Senpai/Kohai* system)

3) Low rates of crime due to trustworthiness, respect and honesty

4) Stable family structures (low rates of divorce)

5) Strong education system (difficult entrance exams)

6) Safe places, streets and schools

7) Use of honorific language to show respect and consideration (Schumacher, 2008).

According to Mungazi (1993), the notion of Confucian education is to understand the stable contributions of trained educators who are capable of foreseeing Japanese education in the future. A main idea of Confucius was that educators should prepare and develop instruction or rules in society. Improving both education and individuals was important because these always relate to the relationships between a human being and society. He understood that shaping a strong relationship between group members in the society is critical in education as well. Japanese culture has adopted these ideas in every area of life. Therefore, Confucian philosophy is necessary in terms of all aspects of Japanese educational efforts.

The philosophy of Confucius contains an understanding of interpersonal relationships in society. These relationships are hierarchical, and social order answers to people's obedience, responsibility, and polite manners. The concept is that a human being does not live by herself or himself alone but in relationship to others, such as sovereign/subject, father/son, elder brother/ younger brother, husband/wife, mother/ daughter and friend/friend (Wang, 2001).

Moreover, one can observe the notion of collectivism in Japanese society, which is related to Confucius' beliefs. Triandis, McCusker, and Hui (1990) stated, "In collectivist cultures behavior is regulated largely in group norms" (p. 1007). In a whole society, state, nation, race, and social status, people should be controlled within the collective group. Japanese historians believe that Japanese people have an instinctive sense and understanding that they cannot live without groups.

Group thoughts are important in the Japanese society. Everyone keeps rules and disciplines based on the notion that Japanese people have similar opinions and share

common rituals that show cooperation. They avoid standing out because this shows that the person does not follow the rules or know discipline. Students, for example, do not often oppose the ideas of elders and professors, even if they hold different ideas. If teachers do not accept students' original ideas and suggestions at the school meetings, they will often adapt students' ideas to better suit their own needs.

In addition, in order to nurture moral performance within groups, rather than giving academic lectures, teachers will give more lectures which instruct primary students on how to behave well in public and how to cooperate with other people. They teach children that maintaining harmony is necessary within groups. Teachers often mention at school that students should keep the same pace of others' steps, *ashinami wo soroeru.* For example, when 35 students in a class go to a different building, each gender makes a line. The shortest student of each gender is first, followed by the next shortest students, and so on. The two long lines move toward the gymnastic building, for instance. Good behavior often coincides with cooperation and in this case, good behavior is indicated by children who follow teachers' and parents' instructions, no matter if the idea is correct or incorrect.

Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asia, and Lucca (1988) considered collectivism to promote interdependence when the individual and group share clear goals. One can see a situation of promoted interdependence in the classroom. While American education tends to have student-centered classes, Japanese classes have teacher-centered lectures. The class style brings the notion of coexistence in Japan in terms of the collectivist society. In order to cooperate smoothly with each other, someone in the group must lead the rest. In the case of schools in Japan, the teacher becomes the leader. The collective atmosphere

can be peaceful and cooperative work can be accomplished because of the relationship between teachers and students.

In terms of traditional schooling, Japanese teachers impart valuable knowledge to students. Students often behave and listen humbly to the teachers (Freire, 2000). Traditional education utilizes standardized tests, letter grades, and short-answer tests. The authority of the teacher sets the tone of dialogue between students and teachers (Shor, 1992). Indeed, Japanese students follow what teachers say and believe what teachers say is correct most of the time. The authority of the Japanese teachers clearly indicates a higher position, which one observes in a conversation between students and teachers, or between teachers and parents. All students and parents use respectful words to teachers instead of using causal words.

Also, Freire (2000) made several points concerning the notions of traditional education. He believes that the “banking method” of education does not promote students’ critical thinking skills and discourages their future goals and curiosities because “the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filling, and storing the deposits” (p. 72). Instead, this method may produce human beings who perform as they are told rather than as thinking individuals even if they have freedom and are active. When these students become adults, they may never develop strong critical thinking techniques (Freire, 2000). In order to improve their critical thinking skills, students must experience interactive communication with other students.

Conversely, another scholar defines the notion of Confucianism with the unique view that people are always in a mix of human relationships. He argues that to cooperate with others is possibly their destiny. A Confucian idea is that unity is like the wings of a

bird. Humans' wings have to be set, which means that if wings move horizontally, the bird can fly straight, but if the tips of wings go slightly down, the bird will immediately fall to the ground. We can state that when a majority of people do different and wrong things it is like these wings pointing slightly down. It is evidence that the whole country could decline soon (Wagner, 1996).

An example of how this analogy relates to collectivist schooling is an evaluation of the school. If one student kills another student while fighting, the accident will be reported in the media so that most Japanese will receive the information. Afterward, the reputation of the school will be lowered in the eyes of others. Instead of the murderer receiving a negative reputation, society will blame the instruction of the school, and lower the school's reputation.

Summary

Throughout the investigation of history and philosophy in Japanese education, it is evident how history and educational thoughts have influenced Japanese society and people. Japanese education started from classes for Samurai warriors and has become compulsory for all citizens equally. Japanese Confucianism follows harmonious, collectivist, authoritative and traditional education. These are all critical elements for me to understand the evolution of Japanese education.

Japanese International Students in the U.S.

Not only Japanese students and other international students but also U.S. colleges and universities benefit by welcoming foreign students. As the first important reason, Liu (1996) proposes substantial accessibility for international students to further their research and academic study. While pursuing advanced degrees in U.S. institutions,

students participate in special training and unique research opportunities which are unavailable back home. In addition, these students engage with many new perspectives and bring diversity to the U.S. institutions. While empowering the multicultural environment via their ethical, religious, and linguistic backgrounds, international students foster effective exchanges and encourage global understanding. Finally, Habu (2000) and Levin (2002) suggest that international students have a significant economic impact in the U.S. One of the main reasons the U.S. encourages international students to study here is to maintain the U.S. economy. Although all of the factors above are plausible, I believe that international students come to the U.S. in order to satisfy their curiosity, nurture self-esteem and develop flexibility.

Over the decades, students have gone abroad in order to gain advanced knowledge and meaningful experiences. Studying abroad is one of the popular decisions and honorable achievements in history. According to the Institute of International Education (2006), 38,712 Japanese students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities during the 2005/2006 academic year. Although this number is 8.3 percent down from the previous year, Japanese students place fourth in the number of foreign students in the United States. Of this enrolled number, 64 percent pursue undergraduate programs, 21 percent study in graduate programs, and the remaining 15 percent are here for diverse reasons.

With the large population of Japanese students in U.S. institutions, considerable research is necessary in order for them to achieve academic success. According to Okazaki (1997), these various needs are academic support, cultural adjustment, acculturation, emotional well-being, stress adjustment, academic sources, counseling

credibility and intercultural understanding. Although there are several issues that need to be discussed, previous research covers rather a broad realization and very few case studies (Liu, 1996). As a result, serious problems often are overlooked and negatively stereotyped. In order to discover effective adjustment strategies for students, this literature review clarifies unspoken misunderstandings while enhancing cultural awareness.

Identity Adjustment at U.S. Universities

International students in U.S. campus environments often encounter challenges in terms of cultural and intellectual perspectives while they meet academic requirements and experience diversity (Altbach, 2004; Liu, 2001). Generally speaking, international students, particularly Japanese female graduate students, have to complete their degrees while immersed in the American lifestyle and adjusting to cultural differences in terms of values, behavior, institutions, language and organization (Hofstede, 2001).

Social identity theory, developed to understand the psychological basis of intergroup discrimination, explains aspects of identity adjustment. The theory attempts to identify the minimal conditions that would lead members of one group to discriminate in favor of the ingroup to which they belong and against an outgroup. According to social identity theory, a person is not one “personal self,” but rather several characters that correspond to widening circles of group membership. Different social contexts may cause an individual to think, feel and act on the basis of her or his personal, family or national “level of self.” Apart from the “level of self,” an individual has multiple “social identities.” Social identity is the individual’s self-concept derived from perceived membership in social groups (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). In other words, it is an

individual-based perception of what defines the “us” associated with any internalized group membership. This can be distinguished from the notion of personal identity which refers to the self-knowledge that derives from the individual’s unique attributes.

Additionally, social identity theory asserts that group membership creates ingroup/ self-categorization and development in ways that favor the ingroup at the expense of the outgroup. The examples (minimal group studies) of Tajfel and Turner (1986) showed that the mere act of individuals as group members was sufficient to lead them to display ingroup preference. After being categorized by group membership, individuals seek to achieve positive self-esteem by positively differentiating their ingroup from a comparison outgroup based on some value dimension. This positive individuality means that a person’s sense of self is defined in terms of ‘we’ rather than ‘I’.

Tajfel and Turner (1986) specify three variables whose contribution to the emergence of ingroup favoritism is particularly important: 1) the extent to which individuals identify with an ingroup and internalize that group membership as an aspect of their self-concept; 2) the extent to which the prevailing context provides a grounds for comparison between groups; and 3) the perceived relevance of the comparison group, which itself will be shaped by the relative and absolute status of the ingroup. Individuals are likely to display favoritism when an ingroup is central to their self-definition and a given comparison is meaningful.

Therefore, social identity theory generates a considerable impact on social psychology. It has been tested in a wide range of fields and settings and includes ideas on prejudice, stereotyping, negotiation and language use. The theory also has implications on the way people deal with social and organizational change.

One of the most common challenges is language difficulty, which causes Japanese female graduate students to feel anxiety, fear, and isolation (Bang, Muriuki & Hodges, 2008; Lin & Yi, 1997; Tatum, 2003). These negative factors lead to less motivation to speak English as the foreign language (Gass & Selinker, 2001) since speakers' identities when speaking English becomes too fragile to produce a target language (Brown, 2001). They particularly struggle with telephone conversations because they cannot see facial expressions and gestures (Englishclub.com, 2009). Speech styles and tones of another language are often associated with their mother tongues, and some English sounds are extremely difficult for Japanese native speakers to acquire (Wells, 2000). It is easier to judge accurate sounds during face-to-face interactions than by telephone. If the students fail to communicate with someone in English, their self-esteem becomes too low to perform well, and they are confused about how to perform in a society while having difficulty in justifying their identity (Erikson, 1968). Confusion is likely to occur due to the uniqueness and the self-development associated with a group and collective identity (Azmitia, Syed & Radmacher, 2008).

A serious problem Japanese female graduate students face is marginalization due to failed experiences and differences from others. Marginalization occurs due to misrecognition and unequal treatment from others and these factors oppress people (Goodland & Riddle, 2005; Mitakidou, Tressou & Karagianni, 2008). Due to a lack of language proficiency and an identity crisis, Japanese female students are not able to make contact with Americans and other international students; the situation leads to isolation and anxiety (Bang, Muriuki & Hodges, 2008).

Therefore, it is extremely challenging for these students to adjust their identity because of a different academic environment. With limited English proficiency, these challenges cause transitional difficulties and culture shock (Althen, 1988; Wilton & Constantine, 2003); as a result, Japanese female graduate students experience homesickness and stress due to separation from family and familiar settings (Flett, Endler & Besser, 2009; Thurber, 2005). These difficulties are categorized in three sections: 1) the adaptation of identity in U.S. universities among Japanese students while exploring collectivism/individualism; 2) linguistic challenges, and 3) academic issues.

Collectivism/Individualism

The notion of individualism and collectivism has been discussed as a major dimension of cultural differences to develop intercultural communication. According to Triandis, McCusker and Hui (1990), “In collectivist cultures behavior is regulated largely by in-group norms; in individualist cultures it is regulated largely by individual likes and dislikes and cost-benefit analysis” (p. 1007). It is critical to understand how members from either group are able to adjust to other behaviors and norms although there are deviations within the same culture.

Hofstede (2001) also believes there are particular perspectives in society when one looks at the relationship between individualism and collectivism. Some cultures consider individualism as a blessing and a form of well-being, and others think of it as alienating. For example, religious communities are easily created in an individualist society where new ideas and beliefs are motivating factors. In terms of collectivism, some cultures view it as peaceful harmony, and others categorize it as vague spirituality. In order to maintain harmony, individuals avoid departing from accepted standards;

consequently, new communities rarely happen within a short time in a collectivist society. According to the view of Hofstede (2001), it is clear to see that there are different values of human society in collectivist and individualist societies.

U.S. culture is categorized by individualism in terms of cultural values and assumptions whereas Japanese culture is categorized by collectivism. As individualists, U.S. citizens tend to oppose their national culture because they often insist on labeling themselves unique individuals and a mixture of cultures. As a result, U.S. citizens often reject activities that unify them. Moreover, a pattern of goodness among American people is to be self-reliant even though they act independently (Bennett, 1998). On the other hand, Japanese people try to generalize their national culture while citing many similarities among them. According to Bennett (1998), Japanese people avoid self-assertion because they consider it selfish behavior. As a result, most Japanese are comfortable utilizing “we” to describe Japanese people in general. It shows a collective consciousness which is necessary for group thoughts to happen. Although Japanese society tolerates and even expects individual initiatives in a fashion compared to other Asian countries, large parts of the society follow the notion of collectivism (Wiseman, Congalton, Gass, Sueda & Ruiqing, 1995). Analyses of Bennett (1998) are insightful while looking at critical issues of individualism and collectivism, and it helps to understand cultural values.

Individualism and Collectivism: Linguistic Challenges

When people talk in general, all of them unconsciously express their ideas without thinking about grammatical structures and choosing speech styles. This habit tends to be natural in their first language because fluent speech happens naturally (Whorf,

1998). However, this natural habit happens differently when language is different regarding rationale of thoughts, meaning, nonverbal communication and gender.

In general, a collectivist society has a more honored and respectful language for elder people than does an individualist society (Giles & Lim, 2007). Asians, in particular, are sensitive to age differences compared with Europeans. According to Giles and Lim (2007), communications between one-year-difference speakers show modesty and respect from younger speakers in Korea. Although the individualism-collectivism dimension does not perfectly examine why they care about age differences, one has to understand these values of age differences in both societies.

Romaine (2000) suggests a helpful way of understanding differences between languages. The concept is to realize a divergence of langue function in each society. Usage in the Japanese language, for example, can be changed depending on social relations rather than proper grammar use. While English speakers generally refer to themselves as “I” only, there are four pronouns referring to self for Japanese speakers, depending on the occasion and the status of speakers.

Similarly, Kashima and Kashima (1998) analyzed the relationship between different cultures and language. In Japanese, they discovered two linguistic characteristics: Pronoun drop, which is the practice of omitting the first person singular pronoun and single or multiple first person pronouns, such as “I” in English compared with *watashi*, *boku*, *ore* and others in Japanese (Hofstede, 2001). While *watashi* is a gender-free word, *boku* and *ore* are for males and they represent a level of masculinity and power of the male gender.

Individualism and Collectivism: Educational Pedagogy and Philosophy

Schooling demonstrates decisive differences of individualist and collectivist cultures. Before primary school, children rarely experience these distinctions; however, there are visible differences in classroom behaviors. According to Hofstede (2001), the formation of new groups effectively works in an individualist society while it takes time to adjust and interact with new members in the collectivist society. In addition, confrontation and difference of opinion are acceptable in the individualist classroom in order for students to develop their self-esteem and their critical thinking skills. However, maintaining harmony is necessary to avoid confrontations and conflicts in a collectivist classroom.

Another distinction of collective education is that classroom teachers are committed solely to one class for the entire year. The class style brings the notion of coexisting in Japan in terms of the collectivist society. In order to smoothly cooperate with each other, somebody in the group must lead the rest of the members. In the case of schools in Japan, the leaders are the teachers for the group in the classroom and school. School can be peaceful and attain cooperative work because of the relationship between teachers and students.

Throughout Japanese history, the powerful Confucian beliefs have influenced and enhanced national life in all aspects of society and educational fields. The Japanese education system has become one of the most successful in the world, partially because it has been built upon the philosophical ideas of Confucius (Munganzi, 1993). Confucianism was introduced from China, and has had a powerful influence on Japanese culture and education. According to Confucius, maintaining peace in family, friends, and

work relationships is necessary, and admiring hierarchy in both society and in relationships is important as well (Gutek, 2006).

Therefore, group thoughts are important in Japanese society. Everyone maintains rules and disciplines based on the notion that Japanese people have similar opinions and share common rituals that show cooperation. They avoid outstanding attitudes because these show that the person does not follow rules and knows no discipline. Students, for example, do not often oppose ideas and suggestions, even if they hold different views. If teachers do not accept students' ideas and suggestions at a school meeting, the teachers will often adapt the ideas to better suit their own needs.

Summary

Japanese international students, particularly graduate students, face challenges in U.S. universities and colleges. One of the serious issues is differences of collectivism and individualism. When collectivist cultures prevail in society, there are particular differences in language use, identity, and educational philosophy; these are evident in individualist cultures. In the next category, reviews explore women's roles in Japan while understanding individualist and collectivist societies.

Socialization Process of Women in Japan

The philosophy of Confucius contains understanding of interpersonal relationships in society. Relationships are hierarchical, and the social status pertains to people's obedience, responsibilities, and polite manners (Wang, 2001). Historically, in the notion of Confucius, women are supposed to be subordinate to men. Gender issues are important matters in the Confucian philosophy. In this category, I review women's roles in terms of language tools, expectations and the general socialization process.

Gender and Schooling in Japan

Power relations dominate Japanese society in terms of gender roles. In modern society, Japanese women are still oppressed in the fields of education, politics, and media, etc. The relationship between gender and schooling shows reinforcement and it has appeared in the notion of resistance to human experiences through social activities and political consciousness. The experience of women and young girls in school describes notions of resistance where the school operates to promote gender separation and domination (Weiler, 2003).

In Japan, there are understandable social statuses depending on age, educational background and gender. Therefore, the social status of educators is superior to students and their parents. However, although all students in the same grade are the same age, different speech styles and behaviors are clear between male and female students. Utterances and behaviors from male students are indicative of aggression, authority, and intimidation. Female students, on the other hand, are rather quiet, modest, and express their opinions with polite speech styles. These differences show that women are oppressed not only in society but also in educational institutions. The more schools are located in suburban areas of Japan, the more these differences become clear.

Moreover, the notion of hegemony comes from the process of domination that generates social inequality. Scott (1992) suggests that the hegemony is likely to happen in any type of system, although he lists several arguments on hegemony and criticizes their perspectives. The main argument is that one cannot easily observe the situations which produce the naturalized system of hegemony. That is why people in the community are never disappointed, or resist, since the situations occur naturally and historically.

The gender disparity is manifested in the way students are seated in the classroom. Problematic issues in Japanese schools are the arrangement of name orders and desks. Regardless of the Japanese alphabet, a list of names of students in class gives males' names first alphabetically, and females' names next. Moreover, on the first day of the class, desks in classrooms are arranged into two sections: Male and female. The male students' area is often placed on the first side of the classroom, close to the entrance. The female area is in the inner part of the classroom, and it takes time to move to other buildings and facilities. Moreover, in the case of emergencies, such as disasters or earthquakes, males will have priority in getting to safety compared to females who are placed far away from entrances.

As Scott (1992) suggests, obedient subordinates will usually express the speech and gestures that superiors and men expect. In developed systems of domination, it is natural that one hides his or her feelings and words that are on his or her mind. Rather, a possible question that one tends to argue is how to control what would be a natural impulse to rage, insult, anger and violence that such feelings prompt. One of the worst conditions is the abuse of children and spouses; it is not customary to challenge these abuses (Scott, 1992). I believe this theory fits the issues of gender inequality in Japan.

In high school, for instance, the percentage of female teachers resigning is high, especially among new employees. According to domination of gender roles in society, some male students tend to be arrogant toward young female teachers in Japanese schools as well. These male students exhibit disrespectful thoughts and behavior towards young female teachers and ridicule them during lectures. Faculties of an institution will often observe that young female teachers cry in the faculty office from being insulted and

disappointed. Several victims have left the school or resigned although some devoted workers will stay with effort and other support.

Negotiation of Japanese Women's Speech Styles

Japanese language use describes gender differences in word choice, structure, and tone of voice. While the English language often includes self-assertion, the Japanese language makes speakers conform to strict rules and an invisible hierarchy. For example, men's voices are markedly lower and louder than women's voices. Japanese men regard lower voices as an expression of confidence and dignity. On the other hand, Japanese women's voices are generally clear and high in order to establish their modest and elegant attitudes. This women's speech style creates a less powerful and cooperative personality than Japanese men's speech style (Schonfeld, 1999).

Women's speech in Japanese is modest with soft voices in order to display an elegant and ladylike attitude. Even though there are several discussions about equal treatment between men and women, some experiences Japanese encounter in every day language usage often puts women in a position subordinate to men. According to Mori (1998), the tone of Japanese women's voices is high-pitched, squeaky and childish. For instance, female flight attendants, telephone marketers, and TV anchor women who read news perfectly utter this high squeaky voice.

On the other hand, Goodwin (1980) discusses the discourse of Japanese women which tends to be more cooperative than men's speech. Instead of making clear statements as men do, women's style of speaking can require approval; often sounding more like questions. Goodwin (1980) also asserts that Japanese women will make non-definite statements such as; *well*, *kind of*, and *maybe*. Since Japanese women live in a

different subculture than men, the importance of their language is dissimilar. In other words, Japanese women recognize how to communicate with others effectively, because women are used to caring for other people in the house, such as husbands, neighbors, children and relatives.

Since the West has influenced Japanese education, Japanese women have gradually taken positions in what were traditionally men's areas. Since World War II, Japanese women have started to pursue higher education even more than men do (Hines, 1996). Now, it is extremely common to hear that both husband and wife are working around the house. However, there are decisive differences between men and women's treatments in the same job. A typical example, which describes a serious gender issue, is a special training of tea-making and proper manners for first-year female workers in Japanese companies. In addition, one can easily distinguish language usage between men and women at work.

Regardless of age, a person in a lower position uses more polite forms to one in a higher position in Japanese places of work. However, executive women in a company tend to adapt the same speech style of lower ranking co-workers while men who share these women's ages and positions do not. Moreover, women who belong to higher social ranks actually show more elegant politeness in their speech than do women who belong to lower ranks (Adachi, 2002). For example, typical Japanese female receptionists say, "May I call you back later?" or "Could I call you back later?" instead of "Is it okay if I call you back?" and "Do you want me to call you back?" These women show extreme modesty while possessing high qualifications of power in their education and their cleverness.

Intercultural Communications: Japanese Women

Understanding intercultural communications is important when talking about differences in communication styles between Japan and the U.S: High-context (HC) and low-context (LC) communications. High-context communication tends to be insufficient, implicit and involve indirect messages. On the other hand, a low-context communication contains much and explicit information (Hall & Hall, 1990). Listeners in high-context communication are supposed to guess what the speakers are trying to say with a few statements (Clancy, 1986; Mori, 1998). For example, if one said, "I need to go grocery shopping," the listener would understand and think, "Oh, she is asking me to give her a ride to go to the grocery store. I should ask if she needs a ride."

Directly saying "No" or rejecting offers in Japan is uncommon since these denials are supposed to hurt other people (Kawamoto, 2007; Mori, 1997). However, Japanese females have to be aware of their responsibility and be frank in expressing what they desire in the U.S. Clancy (1986) provides 16 ways in Japanese to show disagreement without saying no, such as "silence; ambiguity; expression of apology, regret, and doubt" (p. 215). "I'll think about it" is a typical example which is used to reject offers. Therefore, language could be a tool for communication; however, just improving language proficiency will be not enough for successful intercultural communication (Ie, 2009).

These different ways of speech easily cause misunderstanding when Japanese and Americans have conversations; they affect individuals' thoughts and feelings. Barna (1998) calls it "stumbling blocks" (p. 73). While body language and affirmative comments are considered as informing and helpful in the U.S., newcomers find

Americans' self-assertive behaviors in trying not to embarrass the newcomers is actually overwhelming. A serious stumbling block is that these new foreigners feel different, and uncomfortable in the group of Americans (Barna, 1998; Mitakidou, Tressou & Karagianni, 2008).

When nonnative English speakers experience negative feelings, including sadness, pain, and being overwhelmed, their language skills are paralyzed and they are not able to produce their target language unless they have sufficient language proficiency and experiences in the country (Gass & Selinker, 2001). Brown (2001) defines this situation in a principle of teaching for foreigners. He believes that human beings create another mode of thinking, feeling, and performance, and it becomes a second identity when they speak a second language. This second identity is too sensitive to tackle challenges because its emotions are fragile as is its language proficiency. People who speak a second/foreign language tend to be silent due to anxiety, overwhelming situations, and cultural sensitivity, particularly, face-saving during interactions. Female international students hesitate to make mistakes for fear of being be ridiculed by others so they remain quiet. It is face-saving and it is common in Japanese culture where people connect with other group members (Liu, 2001).

Summary

Women's language is historically formed through a long education in Japan. Speaking styles defined one's social status and gender differences regardless of their ages. In addition, companies require women who take managerial positions to use the most polite language and elegant attitudes even though their male cohorts rarely speak with a polite speech style. While Japanese women are more educated than ever, their

speech styles show the gender hierarchy of Japan and these speech styles easily put women in subordinate positions. Their speech styles and behaviors are associated with Japanese history in which women's and men's roles were different, and these factors affect behavior and communication among Japanese female graduate students.

Theoretical Framework

As the theoretical framework of this research, I utilized two theories. As the main theory, the organization theory is meaningful because it can address individualist and collective societies. In order to support these critical concepts, I use postmodern critical feminist theory. These two theories look at how Japanese students recognize themselves as members of U.S. universities, and how gender control unconsciously perpetuates their behavior and personalities.

Organization Theory

Etzioni (1961) has developed his theoretical schema thoroughly, and has examined the work of over 60 social scientists who have tested his theoretical constructs since 1961, and thus have been able to evaluate his hypothesis. The key to Etzioni's work is his use of compliance as a tool for the study of organizations. According to Etzioni (1961), compliance meant "both… a relation in which an actor behaves in accordance with directive supported by another actor's power, and… the orientations of the subordinated actors to the power applied" (p. 3). He recognized the forms of compliance as a relationship between power on the one hand and the individual involvement in the organization on the other. Also, compliance structure will change depending on types of goals, working policy, leadership types and roles of satisfaction in institutions (Etzioni, 1961).

In order to thoroughly understand his organization theory, Etzioni (1961) suggests that power in an organization is understood as coercive, remunerative, or normative. According to him, coercive power is the threat, actual infliction of physical restrictions of movement, or the denial of basic needs of one individual by another. For instance, they include physical pain, death, and basic needs such as food, sports and relaxation. Remunerative power is created by material rewards, including salaries, prizes and services. Finally, normative power is the allocation of esteem, prestige, ritualistic symbols and social acceptance. This power usually comes from workers to leaders, mass media, and acceptance of authority, self-efficacy and opinions. Interestingly enough, Etzioni (1961) provides two types of normative power. One is the manipulation of esteem, authority and geographic symbols. This power commonly goes beyond its members. The other power is the manipulation of acceptance, and it keeps rather horizontal relationships among group members. Leaders in the group do not show their authority in this power.

Additionally, to critically understand organizational power, researchers have to understand three forms of involvement: Alienative, calculative and moral involvement according to Etzioni's (1961) terms. The involvement ranges from high to low; the direction is either positive or negative respectively. Etzioni (1961) characterizes alienative involvement as an "intensive negative orientation" (Etzioni, 1961, p. 10). Subordinate workers tend to feel this way toward their bosses and their workplace. Prisoners and people in concentration camps are also alienated from their respective organizations. Calculative involvement is a low-intensity involvement, which delegates either a negative and positive orientation. For example, it includes relationships between

companies in a capitalistic society. Attitudes of repeat customers in business tend to be calculative. Finally, moral involvement is a positive and high-intensity type based on standards and authorities. It contains loyalty and the devoted members in her or his party, for example (Etzioni, 1961).

According to Etzioni's (1961) understanding, the three types of power and three involvements are usually formed in organizations. In other words, there are three combined types of organization; coercive power; and alienative involvement, remunerative power and calculative involvement; and normative power and moral involvement (Etzioni, 1961). He calls these three types the congruent types because the three types were frequently found in organizations. The effective application of normative power, for instance, requires that subordinates are highly committed. If subordinates are rarely committed to the organization, the application of normative becomes ineffective (Etzioni, 1961).

Hofstede (2001) defines organization theory with the notion of individualism and collectivism societies. The members of organizations show particular relationships and differences between individualist and collectivist groups. For example, members of collective groups expect support from other members, and they often call it cooperation. On the other hand, individualist group members do not hesitate to express disapproval and different values in the organization in order to emphasize their unique belief (Hofstede, 2001). According to Etzioni (1961), each organization shows decisive characteristics. The collectivist organization values moral involvement which is the focus of working together within a system of rules while at least one leader exists. The individualist organization values the calculative involvement which is more goal-oriented

and does not necessarily follow a guidance of group rules; there is a probability of conflict in the individualist organization. Etzioni (1961) believes that there are two types of moral involvement—pure and social. Pure moral involvement occurs in vertical relationships, such as teachers/students, priests/parishioners and leaders/followers. Subordinated groups are expected to adjust and accept person's and group's requests (Peaz, Martinez-Taboada, Arrospide, Insua & Ayestaran, 1999). This involvement is often seen in collectivist societies, such as in Japan. On the other hand, social moral involvement occurs in horizontal relationships in various kinds of groups (Etzioni, 1961), and is likely to be seen in individualist groups, including American society.

Throughout Etzioni's (1961) theory, I have discovered strengths of organization theory. In *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations,* Etzioni demonstrates impressive collections of substantial studies. He ties together disconnected research and provides a conceptual umbrella of many types of organizations. Etzioni (1961) suggests the organizations' compliance structures, including frameworks of utilitarian, normative, and coercive forms of power, and forms of member's motivational involvement. His studies contain sociological theory, formal group dynamics, formal organization, professional and other occupational roles, and other research areas, such as prisons, educational institutions, corporations, combat armies and religious orders. Therefore, over 60 studies have used Etzioni's organization theory since 1961. His logical structures in the theory are practical and useful. As time goes by, Etzioni's revised edition demonstrates the efficacy of organizational power.

I strongly believe that the use of normative power will be a strong support in my study. There are two kinds of normative power; one comes from communities with

leaders, and the other from acceptance of authority, self-esteem and opinions. The first organization demonstrates at least one authority in a community, and demonstrates the hierarchical society in Japan. On the other hand, the other power keeps horizontal relationships among the community, such as teachers/students and parents/children. Therefore, I analyze how this power describes U.S. society. For these reasons, utilizing normative power to examine Japanese females at a Midwestern U.S. university will be beneficial.

Although Etzioni (1961) provides effective variables and correlations in his theory, there are some weaknesses. I found some ambiguous concepts in organization theory. Subsequent categories of Etzioni's studies seem too simple and broad. For instance, it was difficult for me to clarify concepts of lower participants and upper participants' organization. I was not sure whether "lower" and "upper" represented negative/positive or followers/authorities. This idea would be more convincing if Etzioni (1961) could demonstrate these clarifications.

Next, even though his work is reliable, Etzioni will have to update this research because organization styles change from generation to generation and the theories of the sixties may be obsolete. In addition, Etzioni should incorporate into the text critical and integrative reviews of the areas, which his work assists to develop more and more. When Etzioni publishes the next edition of his research book, he could include a guide on how to effectively use these critical theories in an active society. In this way, his work could be meaningful for all educators and those who are interested in understanding organizations.

Moreover, Hartley (1997) argued an interesting critique of organization theory. He believes that nothing is formed at first and norms come after organizations are created and not before. There is no pre-formed structure because all groups differ across space and change over time. As I understand it, although organization theory is helpful, Hartley is not willing to accept categorized groups because all group members create unique characteristics. On this point, I agree because I am going to research a Japanese group who experience U.S academic and social culture. Since they do not live in Japanese society, there may be a new identity group within the community.

Another weakness of organization theory is that it does not explore intercultural communication issues, though on pages 137 - 141, Etzioni (1961) briefly discusses communication roles in organizations. Organization theory analyzes either horizontal or vertical expressive communication styles and I believe that these differences are critical for researchers to understand. In addition to communication within an organization between authority and followers, my research explores intercultural communication styles in particular groups. In other words, examining direct and indirect communications styles in organizations will be more critical in my study because intercultural communication often blocks communication between Japanese and non-Japanese (Ramsey, 1998).

Applications of the Organization Theory

Stevenson and Stigler (1992) provide the notion of group identification which encourages children's motivation to achieve in collectivist and individualist societies while analyzing the learning gap among U.S., Japanese and Chinese schools. In the collectivist societies, such as Japan and China, children in school often hesitate to express

disagreements with other pupils or to criticize teachers' efforts. In addition, the achievements of groups or an individual represent the whole class when they attain a goal. Meanwhile the individual efforts are respected and prized. As a result, students in the class understand the importance of cooperation and responsibility towards particular goals.

In this research, the particular characteristic of the organization theory explains that a collectivist society, such as Japanese and Chinese schools, demonstrates moral involvement which is high intensity type.

In the individualistic orientation of society, U.S. schools inspire children to be self-reliant, critical thinkers, and self-assertive. Instead of having authoritative teachers, children are encouraged to build their own knowledge and describe it to adults. Therefore, conflicts and disagreements between parents/children and teachers/children are unavoidable in U.S. society (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch & Greenfield, 2001). In other words, children in school can pursue and attain their individual achievements (Peaz, Martinez-Taboada, Arrospide, Insua & Ayestaran, 1999) by discussing issues and expressing thoughts. I strongly believe that Etznoni's (1961) calculative involvement fits this U.S. school philosophy because calculative involvement designates either a negative or a positive direction of low intensity.

The notions of individualism and collectivism have been discussed as major dimensions of cultural differences in developing intercultural communication. According to Triandis, McCusker and Hui (1990), "In collectivist cultures behavior is regulated largely by in group norms; in individualist cultures it is regulated largely by individual likes and dislikes and cost-benefit analysis" (p. 1007). It is crucial to understand how

members from either group are able to adjust to other behaviors and norms although there are deviations within the same culture.

Hofstede (2001) also believes there are particular perspectives in society when one looks at the relationship of individualism and collectivism. Some cultures consider individualism as a blessing and way of well-being, and others think of it as alienating. For example, religious communities are easily created in an individualist society where new ideas and beliefs are motivating factors. In other words, new ideas are often respected, and these unique ideas encourage other people to actively participate in the society. In terms of collectivism, however, some cultures view it as peaceful harmony, and others categorize it as vague spirituality. In order to maintain harmony, individuals avoid departing from accepted standards so that new communities rarely happen within a short time in a collectivist society. According to the view of Hofstede (2001), it is clear to observe that there are different values of human society in collectivist and individualist societies. Therefore, how these values impact Japanese females studying in an individualistic society will be key to the research.

The U.S. society values individualism while the Japanese society is categorized by collectivism. People in the U.S. are likely to consider themselves unique individuals in a mixture of culture; they also behave self-reliantly (Bennett, 1998). On the other hand, Japanese people try to generalize their national culture while suggesting many similarities among themselves. According to Bennett (1998), Japanese people avoid self-assertion because they consider it selfish behavior. As a result, most Japanese are comfortable utilizing “we” to describe Japanese people in general. It shows a collective consciousness which is necessary for group thoughts to happen. Analyses of Bennett (1998) are

insightful while looking at critical issues of individualism and collectivism, and it helps to understand cultural values.

In terms of the nature of the relationship between the theory and my research question, organization theory strongly relates to two of my research questions as stated on page 24:

2) What are the on-campus and off-campus living experiences of Japanese female students?
3) What other academic difficulties do Japanese female students experience?

Living in residence halls and on-campus apartments in the U.S., Japanese students experience new organization groups which they never experienced in Japan. Based on Etzioni's theory and Bennet's concepts, individualist society members act self-reliantly whereas collectivist society members avoid self-assertion. Moreover, classrooms demonstrate different perspectives between collectivist and individualist societies. Students in Japan and China avoid expressing disagreement and rejection to keep and maintain group harmony while American students value independence and self-assertion regardless of conflict. I believe the theory and concepts could be used to examine students' experiences with regards to this research question. Although I have not researched the study yet, I believe that using the experiences of Japanese females in a Midwestern U.S. university will reveal crucial issues critical to the study.

Meanwhile, this theory does not examine groups of gender at all although organization is often created by a particular gender and gender often creates particular group characteristics. Therefore, I would like to consider a feminist theory in my research in order to understand the power of gender. In my research, I choose to select postmodern

critical feminist theory. In the next section, I am going to explain how postmodern critical feminist theory strongly frames my research and how I would like to utilize this particular theory. To begin, I examine the introduction of the theory, and the theoretical context of my proposed study. I then will demonstrate what the nature of the relationship is between the theory and my research question, the strengths and weaknesses of each theory in order to analyze what I can gain or lose by using the theory, and what types of elements effectively assist my research.

Postmodern Critical Feminist Theory

Lather (1991) is a feminist who has connected feminism, postmodernism and critical educational theory, and considered the consequences of such a connection for research and teaching. Breitkreuz (2005) describes the notion of critical feminist theory as the following: When critical theory is respected as an important tool of social institutions to shed light on the construction of domination and oppression, feminist theory is utilized as a tool to analyze women's subordination and to discover ways of changing the reality. Moreover, postmodern feminism examines another feminist theory which discusses the power of language (Lather, 1991). Postmodern critical feminist theory is a combination of these three theories in order to disclose structural oppression, to transform systems, and to liberate oppressed people. While exploring previous visible and modern invisible female experiences, critical feminist theory clarifies women's unequal social status. Examining the relationship between individual experiences and societal contexts, critical feminists theorize critical problems, including poverty, in order to emphasize individual explanations of particular phenomena. In European society,

particularly, critical feminist theories are applied to examine structural oppression and women's experiences (Fay, 1987; Gordon, 1979; Lather, 1991).

Similarly, Jaggar (1983) provides the idea that critical feminist theory combines with other critical theories focusing on the historical details, economics, and political structures which are created and organized by people. Additionally, she suggests that critical feminists share knowledge and other means, such as deviance, social problems and practical constructs, that are "historically determined by the prevailing mode of production [and] support the interests of the ruling class" (Jaggar, 1983, pp. 358-59). On the other hand, critical feminist theory also vividly reflects people's living experiences.

Generally speaking, postmodern feminism is an approach to feminist theory combining postmodern and post-structuralist theory which analyzes the concepts of language. The majority of postmodern feminists start discussion about gender structured through language. Frug (1992) suggested that one "principle" of postmodernism is that human experience is located "inescapably within language." Power is exercised not only by direct oppression, but also through the way in which language shapes and restricts our reality. "Language is the terrain where differently privileged discourses struggle via confrontation and/or displacement" (Lather, 1991, p. 8). One experiences this oppression not only in European countries but also in Asian countries.

Critical theory examines society and countries through a wider lens whereas feminist theory investigates particular institutions, including schools, companies, and workplaces. In my research examining female international Japanese students at a Midwestern university, I explore female socialization in Japanese society as a large field

while looking at expectations in both Japanese and American schools as specific communities.

Critical theory looks for resistance instead of victims, and Morgen (1988) calls this “empowerment.” The goal of this theory is to search “for,” not “on” or “about”, marginalized people; they are middle-class white women, racial-ethnic people, and working-class people’s voices and visibility in academic literature. Doing research “for” the subjects of research is a way of showing them respect. In other words, choosing research questions to which marginalized people want answers encourages them to tell their own stories in their own words. It also avoids overwhelming interpretations of their experiences. Thus, voice will be given to the participants to tell their own stories and share their experiences. Lather (1991) and other feminist fieldworkers say that doing research “for” marginalized people means that fieldworkers should create spaces in which oppressed people can speak for themselves instead of the researcher speaking for the subjects of the research.

The tenets of feminist theory are paying attention to the histories, perceptions and conceptions, experiences of oppression and the resistances of subordinate people. According to Amott and Matthaei (1991), the only ways of discovering solutions are to produce “liberatory knowledge, crafted with the goal of human liberation” (p. 6). The challenge of feminist research is to facilitate other studies that encompass and analyze concerns and issues of women’s issues. In *Getting Smart*, Lather (1991) briefly states, “very simply, to do feminist research is to put the social construction of gender at the center of one’s inquiry” (Lather, 1991, p. 71). An ideological goal of feminist research in gender inequality is “to correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in

ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position" (Lather, 1987, p. 6). As she states, invisible experiences within women's inequality are called either false consciousness or hidden transcripts (Lather, 1991; Scott, 1992).

Not surprisingly, challenges of interweaving these three areas, including postmodern, critical and feminist theory, demonstrate both excitement and difficulties. This new way of discussion and analysis makes Lather's and other feminists' work critical. Although research on gender inequality in education and postmodernism has not yet been deeply scrutinized, Lather (1991) courageously discusses how she tries to make a connection between feminism, postmodernism and critical educational theory. She discusses effective elements pertinent to my research of Japanese female students at U.S. universities. While analyzing the work of Lather and several feminists, finally I will explain why this European-concept theory is meaningful to use in examining Asian students.

Through the exploration of postmodern critical feminist theory, I have noticed decisive strengths. One of these powerful strengths is that this theory does not consider just one method, but examines additional elements to deeply realize critical issues, which are inventive and necessary in modern society. In postmodern critical feminist theory, while some feminism researchers analyze out of traditional paradigms and interpretive situations, the majority use liberatory knowledge. According to Lather (1991), understanding liberatory knowledge is required to understand issues of false consciousness and critical roles of researchers. Lather's feminist research goal of discovering the invisibility of women's equal experiences is one of the supportive strengths in my research. Situations of false consciousness are often invisible; they

become hidden transcripts because these situations of disempowerment have occurred historically (Lather 1991; Scott, 1992). In the case of Japan, the gender disparity is manifested in the way students are registered. A problematic issue in Japanese schools is the arrangement of name orders. I believe this concept critically explains issues of gender inequality in Japan.

Another advantage of critical feminist theory examines the power of language. This concept is greatly appreciated in my study because my research will explore how their first language and culture influence Japanese female students' identity and what types of challenges they have to overcome. Without exception, Japanese society unconsciously perpetuates the power of language in a different way than American society. Gender roles in Japan automatically create different speech styles between men and women. All participants in my research spoke English as a second language. While understanding American culture and gender roles, Japanese female students have to act differently in several cases. I believe the concept of language power in feminist theory assists my research.

Although critical feminist theory brings several advantages to understanding gender equality, it has weaknesses. To begin with, studies of gender inequality in education and postmodernism have scarcely been noticed yet. The focus on improvement of educational research, the orientation of research on learning and the development processes of teachers and pupils appear to be at odds with postmodernism. In other words, postmodernism of "gender as a social construction," which has largely been researched in other fields of women's studies, has hardly explored gender and education (Dam & Volman, 1994; Ellisworth, 1989; Gur-zeev, 2005; Marchand & Parpart, 1995).

In contrast to Etzioni's *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations*, Lather cites substantial references so that her opinions seem rather submerged in *Getting Smart*; Lather fails to express original ideas. Although several references provide excellent sources for those who are interested in postmodern-related arguments, the inclusion of so many references makes her points unclear (Walker, 1994). I wish to read and understand Lather's own arguments and discussion. Furthermore, in terms of the references, I have noticed that the researchers whom Lather often cited were predominantly either Whites or Anglo-Europeans. While she quotes postcolonial writers such as Spivak, Said, and Bhabha, they are privileged in the society (Noffke & Brennan, 1993). If Lather cited other scholars of multi-cultures, including African-Americans and Asian-Americans, her work would have been more applicable to my research.

Another gap regarding Lather's work is some unclear and broad analysis, particularly the power of language. Although postmodern feminists critically examine gender inequity through language, Lather did not clearly state her own discussion in the book. As Jones (1997) argues, discovering unclear and difficult ideas is important in challenging thoughts and issues. Lather maintains her own expressions, which are ambiguous to readers. I wish to understand what exactly Lather was trying to discuss in the section of language power because I appreciate the theoretical context of the power of language in postmodern feminism.

Critical feminist theory explores the extent, the dimensions, the forms and the causes of racial-ethnic, class, and gender privilege in the United States, but also the extent, dimensions, and forms of resistance to institutionalized oppression in other countries. When racial-ethnic men/women, working-class people, and middle-class White

women see themselves as victims, they resist progressing in the workplace, leave organizations, and construct families as cultures of resistance (McCall, 1993). I selected this U.S.-focused theory for my research, which investigates Japanese female graduate students, because issues of racial-ethnic and particularly gender privileges are similar, although the countries are different. In any case, this theory explores oppressed women in society. That is why I believe that critical feminist theory is appropriate for my research.

Applications of the Postmodern Critical Feminist Theory

Throughout Japanese history, powerful Confucian beliefs have influenced and enhanced national life in all aspects of society and educational fields. The philosophy of Confucius contains understanding of interpersonal relationships in society. Relationships are hierarchical, and the social status represents people's obedience, responsibilities, and polite manners (Wang, 2001). Historically, in the notion of Confucius, women are supposed to be subordinate to men in the society. Gender issues are often important matters in this philosophy. Therefore, power relations dominate Japanese society in terms of gender roles. In modern society, Japanese women are still oppressed in the fields of education, politics, and media, etc. The relationship between gender and schooling reproduces the oppression and it has appeared in the notion of resistance to human experiences through social activities and political consciousness.

A current controversy in politics is about who will take over as the next emperor of Japan. Crown Princess Masako gave birth to a baby girl, Princes Aiko, on December 1, 2001. By tradition, this baby will become the emperor in the next generation; however, all previous emperors in Japan have been men. Some male politicians strongly oppose the idea of a female emperor, although the emperor in Japan is only a symbol of the nation.

Furthermore, it is highly unlikely that Crown Princess Masako will give birth again because of illness and age. On the other hand, in September, 2006, a younger brother Crown Naruhito produced a baby boy. Several politicians and citizens believe that this baby boy should take over as the next emperor because of the stereotypical traditional idea that males should be emperors (Best, 2006).

This situation shows that inequality and domination exist in Japanese society. Weiler (2003) considers gender relationships to have grown from economic production and belief. It indicates the conceptualization of women's work within both the public and private realms. In his latest announcement in February of 2007, Health Minister Hakuo Yangisawa stated that women are "child-bearing machines." Quite a few Japanese women were against his idea and were outraged. These advocates argue that: "When Japanese women want to express their opinions, there's nobody there to vote for," and, "No party is there for us" (Nakata, 2007, para. 31). This situation shows that society portrays gender domination which systematically continues within both public and hidden places.

The notion of marriage for Japanese women demonstrates social expectations and these expectations often put pressure on women. Although, currently, many Japanese women pursue higher education and receive higher degrees, anticipation of the marriageable age and women's positions has not dramatically changed yet. For instance, if women who are close to 30 remain single, their mothers often pressure them to meet possible future partners or even make plans for an arranged marriage. Marriage is one of life's achievements for Japanese women and married women are considered to be successful group members. I have often heard comments about marriage from school

friends who are single. An employee in a Japanese company told me, “I am so jealous because A [one of her friends] married earlier than I.” Another Japanese girl who works in Canada said, “Oh, what am I doing here in Canada without any boyfriend at this age [28]. I like my job and all my friends here, but I have to find a marriage partner now. When I pass 30, I am sure that I will lose all chances for marriage.” Moreover, a 29 year-old-female student at a Midwestern university said, “My mother asked me to do an arranged marriage because I am busy every day, so she thought I would never marry.” Although these Japanese women are happy in their current occupations, academic work and life, they are not completely satisfied with their lives without marriage.

Since the West influenced Japanese education, Japanese women have gradually taken positions that were traditionally men’s positions. Since World War II, Japanese women have started to pursue higher education even more than do men (Hines, 1996). Now, it is extremely common to hear that both husband and wife are working around the house. However, there are decisive differences between men’s and women’s treatment in the same job. Few companies and institutions will hire women workers as permanent employees because they do not allow women to take maternity leave. For the workplace, it would be very inconvenient for workers to leave for a few years of child- raising. They would rather keep male workers who stay for long hours rather than look for other workers.

The experience of women and young girls in school describes notions of resistance where schools operate to promote gender separation and domination (Weiler, 2003). In other words, if there are facts of gender inequality in families, companies, and government, situations of gender inequality happen in educational institutions also. For

instance, regardless of Japanese alphabets, on a list of names of students in class males' names are registered first alphabetically, and females' names next. Whenever teachers check students' attendance, they call males' names first because of the order of the names on the list. This is a good example of the hegemony that males are more important than females. People are being socialized and gender roles are perpetuated (Weiler, 2003).

Moreover, situations of false consciousness are often invisible; they become hidden transcripts because these situations of disempowerment have occurred historically (Lather 1991; Scott, 1992). In a stratified society, there are understandable social statuses depending on age, educational background and gender. The social status of educators is superior to students and their parents. However, although ages of all students are the same in a grade, different speech patterns and behaviors are clear between male and female students in Japan. Utterances and behaviors from male students are indicative of aggression, authority, and intimidation. Female students, on the other hand, are rather quiet and modest, and express their opinions with polite speech styles. These differences show that women are oppressed not only in society but also in educational institutions. The more schools are placed in suburban areas of Japan, the more these differences become clear, thus interrogating how Japanese females manage differences in U.S. institutions will be critical.

In terms of the power of language, it often privileges particular groups and restricts our reality while people are oppressed and struggle with the power in the postmodern society (Lather, 1991). In Japanese high schools, for instance, female teachers are resigning at a high rate, especially new female employees. Following domination gender roles, some male students tend to be arrogant toward young female

teachers. They disrespect and behave badly toward young teachers and ridicule them during lectures. Faculties of the institutions will often see young female teachers crying in the faculty lounge after being insulted and disappointed. Several victims have resigned.

In terms of the nature of the relationship between the theories and my research question, critical feminist theory also strongly related to one of my research questions as presented on page 24:

3) What other academic difficulties do Japanese students experience?

Living in another country where different philosophy, gender roles and language exist, Japanese students at a Midwestern U.S. university experience language-related difficulties and gender-related challenges because of philosophical differences between the U.S and Japan. Based on Lather's theory, often victims do not notice the oppression because the situations occur naturally and historically (Lather, 1991). I believe this feminist theory and its concepts critically examine students' experiences and this research question. Moreover, in addition to advanced English proficiency, Japanese female students have to realize and learn about different speech patterns when they speak English as a second language. If they use Japanese speech styles when they speak English in the U.S, other English speakers will consider them too quiet and polite individuals. However, researchers should realize that these ubiquitous behaviors are not nature, but nurture because historical Japanese society has oppressed their speech performance and behaviors. How these adjustments affect their self image was an intriguing part of my research.

Summary

These two theories have been tested in a wide range of field settings and include ideas on prejudice, stereotyping, negotiation, and language use. Although any theory contains criticism somehow, there are powerful strengths that cover and overwhelm any weakness. Most importantly, the theories also have implications about the way people deal with social and organizational change.

In conclusion, these theories help this research to create a meaningful framework. In order to research experiences of Japanese female students at U.S universities, organization theory and critical feminist theory generate a considerable impact on this research. Organization theory insightfully examines collectivist society in Japan and individualist society in the U.S. When different philosophies, languages, and societies exist, there are different organizational beliefs. Individuals observe different classroom participation and living experiences between collectivist and individualist societies. Moreover, postmodern critical feminist theory explains how Japanese society perpetuates women's inequality in effective ways, such as speech styles and unconscious awareness. My research explores how these Japanese female graduate students challenge different expectations and adjust their identity in the U.S. I strongly believe that this postmodern feminism theory benefits me while I investigate the visible issues and hidden messages.

Finally, organization theory will be the main framework in my research even though both organization and postmodern critical feminist theory are critical to it. While organization theory explores larger institutions and society, critical feminist theory explores a particular gender. Critical issues may mostly involve philosophical differences, parents' expectations and educational system differences, which organization

theory examines effectively. However, I still believe gender roles in Japanese society challenge several female Japanese students in the U.S. Therefore, I would like to utilize these two theories in my dissertation research in order to examine challenges of Japanese students at a Midwestern U.S. university.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to understand challenges that nine Japanese female graduate students faced while adjusting to speaking English, when attending a U.S. University in the Midwest and while socializing with others. This chapter discusses the overall methodology which was utilized in this study. It contains the design of the study, site selection, selection of participants, the researcher's role, time frame, instrument, and the data collection procedures.

Design of the Study

In this section, I will explain why a qualitative approach was more appropriate for my study and then discuss the adaptation of a case study. Since this research analyzed the personal experiences of Japanese female graduate students and their social interactions at a U.S. University in the Midwest, the study utilized the qualitative methodological approach. Qualitative inquiry examines issues in depth and detail, while providing openness and credibility to both researchers and participants (Best & Kahn, 2003). A strength of qualitative research is producing a wealth of detailed information about a small number of people and cases. However, it is often difficult to determine generalizability but this is not the focus of the study. It is seeking to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of a particular group of people. The insights gained in this endeavor can be informative as well as instructive in other settings but that is not the thrust of this research. In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument. Therefore, the validity of this research depends on the researcher's competence within a number of areas, including communications, knowledge of the field, flexibility and experiences (Patton, 2002).

According to Maxwell (1996), in applying the inductive approach, qualitative research demonstrates five strengths. First of all, it assists in understanding the meaning of the events, situations and people's actions while exploring participants' perspectives, such as how the participants understand their life situations and how these situations influence their behavior. Also qualitative research assists in understanding particular phenomena, such as students' behaviors, students' active participation in their educational development and unique classroom experiences. Moreover, it identifies unanticipated phenomena. Qualitative observations can generate new grounded theories. Next, qualitative research emphasizes the process by which events and actions take place; however, quantitative surveys and experimental research only offer limited experimental data. Finally, qualitative methods develop causal explanations. Weiss (1994) states, "in qualitative interview studies the demonstration of causation rests heavily on the description of a visualizable sequence of events, each event flowing into the next" (p. 179). Although deriving causal explanations from a qualitative study is not a straightforward task, both qualitative research and quantitative research have to identify and deal with possible threats to any causal explanation (Maxwell, 1996).

The most appropriate qualitative design that fits this inquiry was a case study. Case studies allow for the examination of individuals from different cultures in the context of historical backgrounds, physical setting and economical situations (Best & Kahn, 2003). A case study is an exploration of a broad system of a case or multiple cases over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving diverse sources of information in context (Creswell, 1998); it represents an analysis process. The first process of constructing case studies is to assemble the raw case data. These data consist

of all the information collected about the person and organization which is to be examined. The next step is to construct a case record; this process is to condense the raw case data organized, classified and edited into accessible documents. The final step of the process is to write a final case study narrative; in this stage, case studies should be readable, descriptive pictures of or stories about people and organizations, for instance (Patton, 2002).

While examining the experimental true stories, the case study allows the researcher to deeply analyze interactions between factors explaining the present status and factors influencing social identity change and self development among Japanese female graduate students at a Midwestern U.S. university. Instead of generalized findings, I was able to deeply examine and understand experiences of nine Japanese female graduate students who lived in a country where English is the major language. These participants became a peculiar group in the U.S. society so that all case studies presented uniqueness with in-depth discussions.

Although the case study is a beneficial method of organizing observations, researchers have to understand some weaknesses. To begin with, the method may look too simple. In order to examine the case studies critically, the researcher has to thoroughly understand theoretical knowledge within the field and has to be skillful in terms of their observational insights. Subjective bias is a constant threat to objective data-gathering and analysis. It is possible for the researcher to bring in her or his feelings and change conclusions (Best & Kahn, 2003). Therefore, it is critical for researchers to produce a wealth of detailed data from a small number of participants and cases. Because I was the instrument and my participants were my subjects in this study, I needed to

carefully reflect, deal with and report potential bias (Patton, 2002). In this study, I had to thoroughly understand the theoretical framework in my research in order to examine critical variables.

Site Selection

This study was conducted on the main campus of a Midwestern U.S. university. First of all, as an insider of this research, and as an international student who has attended a U. S. university for six years, I was familiar with similar settings and campus environments. I was therefore able to build trust among my respondents.

Moreover, the Midwestern University accepts a variety of international students from all over the world. In the 2007/2008 academic year, 1,256 international students enrolled, and they were from 87 different countries. In terms of their population, most international students were from China, India, Ghana, Taiwan, South Korea, Brazil, Indonesia and Japan (Office of Institutional Research, 2008). The university and the town community provide several support services for all international students. The International Student and Faculty Services (ISFS) office, for instance, provides several. The ISFS office assists international students when renewing student visas, by advising them about the proper procedures. Additionally, the office organizes peer advisers for newly arrived international students every quarter; and peer advisers assist new international students to find residences, locations where they can purchase their living necessities, and in finding an environment where they can socialize as well as helping to organize events.

Finally, this University is located in a college community, where the university is the main source of employment and the center of activities. Unlike urban campuses

where there are large non-student immigrant communities or other distractions, campuses like the site selected for this study have few community networks for international students to help adapt to their new environment. The campus is fairly isolated in terms of access to large metropolitan cities. Students must rely on limited public transportation that typically does not accommodate many of their transportation needs because of bus schedules and limited routes. Housing and dormitories in the community are rather expensive for the students' incomes, so most international students share an apartment or a house with two to four other people.

Selection of Participants

In qualitative methods, researchers narrowly sample participants from a particular group to emphasize the depth of the analysis. Although there are several different strategies for purposeful sampling, this research utilized typical case sampling. The goal of this strategy was to capture and represent themes, which disclose experiences of a group in organizations and programs which are placed in a peculiar situation. In my case, all the participants of this study were Japanese female graduate students. While I selected a small diverse sample, this strategy effectively provided two strengths in the data collection and analysis: 1) in-depth details of each case, which demonstrate unique experiences, and 2) critical patterns that cut across cases, while exploring any heterogeneity (Patton, 2002).

In selecting case study research, purposeful sampling is applicable as a sampling approach (Creswell, 1998). Purposeful sampling emphasizes "selected information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study" (Patton, 2002, p. 230). Seeking information-rich cases is an important purpose of this inquiry. In one of the

purposeful sampling approaches, typical case sampling serves as the appropriate strategy to examine the participants in this study. This sampling is used to describe a culture or program to people who are unfamiliar with the setting studied instead of making generalized stories about the participants (Patton, 2002).

The participants selected for the interviews in this research were nine Japanese female graduate students enrolled in master's degree programs at a Midwestern U.S. university. All participants had lived in the U.S. at least one year, and two years at the most. This group of Japanese females studied and lived in a new environment while trying to understand and accept unfamiliar settings. In terms of culture, the selected participants experienced different values, norms, religions, organizations, language and educational systems in the Midwest of the U.S. Therefore, choosing typical case sampling was appropriate for this study.

All international students at a Midwestern U.S. university are required to attain a score of over 550 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). If potential students do not achieve this language proficiency, they are obligated to take the English as a Second Language (ESL) program for at least a quarter or more quarters until they have reached the required scores in their programs. International students who are accepted at the university have to take the TOEFL exams again at the university before they start taking academic classes at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Because some international students fail to document their English competence before they enter the United States, they have to certify language proficiency for all academic departments. All participants in this research had satisfied the English competency required by the Midwestern university.

The target population of this study was Japanese female graduate students at a Midwestern U.S. university, who enrolled in the summer, fall and winter quarters in the 2007 to 2009 academic years. For participants for this study, I selected nine Japanese female graduate students who pursued master's degrees in the U.S. campuses. Usually graduate students spend less than two years to complete their master's degree. I selected only Japanese female graduate students who lived in the U.S. from one to two years to understand their challenges and adjustment strategies.

I was able to access my participants through the Japanese Student Association (JSA) at the similar university. Because I was a member of the association, my inside knowledge about its operation and the social network mechanisms available helped me to identify students who fit my category for participation in this research. Nine Japanese female graduate students fit and were, therefore, selected. I conducted individual interviews lasting between 45-90 minutes with each of them. Additionally, I observed their classes during fieldwork.

The participants in the study belonged to various departments at the Midwestern U.S. university and lived in the U.S. for at least one year. They pursued graduate programs, including Linguistics, International Development, Cultural Studies, Special Education, Communication and Development, and Economics.

The Researcher

For researchers, reflexivity involves emphasizing "the importance of self-awareness, political/cultural consciousness, ownership of one's perspective" (Patton, 2002 p. 299). Through reflexivity, qualitative researchers develop self-reflection, self-knowledge and consideration of how an individual affects what she or he observes, hears

and realizes in the study. As a result, researchers have to observe the self during fieldwork while observing and interacting with others.

Madge (1993) describes how a researcher's positionality may influence data collection, particularly, for the purpose of this study, my institutional privilege as well as social identity, are positions that impact power relations. This situational knowledge is crucial to consider the role of the multiple self. Moreover, a researcher's position indicates a kind of power that enables a certain kind of knowledge. In-depth awareness and experiences in the fieldwork allow researchers to critically examine situations. Therefore, the researcher's knowledge positions or situates the research.

My experiences with cross-cultural adjustment during my six years of study at a similar university offered four important advantages in terms of my positionality for this study. I had a similar adjustment process living and studying in the U.S. for six years, and I have a particular cultural awareness from living in the U.S. and Japan. These factors assisted me when analyzing individuals' shared and unique experiences. Moreover, Japanese is my first language; and I am a female graduate student as were the participants of this study. Therefore I was able to utilize these common features as advantages in order to understand their experiences and perceptions. I built further rapport with my participants by spending supplemental time with them besides conducting interviews and observations. I created various opportunities to interact with my participants to obtain further insight and trust, e.g. reading their individual blogs, attending Japanese Student Association (JSA) events, and having casual conversations at the café, the library and their houses.

According to my experiences as a foreigner, I understood that Japanese female graduate students required much time and energy to trust other people in a different country. Consequently, the participants were more likely to engage in my study due to an established level of trust. To successfully interview my participants who were Japanese female graduate students in the U.S., it was important for me to build strong rapport with them.

Instrument

The main instrument in this research was a semi-structured qualitative interview guide. Interviewing allows us to realize the nature of social life, cultures, and values, norms, and rules and to understand peoples' experiences (Glense, 1999). Although researchers cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions, interviews allow researchers to infer information as if entering into the minds and the perspectives of others. The interview guide as an instrument contains a list of questions to guide, explore and probe participants' perspectives and experiences. Within limited time, interview guides allocate researchers to specify important issues in advance and organize the same order to all respondents (Patton, 2002). Interviews in this study were conducted face-to-face and recorded by a digital voice recorder.

Eight open-ended interview questions covered areas such as reasons why participants traveled abroad, their experiences in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program, how they performed in class, how they socialized off and on campus, how they coped with adjustment challenges and how gender roles in Japan affected their behaviors in the U.S. The second round of interviews covered reflections on classes and how the women developed themselves (See Appendix A).

Data Collection Procedures

Instead of only utilizing one approach, qualitative interviews in this research apply numerous theories as all responses differ from each other (Weiss, 1994). Moreover, Patton (2002) points out that, “the fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms” (p. 384). Therefore, in addition to interviews, observation method was utilized in order to deeply understand the class participation of Japanese female students in this study.

The university required an approved proposal before I began collecting my data. I submitted an application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval on July 30, 2008. This application included a brief summary of this research, such as literature review, purpose of this study, research procedures, and interview questions as well as providing guidance for obtaining permission from my participants to allow me to interview them for this study.

I spent 11 weeks, from September 8, 2008, to November 28, 2008, for the fieldwork of this data collection. Between September 8-20, 2008, I met the subjects individually during weeks one and two of the quarter under study. I completed all transcriptions within the next week. Additionally, I observed the class participation of three Japanese female graduate students to understand their class participation and their self development. The rest of the participants had completed their coursework and were writing seminar papers and theses. I attended classes three times for each of the three students during the following weeks: September 8-12 (week 1); October 6-10 (week 5); and November 10-14 (the final week of classes). Finally, I interviewed them for another

15-30 minutes during November 10-14 (the final week of classes) for all participants. The rationale for the second round of interviews was to ascertain how far they had come with their adjustment process. The same rationale underpinned the three observations carried out.

First, I contacted the JSA and using purposeful sampling I identified nine graduate students who fitted my category. I met with them informally at one of the association meetings to inform them about my research and the fact that they had been preselelected based on my criteria to participate in my research. We exchanged e-mails and I proceeded to send individual e-mails to get formal consent from them to participate in the research. After contacting individuals to ask if they would be willing to allow me to interview them about their experiences through e-mail, telephone and face-to-face meetings, I explained the data gathering requirements carefully to get the person's verbal agreement to participate in this research. Then, I informed all participants that their voices would be recorded with a digital voice recorder. Additionally, since only three of the selected participants were taking classes in the quarter I asked their permission to allow me observe their classes three times during the quarter. When each participant agreed to the process, I obtained written permission to conduct interviews.

Through telephone, e-mail, and face-to-face meetings, I arranged a time and date with each interviewee. All participants selected venues for individual meetings that were the most convenient and comfortable for them. Some participants chose the discussion room of the university library as the venue for the interview. Others invited me to their houses because they were rather relaxed at home. I conducted semi-structured interviews guided by the questions, such as, "Do you remember an experience when you had to

overcome a language barrier?" "Could you tell me how you felt? Why?" and "What did you do when you had a problem?" I used Japanese for eight participants and English for one respondent.

I met participants individually and interviewed them. As planned, I recorded the interview with a digital recorder. Meanwhile, I provided a brief explanation of the overall study and told them they could feel free to ask any questions. At the end of the interview, I stated that the digital recorder could be turned off so that they could speak off the record. Indeed, more than half of the participants talked about emotional stories when I turned off the digital record. Since I brought up serious issues that some people often hesitated to talk about, I had relaxed conversations and created a comfortable atmosphere and trust between an interviewer and interviewees. To avoid intimidation, I asked questions in a relaxed manner.

After completing each interview, I immediately transcribed the recorded information. Since eight of the nine Japanese female graduate students were more comfortable speaking Japanese with me, they spoke Japanese during the interview. After the interview, I transcribed and then translated these interviews from Japanese into English. I shared the Japanese transcripts and quotations that I used for analysis with each participant to ensure that I had accurately captured what they shared.

Direct observations were conducted as fieldwork. Three participants allowed me to attend their classes three times during the quarter. Although I planned to observe all the participants, the rest of the students had completed all their coursework but had only either thesis or seminar papers left, so I was able to observe only three students in class. Before the direct observation started, I contacted their professors through e-mail

explaining my research and asking permission to sit in on their classes (see Appendix B for sample e-mail). After I obtained agreements from them, I sent consent forms to them and received permission from all participants and their professors. Out of three professors, two of them introduced me in class each time I attended. For all observations for this study, I went early and sat down before all the students came. All participants came early for the classes and started conversations with other peers until the professors came in. During class observations, I described in my notes what my participants said, how they performed in classes, and how they participated.

During the final week, I met my participants for a second round of interviews, for 15 to 30 minutes each. As with the first interview, I recorded their voices with a digital voice recorder. Interview questions included reflections on classes and how they developed themselves through the quarter. Soon after the second half of interviews and observations was finished, I transcribed my interview and observation notes. As for the previous interviews, I translated the language after all transcriptions were completed. The data collection procedures took four months (e.g. interviewing, observing, transcribing, and translating).

Because I was using qualitative methods, I had to be aware of three validity issues. The first involved accuracy. In order to demonstrate their insightful stories, I recorded their voices during interviews on the digital voice recorder. The second validity was rich description. I took notes of what all participants said and did during observations. Soon after interviews and observations were completed, I transcribed their voices, and complied with my written observation of their gestures, behaviors and facial expressions.

Sources of Data

There were two main sources of data for this research, namely interviews and observations. I will discuss each one, showing why it fits my research and steps taken to ensure that all ethical issues were adhered to.

Interviews

The purpose of qualitative interviewing is to enter into the other people's perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit (Patton, 2002). Interviewing is one of the powerful ways in which researchers try to understand human beings to reveal reality and ambiguity. The common form of interviewing involves face-to-face verbal interexchange between two people and sometimes focus groups (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Patton (2002) suggests three types of interviewing approaches: informal conversational interview, general interview guide approach, and standardized open-ended interview. In this study, standardized open-ended interviews were used to expand flexibility. This type consists of a set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same questions. Moreover, open-ended questions provide in-depth responses about participants' experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings and knowledge. I interviewed nine Japanese female graduate students. I spent between 45 and 90 minutes interviews with each participant during the first week of the fieldwork. These second interviews lasted between 15 and 30 minutes to gather their reflections and their self development through the quarter. All of the participants but one were most comfortable speaking Japanese so eight interviews were conducted solely

in Japanese. Transcripts of interviews totaled 132 pages, and I translated from Japanese and English for quotations that I used for analysis. Each participant read her Japanese and English versions of transcripts to ensure accuracy.

Observations

Observation data allows researchers to describe the setting that was observed, the activities that took place in that setting, the people who participated in those activities and the meanings of what was observed from the perspectives of those observed (Patton, 2002). It requires in-depth descriptions, factual and accurate, while adhering to rigorous standards in order to avoid any potential bias (Angrosino & Perez, 2000; Patton, 2002). Through direct observations, the questioner is better able to understand and capture the context within which people interact. Additionally, it allows researchers to open and discover firsthand experience with a setting and the people in the setting (Patton, 2002).

Another value of direct observation is the fact that participants would be willing to talk about it during interviews. Participants may be unwilling to talk about sensitive topics (Patton, 2002). Since the main objective was to understand challenges Japanese females faced in the U.S. university, their stories tended to be emotional; as a result, some of them hesitated to reveal their stories. Direct observations assisted me to understand situations that participants did not touch upon during interviews.

I observed the class participation of Japanese female graduate students. Observation is an important instrument for all research methods in the social and behavioral sciences because it assists in understanding the whole picture, the contexts, and the influence of the physical settings. This observation was to understand their performance, interactions and development as well as learning strategies and cultural

adjustment in a Midwestern U.S. university. In addition, I observed how they interacted with their classmates during class breaks. I observed three subject areas: linguistics, communication development and cultural studies in education. I observed 24 hours from three areas. The total hours from each subject are follows:

- Linguistics: the total observation of six hours.
- Communication and development: the total observation of eight hours.
- Cultural studies in education: the total observation of 12 hours.

These observation reports were summarized in 60 double-space pages total, and I utilized these reports in discussion of the third research question.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1986) pointed to the need for qualitative researchers to be careful about ensuring the validity and reliability their studies. The credibility criteria involve establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participants in the research. The design of these studies drew on conventional approaches to interview-based qualitative research to guide conversations between a researcher and other participants in a study. Such interviews use a format that is either semi-structured or unstructured. The purpose of qualitative research is to describe and understand the phenomena of interest from the participants' voices; the participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results.

In addition, an examination of trustworthiness is crucial to ensure reliability in qualitative research. While establishing good quality studies through reliability and validity in studies, Seale (1999) states that the "trustworthiness of a research report lies at

the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability" (p. 266). Lincoln and Guba (1986) argue that sustaining the trustworthiness of a research report depends on validity and reliability. The idea of discovering truth through measures of reliability and validity is replaced by the idea of trustworthiness. In other words, trustworthiness is defensible and establishing trustworthiness will be important to research in any paradigm.

In my dissertation research, three important concerns related to credibility emerged. Rigorous methods for doing fieldwork yield high quality data. When transcriptions were done, I showed the Japanese version of the transcripts to the participants as the first step. Next, I shared the translated versions of quotations that I used for discussion of results to ensure what I translated and understood was accurate. This process permitted the participants to be able to compare their voices in Japanese with translated versions in English afterward. I allowed them ask any questions and request clarification whenever I distributed the data to each participant. No one cited misunderstandings or asked for corrections in either the Japanese or translated versions after I conducted this fieldwork. Analyzing the data, I contrasted them with literature reviews, my observation notes and my experiences.

Data Analysis

In a qualitative research, researchers provide a description of the research data and present the coding process that emerges from primary data into themes and categories (Robert, 2004). Maxwell (1999) proposes analytic procedures in qualitative methods: a) organizing all data; b) coding the data; c) creating categories, themes and patterns; d) analyzing findings; e) searching for alternative explanations; and f) writing the final discussion of the study. One of the data analyses for a case study applies pattern,

theme and content analysis. Content analysis assists researchers to identify recurring themes and framing themes. In addition, content analysis reflects on any qualitative data reduction and sense-making efforts, which identify core reliability and meanings (Patton, 2002).

The data analysis in this study focused on the interview transcripts and observational descriptions because the awareness of Japanese female graduate students' stories and their academic class participation was the main objective of this study. By reading countless times all transcripts and observation reports, I was able to code categories and find themes. I categorized my interview transcripts and observations into coding data while exploring possible answers to research questions. Based on each research question, categories and themes were described based on patterns.

Next, I conducted the analysis of each answer to the research questions and interview transcripts and observation reports. The data analyses in this study were categorized by themes, patterns, and research questions. While analyzing the findings, I compared the data with literature in order to support and reveal gaps from the previous research. A comparison of previous research is important to understand how the findings fit with the literature (Roberts, 2004).

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the important findings that emerged from the analyses of the research data. The objective of this research was to understand the experiences of Japanese female graduate students living on a U.S. campus in a community where most people speak English. This chapter presents the themes and concepts that emerged from the backgrounds of participants, the interviews and the observations. Additionally, an in-depth description of the findings and analyses related to three research questions are presented.

Through the interviews and observations, several patterns and important themes emerged. The dominant themes were the fear of using English and living in a new environment as international students and of the pressure to satisfy the university expectations, particularly class participation. In addition to fear and pressure, Japanese female graduate students felt socially alienated. They shared substantial challenges and unspoken emotional conflicts during the fieldwork. In the discussions, they highlighted challenges, including the faculty's lack of understanding, different class contribution styles and social involvement in the community.

Background of Participants

Border crossers in this study were Japanese female graduate students whose age range was from 23 to 29. Four out of nine participants had study abroad experiences at the same university for four months two years ago, before they started their graduate studies. They attended an exchange program at the university when they were undergraduate students at the Japanese university which is a sister school of the

Midwestern university. The remaining five students came to the university individually after receiving admission and scholarships. While four participants were aware of the environment because of previous experience, five of them started their campus life from scratch. For the names for the participants in this study, I utilized the nine most popular Japanese baby names of 2008 in order to protect the participants' privacy. When some of those names were identical except for a different Chinese character, I used the next names down on the list for the Japanese female graduate students in this study. These top names in 2008 were Hina, Yui, Aoi, Sakura, Yuna, Miu, Riko, Mio, and Akari (Meiji Yasuda Life Insurance Company, 2006).

Hina

Hina took a temporary leave of absence from her work as a primary school teacher in Japan in order to come to the U.S. She was interested in the field of special education in the U.S. because it has shown higher achievements compared to Japan. When she stayed in Seattle for a month as an exchange student, she took a class in special education and discovered that she wanted to study learning disabilities in special education. When she returned to Japan, she applied what she had learned to her own classroom, but she wanted to learn more. Eight years later she decided to come back to the U.S.

Yui

Yui admitted that she was confident of her English skills because she had achieved the score required by the Department of Linguistics. When she entered her Japanese university in Nagoya City, where she received a bachelor's degree, she started attending a language school near her home during her free time. There, she learned about

English literature and joined political debates. During her bachelor's program, Yui spent five months in California, a month in Australia and a month in London, studying English. While she was working, she continued to study English at a language school three times a week. She studied conversation, EIKEN, TOEFL, reading, writing and discussion. However, when she took TOEFL at a Midwestern U.S. university again, her score was lower than expected, and she realized that she had to take the ESL program.

Yui majored in Linguistics and taught Japanese as a TA for two years. With her bright, extrovert personality, she made friends with many domestic and international students in the program. She was very comfortable in the Linguistics Program and spent much time with these friends at weekend events, group studies, and class activities.

Aoi

Aoi was majoring in Cultural Studies in the College of Education. The main reason she entered a Midwestern U.S university was to improve her English and to learn about education. She believed that living in an English-speaking country was the best way to learn the language. Furthermore, Aoi felt that she did not have the skills to survive in Japanese society. In order to gain the skills she desired, she needed financial aid to support her educational fee and living expenses. Fortunately, she was able to gain admission with a two-year scholarship to a Midwestern U.S. university. She was satisfied with the conditions of learning English and studying education while receiving the scholarship. That is why she decided to come to the university.

Sakura

Sakura is from Gunma Prefecture and lived in Kiryu City, a prosperous textile-manufacturing center. She attended an academic-track, all-female high school,

commuting to school by bicycle, and belonged to a sport club. Sakura was admitted to one of the prestigious Japanese universities in Tokyo, where she became interested in International Development.

While majoring in International Development, Sakura thought that the research in the field in the U. S. and England had reached a higher standard than in Japan. Additionally, to work in international fields, it is beneficial and even necessary to be able to speak English. Therefore, Sakura decided to go abroad and study in an English-speaking country. Originally, Sakura wanted to live in the U. S. for a long time.

Yuna

Yuna is from Gifu Prefecture. Her family could not afford to send her to the U.S. to pursue a master's degree, but the Japanese university from which she earned her bachelor's degree gave her a two-year full scholarship to go to the U.S.

She was majoring in Communication and Development Studies in a master's program. Although she completed a thesis about the mass media during her bachelor's program, she had very little background in the field. Since then, she has become interested in studying mass media. As an undergraduate, she had studied International Development at the College of International Studies in her Japanese university. For her master's degree, she entered a Midwestern U.S. university with a program in Communication and Development Studies which combined her interests in mass media and international development.

Miu

Miu is from the small town of Tsushima City in Aichi Prefecture. She grew up among rice fields, where her neighbors cultivated rice and vegetables. Her family eats

their home-grown rice and sells it if they have a good harvest. Because of the small size of the city, Miu's community is very close-knit. When one family has a funeral, for example, the neighborhood association and a group of the district help with the event. Hers is an extended family, and many of her neighbors live in traditional large-family households.

Miu was majoring in Cultural Studies in the College of Education. With impressive academic achievements, she received a full-tuition scholarship from the university from which she obtained her bachelor's degree to go abroad to a Midwestern U.S. university for two years. Her major was English literature, and she received a professional teaching license in English at the university. At the beginning of the bachelor's program, she thought she would be able to be an English teacher right after completing the teacher-training course and the class for her major. However, Miu felt that her knowledge of teaching was very limited, and she was not confident enough to be an English teacher when she was in her senior year of the bachelor's program. In addition, an experience in the exchange program of a U.S. university during her bachelor's program motivated her to continue on to graduate school in the U.S.

Riko

Riko was majoring in International Development. She had no trouble making friends and was good at creating networks with others. She enjoyed interacting with others while playing sports at the Japanese university from which she received a bachelor's degree. Riko had several friends from her Japanese university and often contacted them through e-mail, telephone and her blog. Additionally, Riko had a good relationship with her professors at the Japanese university. When she came to the

Midwestern U.S. university as an exchange undergraduate student a few years ago, one of her professors in her Japanese university suggested that she apply to graduate school in the U.S.

Mio

Mio grew up in Tokyo where most of the population lives in the residential areas. The area has well-developed public transportation including trains, buses and subways, so she was able to access the center of Tokyo within a short time. There were many *Juku* (cramming schools), schools for intensive exam preparation, in the area where students could commute by bicycle, and most middle and secondary school students attended these *Juku* to pass entrance examinations.

Mio graduated from a prestigious university in Tokyo and received a bachelor's degree with economics. At the end of the program, she planned to apply to graduate schools in the U.S. to study economics at the Master's level. She was not interested in graduate schools in Japan because she thought they were where only very studious students, who never socialized with others, would go. Additionally, Mio had a strong desire to leave Japan for a while because she was tired of Japanese society and wanted to go and study in another country. After receiving admission letters from several U.S. universities, Mio decided to come to the Midwestern university.

Akari

Akari was born in the U.S. and due to her father's occupation, stayed there until she was six. Her family returned to Japan and lived in Gifu Prefecture for 12 years. Her house was surrounded by mountains and there was limited public transportation in the town so her mother used to drive her to private lessons and to go shopping. When Akari

attended a Japanese national university, she had an opportunity to go to California for one year as an exchange student. She then went to work for an international trade company that exported products all over the world. She was an administrative assistant who created consent forms, tracked payments for the head office and ordered parts.

After five years, one of her high school friends, a graduate student at the Midwestern university, suggested Akari to go abroad and study Linguistics while working as a Japanese teaching assistant. The friend advised Akari that it might be beneficial in the future, if she would like to stay in the U.S. Akari had an American boyfriend and planned to live with him. Additionally, Akari wanted to go to graduate school since she received a bachelor's degree. The friend's suggestion, the presence of her boyfriend in the U.S., and her desire to go to graduate school made her decide to come to the Midwestern U.S. university. She was majoring in Linguistics and had a teaching assistantship in Japanese.

The Language-related Experiences in the U.S.

This section presents the findings for the first research questions of the study: language-related experiences in a campus setting of the participants. In order to answer this question, I had to explore and understand how the participants learned English for academic classes and how their language ability impacted their experiences. The central themes were: fear about using English and living in a new environment, intercultural communication in the socialization process, misunderstandings due to pronunciation and grammatical difficulties, and homesickness.

Fear about Using English and Living in a New Environment

Japanese female graduate students confronted the process of completing their degrees while immersed in the American lifestyle and while adjusting to several cultural differences in terms of values, behaviors, institutions, language and organization (Hofstede, 2001). These differences often inspired fear as the students tried to cope with the challenges of adapting to a new culture. With limited English skills, new Japanese female graduate students had to find ways to find accommodations and transportation from the first day. Hina recalled:

> I just wanted to go back to Japan and cried every day. The very first day, I called a taxi through the Web site. The web page mentioned that customers were able to order taxis via e-mail. I was not confident about calling to the company at all. So, I ordered a taxi via e-mail. I believe that was an e-mail trouble. Or although there is a Web site to request a taxi, the company did not manage the website. They just ignored my request. The small trouble already made me worry so much. One lady at the airport listened to my story for three hours while she calmed me down. She kept talking with me. I waited for another taxi and finally I got a ride to the campus.

Hina was afraid to call a taxi because she was concerned her English was inadequate. Although she tried to use a different means to arrange transportation, she failed to order a taxi via a web site. This experience on her first day in the U.S. scared her and this feeling continued for awhile. Japanese female graduate students worry about the adequacy of their English in public, and fear not being understood when they try to interact with others, particularly with people who work and provide services to the public. They may avoid direct conversation with service providers because of embarrassment. As Hina stated, these experiences made her think that she wanted to go back to Japan because she felt fearful while struggling with receiving a service in the U.S. society.

This type of fear could have lasting implications. Once they experience the fear of being unable to succeed or perform (Lin & Yi, 1997), the impact of the fear could continue for awhile, even after they start to become familiar with the environment. The selected site for this study is located in a rural area, with only limited public transportation and few Japanese networks. Therefore, most Japanese female graduate students who came by themselves had to explore the new town on their own while speaking, reading, listening to and writing English as a foreign language. Fear could interfere with using English in public and could even disturb their eating habits, for example.

After arriving at the university, they met peer advisors for new international students who assisted with grocery shopping and helped them to find dining halls and restaurants during their first few days. When the peer advisors completed their tasks, it was time for the new Japanese female graduate students to purchase food on their own. A lack of familiarity with U.S. culture and language difficulties discouraged their appetites, as Mio revealed:

> During the first quarter, I lost a lot of weight from five to eight kilograms (approximately 11 to 18 pounds). I was able to drink only lattes every day. I tried to go to the cafeterias to eat meals, but I was so afraid of ordering. That is why, I used to buy lattes at the Starbucks which seemed to be high in calories, to maintain my health somehow. This way of life made me lose a lot of weight.

Gass and Selinker (2001) suggest that social anxiety leads to avoidance of communication in the society when one speaks a second language. This anxiety creates a feeling of fear and it may have little to do with achievement goals. Mio became less sociable as a result of her fear of speaking English in public. She gave up ordering and

purchasing well-balanced meals; instead, she kept ordering the one which she could pronounce and which would not prompt a cashier to ask her to confirm her choices.

Fear of English as a foreign language was seen in the learning environment as well. The university requires all international students to take a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) even if they were admitted based on their scores on the entrance list required program. If they were not able to obtain the required scores after coming to the university, they had to take the English as a Second Language (ESL) program until they acquired enough English skills. Some of the participants said that the ESL program was rather difficult due to the different educational expectations of Japan and the U.S. Yui revealed:

> I was scared and I was panicking during the quarter. When I came here, I had to take a paper-based TOEFL and the score was very low. So I freaked out because I had to get 50 more points before I could start attending graduate classes. Otherwise, I would not be able to get out of the ESL program and attend graduate school. I was also afraid of losing my scholarship if I did not get higher scores. That's why I was really scared. I studied really hard for the TOEFL exam and the class.

Her fear of having a low English score continued during the quarter even though she performed well in the class. Yui received a teaching assistantship with her master's program one year before she came to the U.S. However, she was later informed that she was could not receive the teaching assistantship and full scholarship until she completed the ESL program. At the same time, she was surprised by the demanding class styles in the ESL program. Usually, all international students attend the ESL program to improve English skills and to attain the required TOEFL scores. However, not everyone was satisfied with the program in terms of class curriculum and learning strategies. These factors inspired fear among students. Aoi said:

> These classes of the ESL program did not help me to improve my English skills. Eventually, in terms of the TOEFL, I had to study by myself outside the classes, though I think that my total skills improved after the ESL program. Although I took the ESL classes for two quarters, my TOEFL score was lower at the end of the second quarter than at the beginning of the first quarter because classes in the ESL program were not to develop only TOEFL scores. My score was 100 points lower than before. I could not believe it because my score was terrible although I had received a two-year scholarship for my Master's program. I was nervous while I was excited about a new life.

Interesting enough, Gass and Selinker (2001) discuss the positive influence anxiety can have on motivation. If a person does not feel any fear towards a goal, she or he tends not to be motivated, and makes less effort. Motivation comes from a desire to attain a goal one is fearful of not achieving. With dedicated efforts, both Yui and Aoi got out of the ESL program before their academic programs started. Those other participants revealed that they studied very hard to achieve high scores because they were fearful about the conditional situation that they might lose their full scholarships if they stayed in the ESL program. Regardless of the achievements, the system of the ESL program was different than what they expected, as Yui shared:

> The ESL program was shocking to me because, you know, in our place, a language school was basically just for fun. Students in class were not desperate to get requirements of higher TOEFL scores to go to college, for example. But here [the ESL program] focus is on getting high scores on the TOEFL exam to attend academic classes so classes were very structured and demanding. It was interesting and expensive. I took three classes, and they were okay. But I took an English teachers' class and that class was very demanding. I had a lot of homework. My classmates and I had to stay at the library until midnight. I had lots of pressure.

In the ESL program of study, class sizes are small and the ESL instructors pay special attention to international students' needs. All classes emphasize participation and practical English in terms of speaking, listening, writing and reading. As an example of the ESL class curriculum, full-time intensive English classes meet three hours a day and

additional support classes meet two hours per day on Monday, Tuesday Thursday and Friday. On Wednesday, students are encouraged to participate in individual lab work, teacher conferences and special projects and other activities. Semi-intensive English classes allow students to take one or two academic courses while they study English. The classes focus on the academic skills necessary to be successful students at the university level (Ohio University: Department of Linguistics, 2008). The semi-intensive classes also meet two hours a day and their support classes meet another one or two hours from Monday to Friday with Wednesday reserved for individual lab work. The classes and additional activities on Wednesdays give students several hours of concentrated work and assignments. Hina took a listening support class in the ESL program and shared the curriculum in the class.

> I had a listening class, and I learned how to greet, how to shop, for example, which were practical at the beginning. These classes gradually became more complicated. For example, a topic of reading material was “marriage.” While comparing rituals of marriage in other countries, each student had a presentation about the topic at the end.

Japanese female graduate students rarely received intensive work or experienced presentations in the Japanese universities. On the other hand, contributions of thought are necessary while sharing their verbal opinions in the U.S. classroom. In the ESL classes, all instructors encouraged students to speak English as a second/foreign language to improve their language proficiency. My participants felt that these different expectations in the program were demanding and put a lot of pressure on them. These different expectations were seen not only in the English classroom but also in their socialization process in terms of speech styles and cultural norms. The ESL program intentionally created this type of curriculum for new international students to come in contact with the

culture of the U.S. and to provide many opportunities for learning English. Although the demanding curriculum seemed to overwhelm the Japanese female graduate students, the ESL program provided an environment where they would get ready to tackle academic classes in graduate school.

Intercultural Communication in the Socialization Process

The communicative style of the Japanese is often indirect and context dependent, whereas the American communication style tends to be direct (Clancy, 1986; Ramsey, 1998). While the high-context communication style in Japan means it takes time to get to know somebody, it is rather effortless to get to know other people in a superficial way in the U.S., with it low-context communication style. In high-context (HC) communication most of the information is communicated in person using insufficient codes and explicit, transmitted messages. For example, listeners are supposed to know, through facial expressions and speech styles, what speakers are going to say before talking about the main topic (Mori, 1999). Meanwhile, a low context (LC) communication includes explicit messages. In Japan most conversations in daily life do not require much in-depth information because they share everything only with people who are important in their lives. On the other hand, Americans interact with others as they need specific information (Bennett, 1998; Hall & Hall, 1990). Consequently, for example, Japanese rarely talk to service-related employees; and they tend to feel uncomfortable talking about even a small part of life with them. Waiting in public transportation stations, for example, conversations about directions with strangers are sometimes seen but these conversations change to personal life in the U.S. in addition to the main topic. Akari shared her experience with small talk in the U.S.:

> In Japan, I was able to buy things at the grocery stores without greeting the cashiers. But in the U.S., I have to have small talk with cashiers. I often think it is very burdensome. I just want to pay money, get things and go home as quickly as I used to do in Japan. When cashiers ask me, "How are you?," I have to say, "Good." Honestly, this small talk is bothersome to me.

A traditionally Japanese saying states, "Silence is better than speech." In other words, the Japanese have little trust in verbal articulation (Clancy, 1986). Akari felt that talking with cashiers was a kind of unnecessary conversation and just wanted to complete her task without talking with strangers. Some Americans view the Japanese as "silent" compared to Americans, who were considered "talkative" (Clancy, 1986). Akari recalled another experience of high- and low- context communication:

> During a graduate orientation for new students, I joined an event called First Communication. It was a party intended for new graduate students to get along. The main activity was to talk to new students. There were several chairs facing each other in a circle, and students had to sit and talk about themselves for four minutes. Then, four minutes later, students who were sitting outside of the circle had to move to the next chair. All students had to talk about themselves to ten people. I was so tired of talking about myself with strangers for such a long time. Although I was able to talk about anything, time was limited, I had to stay in the same chair and I felt very tired. I don't want to experience it again because it was uncomfortable.

Hall and Hall (1990) state that high-context members are likely to be impatient and annoyed when low-context members keep providing information which is completely unnecessary. Low-context members are at a loss when high-content members do not share enough information. Akari experienced fatigue in the First Communication activity because she was overwhelmed in a low-context communication situation, which she was not accustomed to experiencing. One of the critical challenges of successful communications is to understand the proper level of necessary contexts in each situation (Hall & Hall, 1990).

During high-context communication, listeners of Japanese are expected to guess what the speaker may mean before it is actually said (Mori, 1999). For people who utilize a low-context communication, this communication style could be difficult. Yuna's experience is one example of how different communication styles influence communication:

> I learned that it is better to give direct answers, such as "Yes" and "No." For example, female international friends think that I am not interested in them if I give a vague answer when they invite me to dinner and parties. Gradually, these friends no longer stay in contact with me. Maybe I should have said, "I am not coming tonight but I'll join you next time" instead of saying, "I may come to the party, but I may not." In my mind, I knew that I didn't want to go and that I was not going to the event. But when I gave a vague answer like this, these female friends looked sad and they thought that I just did not want to hang out with them because I did not like them. I did not mean it at all, so I felt bad.

Americans and other international students were frustrated when Yuna gave vague answers that could well mean "no;" and when they were not able to determine an exact answer. Clancy (1986) provides 16 ways in Japanese to show disagreement without saying no, such as "silence; ambiguity; expression of apology, regret, and doubt" (p. 215). For example, one replies, "I'll try" or "I'll think about it" when asked to do something she or he does not want to do. These statements are typical negative answers to a question or an invitation instead of saying "no" (Kawamoto, 2007; Mori, 1999). According to Kawamoto (2007), the unwillingness to say "no" and to show disagreement relates to the Japanese collective culture. In terms of disagreement, Mio's behavior during a party showed another indirect disagreement without verbalization. Mio revealed:

> When I went to a party, I was the only international student. I was also the only Asian so I did not feel that I was the one of the party members. So, I just sat in a corner and watched the party and people around of me. My friend who went to the event with me talked to other friends. I did not enjoy the time at all. Though I was determined to go to an American party because I am here to

> experience American culture, I just realized that I could not stay in this party any longer. Then, I went home by myself without speaking to anyone once during one of the parties.

Mio did not interact with anyone at the party, so she decided to leave in silence. A significant goal of Japanese socialization is to encourage consensus of feeling that maintains the norm of the group, based on the principles of Confucianism (Clancy, 1986). In Mio's case, she did not feel that she promoted unanimity between her mind and others. Although language is the main means to socialize with others, language proficiency is not enough for satisfactory socialization across cultures (Ie, 2009). In addition, the norms of Confucianism affect Japanese female graduate students' socialization in foreign cultures as Miu shared:

> At the beginning of the first quarter in the ESL program, many students asked me to go to parties. Although they said, "Let's go together!" to be honest, I didn't enjoy them. I often thought, "Why do I have to go to parties when I am not able drink alcohol at all?" I thought this was a typical U.S.-style [drinking party]. I don't go to drinking parties even in Japan so I don't feel like going to one if there is any language difference…At parties, I know that I don't have to care so much about the concerns of others, but unconsciously I am very concerned about how others are feeling. For example, friends go home whenever they feel like it and I know I can go home anytime, but I always think that I should wait for other friends to go home. In that sense, I am very Japanese. Although I want to go home, I don't because nobody else is about to leave the place. Then I feel very tired of being at the party because I don't see any plan of going home though I want so much to do so.

In Miu's case, she was not able to behave the way she wanted to because she cared about group harmony. In Japanese society, it is a fundamental belief to maintain a peaceful atmosphere based on the beliefs of Confucianism (Schumacher, 2008). Miu thought that going home by herself was self-centered because she unconsciously cared about the atmosphere of the party. That is why she was not able to decide to leave the party though her mind was desperate to go home. In intercultural events where both high-

and low-content communication styles emerge, it is important for both cultures to accept mutual respect. All verbal communications include nonverbal expressions, such as “voice, gestures, eye contact, spacing and touching” (Bennett, 1998, p. 17). These factors could show direct expression of emotion although most information is not explicitly stated as a verbal message (Bennett, 1998). Therefore, awareness of high- and low- context communications is essential in order for Japanese female graduate students to avoid misunderstandings and misconstruing others’ behaviors.

Mutual respect is a fundamental goal of intercultural communication. The main tool of communication is language to represent recognition and thoughts (Bennett, 1998). Benjamin Lee Whorf states, “Ability to speak a language fluently does not necessarily confer a linguistic knowledge of it, that is, an understanding of its background phenomena and its systematic processes and structure” (p. 88). In this sense, languages are connected to rules, norms, and values in the culture as a tool. They guide people to form a society and categorize objects (Bennett, 1998). However, the language values differ across countries. If one learns a language in a country where different languages are spoken, that person would become a non-native speaker of the target language, while somehow maintaining the function of his or her mother tongue. The next theme discusses how English learners of Japanese face language challenges in the U.S.

Misunderstanding through Pronunciation and Grammatical Difficulties

Generally speaking, phonetics is about the sound of speech and the patterns people make. In various practical situations, speakers of a foreign language are likely to hear sounds similar to their own language. Therefore, non-native speakers tend to perceive sounds differently from the way native speakers do. When non-native speakers

make a sound, it often differs from how it sounds when compared to the speech of native speakers. This phenomenon becomes phonological interference, when one's mother tongue impedes one's function in a target language. Not exceptionally, speaking English for Japanese interferes with the speakers' attempts because they perceive sounds differently from native English speakers (Wells, 2000). Compared with meeting face to face, this interference is prominent in telephone conversations, as Hina shared:

> When I called an airline company, I had to choose a language and say particular numbers according to the instruction before I talked to a real ticket agent. The computer did not understand what I said because of my accent. So it took for a while to talk with an agent of the company. At the moment, I thought "Okay, that is it. I give up." As a result, I ended up sending an e-mail to the company to buy a ticket. I am still not good on the telephone, particularly a voice-message system. Since I came to the U.S., I always made sure there was a way that I could reach people with e-mail first. Telephone was the last choice to reach these types of companies.

Due to the Japanese-accented English Hina spoke during her telephone conversation, the machine of the airline company was not able to recognize what she was trying to say. The hardest part of utilizing the phone in a foreign language is that speakers cannot see each other's eyes, mouth and body language. In face-to face conversations, speakers read lips, facial expressions and body movements (English.com, 2009). Certain sounds are essentially more difficult for Japanese than for other nationalities (Wells, 2000). These sounds may be confused with others because it is rather difficult for Japanese speakers of English to pronounce them properly. One of the difficult sounds for Japanese is [v] in English. Both speakers and listeners have to carefully distinguish it from [b] and [z]. Aoi experienced this challenge when trying to reserve an accommodation to attend a conference. She recalled:

> When I called one conference office to ask about the accommodation, I had a problem. I could not distinguish between the sounds of "Z" and "V". I wrote

> down an e-mail address that the speaker on the phone told me. I misunderstood the sounds of "Z" and "V", and the e-mail address was wrong, of course. I thought, "Shoot! I mistook all the sounds of "Z" and "V."

"In the case of [v], the lower lip, as an active articulator, is pressed against the upper teeth in such a way as to allow the air expelled from the lungs to continue to pass through" (Wells, 2000); [z] is produced with the tongue tip on or near the tooth ridge (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996). When people learn English as a foreign language, the sounds of the language are somehow different in terms of the phonetic context. As a result, one tends to fail to acquire appropriate pronunciation for the target language (Wells, 2000). When Japanese female graduate students experience fear about learning English and living in a new environment, face challenges with intercultural communications, and have misunderstandings with English as a foreign language, they tend to feel a longing for the familiar. In the next section, I discuss homesickness among the Japanese female graduate students in this study.

Homesickness

Homesickness is defined as distress or impairment caused by actual or anticipated separation from home (Thurber, 2005). Flett, Endler and Besser (2009) concluded that trait separation anxiety and homesickness were connected. Homesickness is a significant factor of distress and impairment and it happens among students who 1) realize an actual separation from family and 2) who perceive the school setting in general as an uncontrollable, stressful situation. As to the first factor, it is possible for Japanese female graduate students to feel homesickness as Miu recalled:

> I don't know why but I suddenly felt homesick in the middle of the quarter. I first felt homesick when I called my parents in Japan. I had a good time studying abroad in the U.S. at the time until I called my parents' house. However, right after I heard my mother's voice, I suddenly felt homesick. At

> the time, I realized that I would not able to call them any more because I felt homesick. Since then, I send e-mails instead of calling. However, recently I feel homesick when I send messages to them.

Although Miu had a positive time in the U.S., she still felt homesick when she talked to her mother. She described herself as an independent among three siblings during the interview; however, she realized that she was one of a happy family when she felt homesickness even though she had a good time as an international student in the U.S. After hearing her mother's voice, she remembered the conformity of her hometown in Japan and felt homesick because she realized an actual separation from her family.

On the other hand, homesickness could come from highly uncontrollable and stressful experiences (Flett, Endler & Besser, 2009). These factors include both academic and public settings among Japanese female graduate students in the Midwestern U.S. university. They felt homesick when they experienced different expectations in educational settings. Aoi revealed:

> I wanted to go home to Japan. I thought so by the third week. (She sighed for two seconds.) I thought that I was hopeless…From the first to third week, I thought I was so hopeless because I could not speak out, listen to the lectures well, or understand clearly. I thought it was impossible for me take graduate classes in an U.S. university at the time. I panicked.

As Flett, Endler & Besser (2009) report, school settings in general, as uncontrollable and stressful situations, lead to homesickness among Japanese female graduate students. For Aoi, the first three weeks in a graduate program were a struggle because she was not able to understand the lectures, the students' discussions and the readings in English. Her feeling of hopelessness came from her limited English skills and a different educational system in the U.S. than she had experienced in Japan. These factors led to a stressful situation. Therefore, she was eager to go back to Japan. In addition to educational settings, homesickness was experienced in public places. The

university was located in the middle of a rural area so that public transportation was very limited compared to where she lived in Japan. As Akari shared:

> Recently, I really think that it is very inconvenient without automobiles in this small town. Especially, I have heard that it will snow so much during winter, and temperature will go -20 Celsius (-4 Fahrenheit). That is why I think that it is so necessary to obtain a driver's license very soon. Although I had not decided if I would buy a car or not, I know that I need a driver's license. When compared with areas where I worked and lived in Japan, the environment here is very different in terms of transportation.

These uncontrollable factors, weather and limited transportation in this case, resulted in a feeling of homesickness for Akari. Because there was substantial public transportation, including train, bus, subway, and taxi, and her parents gave her rides where she lived in Japan, she never experienced living with limited transportation before she came to the campus community. At this moment, Akari did not have a driver's license and her bicycle was her way to get around. However, she realized that she would not be able to use her bicycle in very windy and rainy weather, and when it snows in the winter. A lack of transportation could be a serious element for making Japanese female graduate students feel homesick because they do not have family to give them rides in the U.S. and feel inconvenienced without a car. Even if busses run in the small town, they do not follow a strict time schedule. As a result, new Japanese graduate students tend to rely on older Japanese students, who have been in the town longer, and have fluent English skills and their own vehicles. These older Japanese students may express pressure as well when they are asked. This habit may create additional pressure among Japanese female graduate students.

The experiences shared by my participants revealed that language-related challenges lead to fear and misunderstandings in intercultural communication and public

speech contexts. As a result, these factors caused Japanese graduate students to feel homesick. While exploring answers to the second research question, the next section discusses their in-depth experiences both on- and off-campus. The mounting stress of language and getting around may provoke a longing for the familiar.

On-campus and Off-campus Living Experiences

While understanding language-related experiences among the Japanese female graduate students, I will venture to shed light on their experiences on-campus and off-campus. While exploring this research inquiry, two themes emerged. These included intercultural friendship and self-esteem related to social identity development. These themes communicate how the Japanese female graduate students in this research interacted with international and domestic students and how they perceived themselves when they faced challenges.

Intercultural Friendship

On Campus

People live in organized societies. They are born into organizations, are educated by organizations, and spend much of their time working for organizations to achieve their goals. These organizations effectively assist various needs of human grouping, such as friendship and communities (Etzioni, 1961). Living in dormitories in the U.S., Japanese female graduate students experienced a new organization group. Additionally, none of them in this study had shared apartments or houses with other people besides their families in Japan so that their off-campus experiences included another new organization group. In campus living, Japanese female graduate students easily got along with other international students who came from Asian countries. As Sakura said:

> I met new friends during the international student orientation before academic programs started. They were from Taiwan. I stayed in the dormitory and one of them stayed in a room next to mine. I was often with them when I worried about new life here. So now we still have a good relationship. After I got along with them, my feeling changed in a positive way. Through these friends, I was able to talk to other students without hesitation. We went to classes and ate together every day. One day, I got a cold and had to sleep the whole day in the dorm. They worried about me from their hearts and brought me medicine. If I had not met them, I am sure my life would be different. I would be very quiet without these Taiwanese friends and I would not have any friends.

The university has an International Student and Faculty Service (ISFS) office. The office organizes international students' orientations every quarter to welcome students to the campus and explain how to register for classes and how to utilize campus facilities. During meetings, international peer advisers introduce new students to the main buildings, dining halls and facilities on campus. Then, the office organizes welcoming events. Through these events, new Japanese female graduate students had opportunities to meet other international students. The Japanese female graduate students felt particularly comfortable with Asian international students because their cultures are similar, mainly collective societies. Members of collective groups expect support from other members, and they all often call it cooperation (Hofstede, 2001). Sakura felt comfortable with Taiwanese students because she noticed that they were supportive of her and showed her that they cared about her.

Meanwhile, people in the individualistic orientation of society tend to be self-reliant, critical thinkers, and self-assertive (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch & Greenfield, 2001). When the Japanese female graduate students shared living spaces with American female students, they lived in individualistic organization groups. If they were unconscious of or did not accept cultural differences, their experiences sometimes involved unfamiliar living situations as Miu shared:

> I used to live with an American undergraduate female student in a dorm, but she did not come back to the room at all and I felt uncomfortable. I was very excited to live in the dorm at the time because I came from Japan to experience it. But I heard that there were ghosts in the dorm and I felt uncomfortable so I really hoped my roommate would come back to the room soon. But our life styles were different. She did not come back until I slept and sometimes she did not come back to the dorm at all. For these reasons, I did not have any chance to talk to her. Although I wanted to sleep because I had early classes in the morning, she did not come back. It meant that she might come back…I wondered if she would be in trouble in the dark room when she came back. So I did not even know if I should turn off the light when I slept. I tried to keep the room light on but I could not sleep well. However, I was not able to sleep well in the dark either because I noticed that my heart was pounding so much when she came back to the room at midnight.

Miu was not aware of the culture of U.S. campus dorms, where roommates usually exhibit self reliance. In a collectivism society, one should be conscious of what she or he does without disturbing others. Japanese people avoid self-assertion because they consider it selfish behavior (Bennett, 1998). That is why Miu tried to keep the light on for the American roommate because she was concerned about her entering a dark room. Additionally, Aoi revealed:

> My previous roommate in the dormitory was a party girl who did not stay in the room. She was an American undergraduate student. When I saw her for the first time, I felt that she was not interested in or good at communicating with Asian students and international students. Unfortunately, I had to share a room with her. Neither of us knew that we were going to share a room in the dorm. On the first day, there was no desk and chair for me in the room. The room was full of her stuff. But I thought that I should try to be friends with her. So, I brought up a topic to talk about with her, but she ignored me. She kept ignoring me. So, I gave up talking to her.

In Aoi's case, the challenges of her roommate belonged to different organization systems between Japan and the U.S. and language barriers. The American roommate was impatient with Aoi's Japanese-accented English. Hui and Triandis (1986) state that collectivism, such as in Japanese society, reflects "the subordination of individual goals to the goals of the collective, and a sense of harmony, interdependence, and concern for

theirs" (pp. 244-245). On the other hand, individualism, such in the U.S., is "the subordination of the goals of the collectivities to individual goals, and a sense of independence and lack of concern for others" (Hui & Triandis, 1986, p. 225). Although Aoi tried to maintain harmony with her new roommate based on the notion of collectivism, the American roommate was likely to behave independently regardless of Aoi's efforts to have an inter-dependent relationship.

Off Campus

As well as on campus, the Japanese female graduate students lived in off-campus apartments due to the cost of living on campus, the availability of large spaces and opportunities to select roommates. If the students had acquaintances or friends from the same country, Japanese students tended to assist new incoming students with finding accommodations. As Yuna said:

> I made a housing contract in this town before coming to the U.S. Luckily, one of my seniors who graduated from the same Japanese university and came to this town found me an apartment. She found an apartment Japanese students shared and she let me sublease one of the rooms. I did not have a hard time finding housing because of her assistance.

Yuna's older friend cooperated with her to find an apartment. The collectivist organization values moral involvement which is the focus of working together within a system of rules. One type of moral involvement in organization theory, pure moral involvement, occurs in vertical relationships, such as between young and old groups (Etzioni, 1961). This pure moral involvement is often seen in collectivist groups, including Japan. Because it is a hierarchical society, individuals rarely express disagreement with older members. Therefore, Yuna immediately accepted her senior

friend's offer, without looking for other possible apartments. Her behavior showed the notion of pure moral involvement.

On the other hand, if Japanese female graduate students tried to share a house or apartment with people from other countries, they had to understand another organization style, which may be unfamiliar to people in collectivist groups. As Mio recalled:

> I felt terrible until I found an apartment. I freeloaded in an apartment where one Japanese female graduate student lived. I felt so sorry for her at the time. Though I knew that I had to find an accommodation very soon, I was not able to find one immediately because my English was very poor. At the time I couldn't think of anything but to find another apartment. Besides, I caught on that the roommate of the Japanese female graduate student was angry at me. This roommate asked who I was, how long I was going to stay, and complained that she could not use the kitchen if I was there. They thought that I was asleep on the couch at the time, but I listened to this conversation. I was very sorry for my Japanese friend. For these reasons, I did not think of anything but looking for an accommodation.

When Mio was involved in an individualist organization, she had to confront someone's self-assertive opinions in a temporary dwelling while she seemed to regret deciding to stay in their apartment. The other type of moral involvement in organization theory is social moral involvement (Etzioni, 1961). The social moral involvement occurs in horizontal relationships regardless of gender, age, and political authority. In this orientation of society, people tend to be self-reliant, critical thinkers and self-assertive. Whereas they are inspired to compromise and understand each other, conflicts and disagreement are inevitable (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch & Greenfield, 2001). However, in the modern Japanese society, individuals sometimes state their direct opinions as Sakura shared:

> There were many problems when I shared an apartment with an American student and Japanese female graduate student. The American roommate was very sensitive about chemical products, such as detergents for dishes, and she did not like them at all. Because of her sensitivity, I saw the American student

> and another Japanese student have an argument. The Japanese friend and I were not able to leave any personal belongings at the sharing areas. If we did, the American roommate cleared the things away.

Although Sakura did not argue with the American roommate, the other Japanese female graduate female roommate tried to assert her position and opinions to the American roommate. Japanese occasionally act in an individualist fashion. In cultures in transition, including Japan, in this kind of performance the trend is towards giving preeminence to individualist behavior in collectivist societies (Wiseman, Congalton, Gass, Sueda & Ruiqing, 1995). Although they were from a collectivist society, their behavior tended to be self-assertive when they faced cultural sensitivity in individualist groups.

Because they are still coming from a mainly collectivist society, Japanese female graduate students have a difficult time understanding and being emotionally stable in an individualist society. Organization theory assisted these cases above to critically analyze the different societies of the U.S. and Japan. When these challenges related to a new organization group and language difficulties, these Japanese female graduate students encountered the intersection of self-esteem and social identity development in new environments.

Self-Esteem: Social Identity Development

Identity is a fundamental focus of social sciences, national and international politics and everyday discourses. According to Erik Erikson's (1968) identity development theory, people need a balance of self-coherence and mental health. Additionally, for Japanese female graduate students, interaction with cultural communities, such as family members, peers, and other groups, leads to identity

exploration, depending on the goals and values associated with mature identities. However, in the stage of identity vs. role confusion in identity development theory, people explore possibilities and begin to form their own identity based on the outcomes of their explorations (Erikson, 1968). Confusion occurs due to a person's uniqueness and self-development related to a group and collective identity (Azmitia, Syed & Radmacher, 2008).

When some obstacles hinder the progress of their explorations, they are easily confused about their roles in the world (Erikson, 1968). In cases of Japanese female graduate students, language barriers in pragmatic situations made it hard to maintain their social identity. When Hina was not able to talk to a staff person at the telephone company in English, she finally begged a resident office staff member from her apartment complex to order a home phone for her. She said:

> I just felt I was useless at the time. I felt miserable. Other friends told me that I was a baby because I was not able to do anything by myself. Although I tried to do it by myself, I could not achieve anything. So, I was often irritated.

She continued:

> I used to call my parents everyday. I cried after I heard my parents' voices…I cried to my parents maybe because I was psychologically relaxed. I was able to say everything that I wanted to say to my parents, and also I understood everything that my parents said. I worried for the future… Disappointments from misunderstanding… Also, I regretted my lack of preparation. I realized that I did not prepare well for studying abroad when I was in Japan. I had these feelings for more than a month.

Hina lost confidence and her friends considered her dependent and needy (a baby) when she encountered language barriers. When she called her mother, her behavior became more like a person unsure of herself and needing reassurance. These feelings could be grounds for serious emotional issues, such as depression, if they continued for a

long time in academic settings and daily tasks (Bang, Muriuki & Hodges, 2008). One's social identity connects to extended circles of group membership so that different social contexts are possible for individuals to think and feel differently (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). Moreover, issues with language proficiency lead to low self-esteem when one experiences social integration within other cultures (Bang, Muriuki & Hodges, 2008). Poor language skills limiting interactions with others led Japanese female graduate students to worry about completing their tasks and about solving important issues in the new environment.

Japanese female graduate students often felt anxious and inadequate about their English speaking ability (Tatum, 2003). According to findings of this study, they felt more pressure and had low self-esteems when they had a difficult time interacting with public service employees. When Aoi was not able to communicate well with a staff person at a leasing office, she said:

> I could not speak and listen well via telephone. In terms of leasing, my closet was leaking with water because the pipe was broken. All my clothes got dirty and bags became moldy. It was the worst situation. I thought I was in big trouble and I had to do something. Although I called the office several times, nobody picked up the phone for awhile. Finally, a staff member picked up the phone. However, this person hung up the phone so many times because my pronunciation was wrong. This person did not understand what I said. Though I kept telling about the water problem to this person, he continuously hung up the phone. I said, "I have a problem of leaking. Leaking… Leaking…" When this person kept hanging up the phone, I was sad and angry. But I knew I had to do something because all my things were getting spoiled. I was upset by the staff member's attitude. At the same time, I was disappointed with myself because he did not understand.

Although Aoi and other participants in this study were selected from either a Japanese university or a company as the best potential scholars with full financial support for two years, their self-esteem became very low when they encountered language

barriers. Individuals consider their self identity based on their knowledge; and in a social group, individuals value emotional attachment (Tajfel, 1974). When these factors were not satisfied, Japanese female graduate students lost confidence, felt disappointed, and ashamed of their lack of English proficiency.

After a year in the U.S., Japanese female graduate students gradually adjusted themselves and developed their social identities. Regardless of language challenges and new environment difficulties, their minds had transformed positively while learning and experiencing a new culture. All participants recalled what they used to be in Japan and what they became in the U.S. As Mio said:

> When I was in Japan, my parents did everything for me and it seemed like they let me be alive…I met many friends who believed in the same Japanese cultural values and I was tired of being with them. For example, girls competed with each other, asking whether they are skinny or they have big eyes. Also, friends used to talk about other's familial backgrounds, looks, and smart people. I did not like to do that at all, and I suffered from an inferiority complex.

In Japan, nobody questioned how she decided on things, even if it was decided by others, her mother in her case. Also, she was sensitive about social competition because she was involved an organization society, where one is a subordinate to particular groups and has to adjust between the person's and group's objectives (Paez, Martinez-Taboada, Arrospide, Insua & Ayestaran, 1998). Older family members guided her decisions. Her ways of thinking transformed after she experienced living in the U.S. for a year. Mio continued:

> I feel "I am alive!" since I've come here [U.S.]. Of course, I have to do everything on my own, I have to keep deadlines of submissions and what I do all depends on my decisions. But since I came here [U.S.], I think that I know about myself more and I like myself more than before. I found a place where I am able to be comfortable and who I want to be. I have noticed that I don't have to belong to some particular groups to be myself as I used to do in Japan.

Riko shared a similar perspective:

> I learned about being positive in the U.S. If I am interested in something, I should cope with the issue by myself and act however I should be. For example, I made a lot of friends from other counties in my program, and I spent time with them outside classes. After I talked and played with them, I was able to learn a lot. If I did not have them, I would not have such a wonderful time. So be positive. Putting ideas into actions was something that I did not use to do in Japan, but it is important.

Living in the U.S., Mio and Riko experienced how it was graceful to choose, negotiate and act on what they would like to do. The individual's goals are more important than the group's goals in an individualist society (Paez, Martinez-Taboada, Arrospide, Insua & Ayestaran, 1998). Mio's personal self-esteem was low because older family members and authorities traditionally made decisions and her evaluations came from other people in Japan. However, while making progress in her life by herself in the U.S., Mio developed her personal identity and gradually liked herself. Meanwhile, thanks to her outgoing personality, Riko built her self-esteem through studying abroad while making several types of friends from diverse countries.

The section of on-campus and off-campus experiences brought up two important themes. These were intercultural friendships across countries and self-esteem associated with social identity development. Challenges to Japanese females included cross-culture issues, language proficiency, and identity development in the U.S. Organization theory, notions of collectivism/individualism and social identity assisted in analyzing these findings. In addition to these critical resources, I will analyze the academic challenges of Japanese female graduate students in the next section.

Academic Challenges in a U.S. University

This section presents the academic challenges Japanese female graduate students faced. Six themes emerged in this research question: marginalization in educational settings, anxiety about class participation, impact from Japanese education, cultural differences in class participation, intercultural relationships, and strategies for understanding classes. The observations conducted for this study also provided some examples that pertain to the third research question.

Marginalization in Educational Settings

"Participation as equals in social life is essential to securing social justice for people marginalized by structural inequalities, as well as those oppressed by 'misrecognition'" (Goodland & Riddell, 2005, p. 52). Since marginalizing people often involves social exclusion, it is important to explore proper solutions to each different source of injustice (Mitakidou, Tressou & Karagianni, 2008). In the U.S university setting, Japanese female graduate students belong to new foreigner and language minority groups. Experiencing new fields of study and language barriers in college often hinders the progress of studying and influences a person's mental condition (Center for Teaching and Learning, 1997) as Hina said:

> During a discussion, I understood what the professor was talking about because she spoke clearly and slowly because I believed that she took note of my English skills. However, other students did not know anything about my condition. I was the only international student in the class. It was hard. Also, I had no idea about the background of special education, which other American students commonly knew. They started a discussion on the assumption that everybody knew the background. So, I could not catch up with the discussion. In the process of the discussion, I finally had a chance to join in when the professor asked me, "How about in Japan?" But I could not say it well. Although I realized that there were some topics related to the discussion after class, I could not say anything in the class.

Sakura also recalled:

> The most difficult class style was discussion. At first, the speed of conversation was too fast for me to listen to them and understand. Even if I did not participate in the discussion, other students added comments continuously after a professor said something. The speech of American students was very fast, just like the way of speaking among young Japanese. Also, for me, sometimes their pronunciation was not clear. Eventually, I did not follow the discussion at all and I noticed that discussion classes were the most difficult ones.

The rest of the participants also expressed similar experiences. Japanese education predominantly practices the banking concept of education, which relies mainly on lecture-style classes, emphasizes repetition and memorizing, and knowledge is bestowed by teachers on students (Freire, 2000). In addition, teachers become a domestic communication tool. Therefore, discussion-based classes were a difficult adjustment for Japanese female graduate students in the U.S. They rarely experienced presentations and discussion-style classes in Japan. They did not speak up in Japanese classrooms because the school systems do not require their students to share their ideas in class (Hofstede, 2001). Moreover, discussion-based classes required remarkable comprehensive skills to understand topics and to express their creative thoughts in English with confidence at the same time. For Japanese female graduate students, however, it was difficult to participate in discussions because of a lack of these competencies. In addition to the fast rate of speech in English, Japanese female graduate students often found discussion-based classes difficult to join due to their lack of experience speaking up in class.

Moreover, experiences of language challenges in class caused them to feel disgraced and isolated. The feelings may possibly lead to depression among students. For instance, in Yui's case, her lack of contribution to class discussions caused her to appear incompetent:

> I felt like I was an idiot. But sometimes, I had an opinion. But you know, I always missed the opportunity. Usually, students who speak English all the time dominated the conversation. When I wanted to insert some ideas in the discussion, my space was not left because I don't speak usually. When somebody said, okay, nobody has opinions, let's move on, I wanted to say something. But I couldn't. I often missed the opportunity to speak.

Yui felt isolation when she faced "stumbling blocks in intercultural communication" (Barna, 1998, p. 173). Stumbling blocks occur when a person from another culture is frustrated with misunderstanding something in their host culture. One of the assumptions is different codes, thoughts, and feelings. In the U.S., body language and affirmative comments tend to be characterized as informed, helpful and as pleasing to newcomers. Therefore, U.S. students complain that international students in discussions and project groups seem uncooperative or uninterested when they do not share their thoughts. On the other hand, culturally Japanese female graduate students understood these affirmative behaviors that U.S. students do as simply indicating polite interest or trying not to embarrass themselves (Barna, 1998). Moreover, their affirmative comments and the discussions of other students created an atmosphere where the Japanese female graduate students felt left out and were not able to find a time to share their thoughts, as Yuna said:

> I did not have confidence in my oral skill. That is why I was not able to speak in class. Also, African students seem to talk a lot and their speech is powerful. When they started speaking, I was not able to jump into the discussion. Overall, I was not confident and my English speaking skills were poor at the time…But if I do not talk at all, people think that I am very shy. Gradually, I became an invisible student in class.

Riko shared a similar view:

> I often try to say something in class though… First of all, other classmates' speech and opinions were powerful so that I am often overwhelmed by their discussion. As a result, I just listened to their thoughts and they convinced me

> of their discussion. Then, I refrained from sharing my opinions because I wondered if my opinions were appropriate to the topic of the discussion.

Riko was a second-year master's student when I conducted the interviews and observations. In her communication and development class, Riko's classmates were from Africa, South America, the Middle East, Asia and America. While these students actively asked questions of the professor from Columbia and had created quite a discussion, Riko did not contribute her thoughts at all during the three observations I conducted during the quarter. Instead, she took notes whenever the professor and students had comments, and listened to all discussion in class while nodding and looking at speakers' faces.

A worse stumbling block is when rejection occurs in a group to which someone belongs yet feels "different" (Barna, 1998, p. 173) from other members of the group because of the rejection. Some of the participants had a hard time facing new types of relationships and new international scenes due to the disappointing results of attempts at communication. When Miu took a class in the first quarter where she was the only international student, she remembered:

> Usually I speak a lot among Japanese friends, but I could not speak at all in a classroom of all American students. One day, the professor in the class said, "Miu is shy so she does not talk much." Since then, I was labeled as shy, and I became one of shy students in the class. Then, I felt that I was not in the mainstream in the class and was marginalized for a quarter. I could not say anything to the students next to me. I felt that I was in a different place than where these American students stayed. I was in the class, but I never felt that I was one of them. The classmates might not even remember my presence because I did not try to open my mind.

When Miu's professor told the class that she was shy, she thought the professor and other students considered her a different student from others. Miu had been quiet due to respect of the philosophy of Confucianism which suggests students should humbly listen to lectures. However, this silent attitude gave a different impression in a U.S.

classroom. Miu emphasized that she was the only international student and she was different from domestic students, so she was not able to talk to anybody and did not try to make any friends in the class either. Moreover, she always felt that her mind was left out and that she did not belong to this class even though she attended all the classes during the quarter.

During the fieldwork of this study, Miu was a second-year master's student who had lived on the campus for a year. After the first observation, Miu said she had wanted to speak more than she did during the education class I observed. She thought that she could not contribute to discussions very well. Although she shared her thoughts a few times in class discussion and several times in small group work, she felt it was not enough. Miu said, "I wanted to share my ideas with the class more than I did, but somehow I could not speak!" She smiled when she told me, though her voice was emotional and loud as if she felt disappointed about how she behaved. Although her desire to contribute in class increased over a year, she still had difficulty adjusting and was not satisfied with her class participation.

Japanese female graduate students felt marginalization when they were not able to speak up in class although they had something on their minds. According to findings, some of them were embarrassed describing themselves as "idiots" and others assumed the position of a listener in class discussions. Moreover, marginalization in this study meant an excluded group that society controls in terms of "difference." (Mitakidou, Tressou & Karagianni, 2008; Barna, 1998). These experiences easily led to anxiety and many other factors associated with this feeling. The next theme that emerged was the anxiety about

class participations they experienced. These interviews point to people who have high expectations for themselves and judge themselves harshly.

Anxiety about Class Participation

Anxiety or tension and stress are common in cross-cultural experiences because of multiple uncertainties and high expectations. While moderate tension meets positive challenges with energy, too much anxiety causes defensiveness, withdrawal, hostility or rejection. Young Y. Kim states that the stress of intercultural encounters is associated with internal balance of the individual system. Different languages, particularly, are difficult to use and interpret with appropriate behavior (Barna, 1998). Additionally, research shows that the level of anxiety relates to gender. Female international students from countries where women and men have different expectations seem to face a higher amount of stress than males in a new environment (Bang, Muriuki & Hodges, 2008).

Language challenges usually generated anxiety feelings, especially for less fluent speakers. When Miu experienced being a "different" student in class, she reflected:

> I was anxious about the class every day while sitting and listening to the lecture and grading students' papers. I often thought, "What will happen tomorrow?" My heart was pounding before class and in class. At the end of the class, the professor talked about an assignment, but I did not understand what he said because I was nervous. Anyway, I was always tense at the time.

When the level of her anxiety was highly elevated, she had even more difficulty using the target language. According to findings, discussion classes were one of the most stressful situations for the participants. For example, during an interview, Hina shared the following about participating in a discussion-style class:

> Well, during the class, I used to pray, "Please don't ask me anything, professor." Or "Oh, don't call my name, anybody." For me, the class was about, "What were you talking about?" I did not understand what the discussion was. Then, if somebody asked me about Japan, I would not have

> any answer ready… Because I often panicked in the class, I prayed, "Please don't ask me anything, professor…" I was seriously thinking about it.

Mio shared as well:

> During the class, I prayed, "Please don't ask me anything." In addition, I looked down and tried not to look at the professor's eye. When I felt that the professor was going to ask me something, I looked down at the desk.

Sakura recalled:

> Well, I felt anxiety. The discussion class gave me a shock. I took the class before I entered graduate school. Before I experienced it, I mainly met and spoke with people who talked with me slowly and clearly. They tried to help me because they knew I was an international student and a foreigner in this country. However, in the class, everybody, including domestic students, of course, is the subject of conversation. So, I realized that in class, they would not treat me as a special person anymore. It is serious. I felt I was in trouble.

Aoi said:

> From the first to the third week, I thought I was so hopeless because I could not speak out, listen to the lecture well, and understand clearly. I thought it was impossible for me take graduate classes in the U.S. at the time. I panicked.

The rest of the participants had similar memories of this language difficulty in high-stress environments. When language learners are experiencing negative emotions, such as anger, sadness, or hate, they are not able to express themselves in their target language because they have less experience and insufficient language abilities (Gass & Selinker, 2001). In Brown's (2001) teaching principles in ESL schools, he defines language ego, stating "As human beings learn to use a second language, they also develop a new mode of thinking, feeling, and acting – a second identity… the second language, can easily create within the learner a sense of fragility, a defensiveness, and raising of inhibitions" (p. 72). Although the participants in this study experienced high levels of anxiety while hoping "Please do not ask any question" in their minds, no one

could express their voice because this second identity emerged. Japanese female graduate students felt this fragility because they suddenly became linguistically and emotionally defenseless in English though they generally resisted similar attacks in Japanese contexts.

Furthermore, Japanese female graduate students perceived themselves as less involved in class interactions, while preparing subject matter, peers' comments and questions. They tended to remain silent in classes due to poorly formulated ideas and anxiety over appearing unintelligent to other students (Liu, 2001), as Yuna shared:

> Although I still do not talk much in class, I am very nervous when I talk. Probably, failed experiences became a psychological trauma, and I always worry about what is the worst situation that could happen, and feel ashamed. Though I understand that telling my thoughts is critical in a U.S. university, I still fear to speak in class. Then again, I was not able to say anything.

Akari said:

> I never took classes in which students had discussions and presentations, and students shared their thoughts in front of all students in the Japanese university. But these types of classes were normal in this university. I needed a lot of courage to speak up. Other international students spoke like native speakers, but I was not able to talk until I summarized my ideas in my head first. In that sense, for me, speaking English takes a lot of time and it is a difficult task.

As Liu (2001) analyzed, Yuna and Akari were involved in few class interactions although they were interested in other students' comments and the topics of discussion. Their voices tended to be silent and their behavior conveyed their anxiety. Akari demonstrated her thoughts and took part in class participation during the observations I conducted for this study. I observed her academic participation in small group activities, class discussions and her professor's lectures. In the group activity of three members, Akari was the last speaker to share her thoughts. She seemed to need some time to think before she started voicing her opinions. Her voice was rather low although she was fluent

in English. After the small-group activity, each group shared a summarized version of their discussion with the rest of the class. Two group members contributed the group's reflections first; and Akari finally added some comments to the class. Due to her very low voice and incomplete statements, the other group members assisted her and added reflections on their discussion while they were being helpful. During my observations, Akari shared her thoughts in the small-group activities although she felt anxiety and did not contribute to the class discussion at all throughout the whole quarter.

Japanese female graduate students feel anxiety due to the lack of time to jump into discussions and because other students dominate discussions. It is, however, cultural as well that in the U.S. class discussions tend to be goal directed, so silent spaces are not valued. Miu had comments about small-group activities:

> I preferred small group discussions to the class discussion at first. Now I am sometimes uncomfortable with small-group activities. While I feel easy about talking with three students in a group, the other two students are excited about particular topics that I do not know. I was not interested in the topic at all and my position was just as a listener. The activity ended while I was hearing the discussion. In that case, I prefer the class discussion to the small group activities.

I observed her small-group activity with three members in her education class. After a minute of brief reflection on the book chapter, an American female and a Kenyan male student dominated discussions in the group. Although Miu nodded and took notes, she was not able to participate in the discussion due to her lack of background on the subject and the lack of opportunities to join in the discussion. During our interviews, she reflected on this situation and added that her being silent made her uncomfortable and she felt anxiety in the small-group activity.

On the other hand, group activities were easier for some Japanese female graduate students to join than class discussion due to the small number of students in groups. Hina shared:

> I felt less pressure because it was a small group. Also, the small groups talked about case studies at the time, so I was able to share my experiences and opinions. Though now I take a class which is discussion-based, I do not resist participation like I used to. I am able to share my opinions at least once in the class. But if I had to make a few comments in the class, I would be nervous again. I was glad that my adviser recommended that I take a class consisting of four or five students in a group. I was able to develop discussion skills at the time.

With her extrovert characteristics, Hina felt less pressure in group activities after consulting with her adviser. While talking with other students and her adviser, she built her communicative competence and self-esteem. One of the factors which allow Japanese students to feel less anxiety within conversations relates to their personality traits. A second-language confidence associates with communication skills in their first language (Liu, 2001). In other words, in one whose communication skills are advanced, these skills demonstrate the same level of capability as well. Hina was a primary school teacher in Japan and her outgoing personality led her to socialize with many different types of people. Hina felt less anxiety during discussions in the U.S. classroom because of her personality.

Japanese female graduate students had to face the challenge of learning about unfamiliar topics and class activities, such note-taking and class announcements. They felt another type of anxiety due to face-saving when they had difficulty understanding lectures and conversations. Yuna said:

> The most serious problem is note-taking. While I took notes, topics change continuously without a break so that I cannot take notes perfectly. For example, if professors write important words on the board, I can take notes.

> However, when professors keep talking for the whole lecture and end the class, I am not able to take notes well. Although I take very few notes, I worry if I get important points in the lecture. Whenever these kinds of things happen, I think it is hard to participate in the class.

This type of anxiety happened during class conversation, as indicated in Mio's reflection of her experience:

> American and other international students laughed a lot when the professor made jokes in the class. Indeed, I did not understand what he meant at all or why other students laughed so much. But I just imitated others and laughed with them with big smiles at the time anyway. I did not want the professor and students to think that I did not understand English. I guess my problem is a lack of language ability […]. The same situation happened when students raised hands. When many students raised hands, I just imitated with them because I was scared of being singled out. Also I was scared of being called by name and asked, "So how about you?" So I did the same things that other students did.

Neither of these women asked the professor to clarify what exactly happened during the discussion and after the class. I analyzed two factors in these case studies. Generally, female international students are unwilling to make mistakes and be ridiculed by classmates. This response involves face-saving, a common practice in Japanese culture, where people's positions are connected to relations with group members and communities. Loss of face results from saying or doing something inappropriate that results in a person not being accepted by other members (Barna, 1998; Liu, 2001). The other factor was the notion of collectivism in Japanese society; according to Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asia, and Lucca (1988), connected collectivism promotes interdependence, while group members smoothly cooperate with each other with harmony. Therefore, Yuna and Mio worried about being seen as unintelligent students not understanding lectures and conversations in class. Moreover, they tried not to disturb the class atmosphere, while maintaining group concord to avoid any possible

confrontation, conflict or confusion based on the notion of collectivism (Hofstede, 2001). As a result, they became silent to maintain group harmony and imitated what other students did although they felt anxiety about what was going on in the class.

When the Japanese female graduate students were given opportunities to speak in class, such as presentations and sharing answers of homework, their anxiety from a lack of experience and confidence became clear. As Yui recalled:

> All students had to share homework answers one day and I had to talk about answers in class. I could not speak well at all. Other students looked at me as if saying, "Good luck, good luck." At the time, my hands were shaking. I am not good at talking in front of the class at all…I did presentations twice. During the first presentation, my body was shivering again and I did not know where to look in the classroom. I was about to cry and I really wanted to go home and stay in my room for awhile. Since then, I stayed at home whenever some projects, presentations, and tests were done, while thinking that I just wanted to forget what happened for the day!

Yuna had similar reflections:

> I had a hard time doing presentations. I had some experiences giving presentations in Japan, but I just read everything that I prepared. In the U.S. university, however, I had to present with my own words, and I never had to do that in Japan. As a student who graduated from an undergraduate program a few months ago, completing a presentation was a big challenge because I was not sure if audiences would understand what I said. During the presentation, I was very nervous. I still remember that I felt my brain was blank and couldn't think of anything in front of all the students and the professor. Although I prepared several statements in advance, I forgot everything that I was going to present, and I became silent during the presentation.

These case studies contained three factors which caused the Japanese students to feel anxiety when they had to talk in the class: face-saving, differences of Japanese and U.S. education systems, and low self-esteem about language ability. The Japanese female graduate students worried about face-saving when they had to share their opinions with the class. Next, they were unfamiliar with the U.S. education system where discussion-

based class is the norm. Japanese education relies on the philosophy of Confucianism and banking education, whereby students are supposed to listen to the lecturers' knowledge imparted by 'experts' or teachers who become the main tool of communication (Freire, 2000). Both concepts create hierarchical systems in the society so in schooling, teachers take the responsibility of presenting a whole lecture while students patiently receive and memorize as passive learners; and authorities often have primary rights to speak for a long time. Japanese female graduate students did not have opportunities to share their thoughts in Japanese schools because teacher-centered classes restricted their dialogue (Freire, 2000). The final factor was low self-esteem about language proficiency. Language difficulty easily creates anxiety and other negative psychological impacts; therefore, the women's identity became too fragile to produce a second language (Bang, Muriuki & Hodges, 2008; Brown, 2001). In the cases of Japanese female graduate students, these factors were major challenges and raised the level of anxiety during class participation.

The result of several months of sustained anxiety caused Japanese female graduate students to have physical diseases, feelings of exhaustion, desperation and depression. They consciously or unconsciously tended to use psychological defenses while constantly adjusting and suffering in their new academic environments (Barna, 1998). The following case study of Miu illustrates how they sometimes experienced stress-related illnesses:

> In the third quarter, I took too many classes and I knew something was wrong with my body. I had a headache every day. In the middle of the quarter, I was not able to sleep through the night though I was very tired…I took two demanding classes. One of them was a research class and I did not fully understand the class in the quarter and I was stressed. At the time, I gradually

> thought I wanted to go back to Japan. It was the time when I realized the limitations of living in the U.S.

Miu had a difficult time adjusting to a new academic setting and accepting cultural diversity; and the continuous anxiety led to headaches and sleepless nights. She continued:

> One reason for my headache was the amount of assignments every week. It was a lot of reading and I was not able to finish it all unless I read 20-30 pages every day. In addition, the content of the reading was rather difficult. I realized that having assignments lead to such terrible feelings at the time.

Her diligent behavior toward all subjects made for additional anxiety. Japanese female graduate students perceive themselves as more prepared for class, more interested in the subject matter, and more inspired by peers' comments and questions than are male students (Liu, 2001). Moreover, Miu's introvert characteristics led her to devote her time to her assignments and projects for all classes (Gass & Selinker, 2001) instead of socializing with others. As a result, she was not able to find a time to relax for a long period.

As time went by, Japanese female graduate students found classes more comfortable than during the first year of graduate school. Hina shared how computer technology helped her to participate in the class discussion:

> I was rather comfortable with the discussion board on the computer. It allowed me to participate in discussions and did not make me feel like I was disturbing their discussions.

In the collectivist society, people try to avoid distracting others by jumping into conversations and with unnecessary activities. Hina thought that contributing to discussions in person seemed to distract others; nevertheless sharing thoughts is

encouraged in U.S. education systems. For Hina, participating via the discussion board on the computer was more comfortable than having verbal discussions in the classroom.

In addition, improving their English competency reduced their anxiety and assisted them in building self-esteem. Aoi recalled:

> Participating in classes was very difficult for me during the first year because I did not have deep knowledge about my program, strong listening skills in English, and I was shy in discussion classes. At first, I thought that all students shared impressive ideas with much emotion. As time went by, I realized what they said was often common sense which I could also think. Then, I started feeling like talking in class because I realized that their thinking levels are almost the same as mine.

While building new backgrounds and taking classes in her program, Aoi developed her English competence. In terms of motivation in second language learning, Gardner (1985) states, “motivation involves four aspects, a goal, effortful behaviour, a desire to attain the goal and favourable attitudes towards the activity in question” (p. 50). This awareness of knowing gave Aoi confidence and motivation to contribute and pursue a graduate-level education.

Anxiety about class participation was deeply connected to a different educational system and gender-roles between Japan and the U.S. Additionally, expectations of collectivist and individualist societies offered different challenges and needed necessary adjustments. These factors put Japanese female graduate students under stress, including feeling threatened or ridiculed for mistakes and by low self-esteem.

Findings showed, however, that levels of anxiety would decrease as they developed their language proficiency and discovered other ways of contributing to discussions. In addition, Miu reflected on how she felt about this research during the data analyses. When I shared transcripts of hers through e-mail, she commented about her

voices and wrote, “All the stories I shared with you, for example, made me feel emotional, and more importantly, I noticed that the presence of the person who could just listen to my issues helped me calm down.” Her message described that the presence of experienced people who went through a similar academic journey could assist their mental conditions. The next section will analyze their understanding and application of Japanese education systems and philosophy to assist them when coping with new challenges in the U.S. The following theme emerged as a result of their Japanese education.

Impact from Japanese Education

Throughout Japanese history, Confucian beliefs have influenced and developed national characteristics in all aspects of society and educational settings. A main concept of Confucius is that educators should prepare and develop instructions and rules in society (Mungazi, 1993). Interpersonal relationships are hierarchical and the society expects people’s obedience, responsibilities and polite manners; therefore, Japanese classes rely on teacher-centered lectures in traditional education (Wang, 2001). Some Japanese female graduate students realized that they benefited from traditional education experiences in Japan. Yui recalled:

> I think most Japanese students are good at quizzes or written tests. So, it was easier for me than writing a paper or taking home a quiz. I made flash cards and listed the things that I needed to remember. That’s how I prepared. Also, I joined study groups with other friends. We divided chapters on the first day and in the next meeting, and we talked about the chapters that we were charged with. I did not worry about scores very much because I never got grades lower than a B.

Japanese education relied on traditional education which commonly utilizes tests, letter grades, and short-answer tests. Completing these tasks requires strong

memorization skills, while students repeat particular subjects again and again. Although children develop less critical thinking skills in banking education (Freire, 2000), their memorization skills assisted Yui with handling exams in a different country.

While many Japanese female graduate students faced several types of challenges in the U.S. university, some of them appreciated the U.S. education system as Yuna shared:

> In Japan, students used to take teacher-centered classes and listened to professors' lectures and I experienced the same as a student. However, here (the Midwestern U.S. university), although it is called a "lecture," students ask a lot of questions in the middle of the professor's lecture. The discussion often expanded for students' questions because the professor tried to answer their inquiries. It helps me to understand topics more. Also, professors in the U.S. often use Power Point to explain specifics. It helped me to understand the contents of lectures.

Through dialogues between the professor and other students, Yuna recognized that discussing unfamiliar issues helped her to deeply understand the field. The discussions required students to express their critical thoughts. Freire (2000) emphasizes problem- posing for students to become involved in knowledge and the organization of the society in a democratic education system (Shor, 1992). In problem posing-education, dialogue is necessary to unveil reality, and it makes for critical thinkers (Freire, 2000). Additionally, Yuna appreciated the technology used in the classroom to clearly categorize the contexts. In this sense, she benefited from the problem-posing style of U.S. education.

Furthermore, experiencing the different organization styles between Japan and the U.S. was valuable for Japanese female graduate students. Sakura pointed out:

> In Japanese education, there are no office hours for students. And professors in Japan are not as friendly as professors in the United States. As a graduate student, I prefer the educational style in the United States because I can experience and learn so much, and taking classes in the United States gives me a chance to broaden my views.

Sakura and other students valued the vertical relationships with professors in the U.S. when they studied in graduate school. Etzioni (1961) provides two types of moral involvement in organization theory: Pure and social. Pure moral involvement is within vertical relationships such as between teachers and students, and the relationship becomes that of leaders and followers which creates a large distance between them. On the other hand, social moral involvement is within horizontal relationships in any type of group. The relationships tend to be close because both partners show less authoritative attitudes (Etzioni, 1961). In Sakura's case, she felt less threatened when she talked to her professors in the U.S. so their friendly behaviors encouraged her to study in many fields.

Conversely, the Japanese education philosophy and system negatively impacted them in discussion-based classes. For Japanese female graduate students, speaking up and sharing thoughts was unfamiliar and it took a lot of time and required confidence. Miu described the situation clearly:

> A big challenge was to speak out in classrooms. Yes, it was speaking out and raising hands before talking. In Japan, professors used to call my family name and asked, "Do you have any idea?" My class participation style was completely passive in Japan. But here, nobody seemed to care about my ideas unless I raised my hand and said something. I could not get accustomed to speaking up in class […] At first, this very positive class participation style overwhelmed me. Then, it took so much time until I was able to raise my hand and share my thoughts in the class. I could not take the first step for a long time. It was a very long period.

Miu believed that it was inappropriate to speak up before she was called on by the professor because the Japanese educators personally called her family name when they needed opinions from her. Furthermore, students' assertive behaviors should be avoided in the collective educational classroom, while their attitudes are encouraged in the individualistic educational classroom (Hofstede, 2001). Miu understood that contribution

to discussions in classrooms was important; and she even tried to do it many times when she had some ideas; nevertheless, the attempts failed due to her lack of experience and to her difficulties accepting the system of individualism.

According to the philosophical thoughts of Confucius, relationships are hierarchical, and social order depends on people's obedience, responsibilities, and polite manners (Wang, 2001). In a Japanese school, one observes the hierarchy between students and teachers. Students often behave and listen humbly to the teachers (Freire, 2000). Regarding the Japanese educational style in Japan, Hina remembered:

> Though I believe it is a Japanese way of thinking, I thought I had to say the correct answers when I shared opinions in class. This idea put me under a lot of pressure. While I was thinking what I was going to say, topics changed over and over again. If I could say something, I was lucky.

The authority of the teacher sets the tone of dialogue between students and teachers, particularly in Japan (Shor, 1992). Therefore, class style automatically becomes "teacher centered" and restricts students' voices. In a Japanese school, students do not talk to each other, while both students and teachers talk to each other in American schools. In the case of the U.S., there are no expected answers. However, both teachers and students are expected to say the correct answers in Japan. Moreover, during discussion-based classes, listening and speaking levels rise even among American students. At the same time, Hina felt she had to give a perfect and exact answer which is expected in Japanese education. This habit of sharing exact answers negatively impacted Hina's participation in discussion-based classes.

In addition, Miu had to cope with a gender-related challenge. Gender roles become an influential factor that governed Japanese female graduate students' class

participation in their new environment (Bang, Muriuki & Hodges, 2008; Liu, 2001). Miu said:

> All graduate students had to grade the papers of the undergraduate students in the class. On the first day, I told the professor that I was not capable of completing this task. I told him that I came from Japan just a few months ago, and I am the one who goes to the writing tutor whenever I complete a paper. I asked him, "How can a person like me grade other people's papers? It is impossible." However, I was the only international student, and the professor did not seem to understand my situation…It is easier for me to read textbooks, but the writing of American undergraduate students was difficult to read. Some students did not write well at all and I did not understand what they wrote. My emotions were unstable during the whole quarter.

Miu's self-esteem was very low; and she felt a lot of pressure during this quarter due to different expectations required in the Japanese hierarchy system and gender-roles as well as language proficiency. A fundamental value in Japanese Confucianism emphasizes social and political hierarchy and harmony (Gutek, 2006; Wang 2001). Miu never graded and taught others' work because Japanese education did not require these tasks of students; instead, the professors did them. She came to the U.S. soon after she received her bachelor's degree in Japan. The authority of Japanese teachers sets the tone of dialogue between students and teachers (Shor, 1992), so her tasks of being a student in Japan were always to receive knowledge and experiences instead of providing them. Moreover, Japanese Confucianism has oppressed females historically while males dominate in the society. In terms of postmodern critical feminist theory, Jaggar (1983) suggests that the historical details and political structures have created an organized people. The relationship between gender and schooling shows the reproduction of the oppression and it demonstrates the notion of resistance to human experience through social activities that may restrict females' capabilities. Although Japanese females are capable of doing many tasks, they are oppressed by their society by the concept that they

are not competent enough. Miu was overwhelmed by multiple factors which influenced her life in Japan in terms of educational systems, gender-roles and language proficiency.

Japanese female graduate students experienced both positive and negative perspectives impacted by Japanese education. They appreciated supportive advisers in their programs and the discussion-based styles in the U.S. Meanwhile, a Confucian philosophy and gender-roles in Japan unconstructively impacted on their class participations in the U.S. classrooms. The next theme includes cultural differences in class participations, particularly gender-related behavior.

Cultural Differences in Class Participation

This theme emphasizes differences in students' class participation between Japan and the U.S. from the perspectives of organization theory, postmodern critical feminist theory, and banking/problem-posing education concepts. The participants described how the class participation of American students and Japanese students differed and what they learned and how they adjusted to the differences. Many of them unveiled how they were surprised by the assertive behavior of American students in the classroom. Yuna recalled:

> I used to act together with a group of friends in Japan. Whenever something happened, my girlfriends and I consulted with each other in class. Then, we decided what to do, where to go, and when to go together. On the other hand, both girls and boys here [in the U.S.] immediately express their own ideas (without consulting with close friends). Though I understand that it depends on the person, my first impression of American female students is that they are brave with strong determination.

In the collectivist society, Yuna used to cooperate and made decisions similar to those of her friends in order to maintain group harmony. In Etzioni's (1961) organization theory, the forms of compliance depend on a relationship between power and the individuals' involvement in the organization. The compliance structures change based on

the types of goals and satisfaction in the group members. The U.S. compliance structures are different from Japanese structures; Yuna had a strong reaction to the assertive attitudes of American female students in the classroom. In terms of assertive behaviors, Hina shared:

> Basically, all students seem to be self-assertive and express their own opinions in the American classroom regardless of their gender. In my program, however, there were only two male students so that it was mostly a girls' class. Female students often facilitated discussion. Then, sometimes male students said, "I think…from a man's perspective" while adding suggestions. Therefore, I was impressed that female students often took the initiative. Oh, I was surprised that many students said in class, "Do you know what I mean?" Japanese female students rarely say something like this in class. American female students wanted to make sure that listeners understood their opinions clearly. Meanwhile, Japanese female students tend not to insist on disambiguating questions and opinions.

As did Yuna, Hina recognized a trait of the individualist education classroom, where students are encouraged to develop their self-esteem and their critical thinking skills (Hofstede, 2001), and their class participation clearly astounded her. The schooling in an individualist society shows decisive differences from the collectivist culture; the formation of a new group works relatively well in an individualist society, whereas it takes time to adjust and interact with new members in the collectivist society (Hofstede, 2001). The observations conducted in this study illustrated what Yuna, Hina and other participants demonstrated as well. Regardless of gender, American students were willing to express their own opinions in the class and expand the discussions with additional comments.

Another important factor of Hina's experience was how she perceived American females' initiatives in the classroom. Historically, in the notion of Confucianism, Japanese women are supposed to be subordinate to men in the society. The situation

impacts schooling, reinforces the relationship between gender and schooling, and it has demonstrated the notion of resistance to human experiences (Weiler, 2003). Japanese female students tend to be rather quiet and express their thoughts with polite speech manners in Japan. Mio reflected on how Japanese female students varied from American females:

> During undergraduate school, Japanese females often think about their beauty and care about themselves a lot. All girls fully make up every day and fix their make-up whenever a class break comes. On the other hand, American undergraduate students wear their university t-shirts and some girls put their legs on the study desk during class. American female students behave like boys compared with Japanese female students.

Although Mio did not recognize how Japanese females were oppressed by the society reflecting Liu's (2001) perspectives that females should be quiet, her descriptions revealed the differences between the gender-roles of Japanese females and American females. Postmodern critical feminist theory explores both invisibility and distortion of female experiences, while revealing women's unequal social position (Lather, 1991). Invisible experiences such as women's inequality are called hidden transcripts (Lather, 1991; Scott, 1992). While Japanese females apparently seem to enjoy making up and dressing well, the society indirectly dictates how they should look and speak as feminine women in Japan. Because Mio used to meet these types of women in Japan, she described some American females as being like men.

Aoi's reflection presented another case of hidden transcript:

> American students think more logically in the class than Japanese students. Based on firm and logical ideas, American students speak a lot during class discussions, presentations, and group activities. However, when I joined the U.S. class, I thought that nationality and gender did not matter so much. An important thing was to adjust class styles in the U.S. and that was harder than being conscious about gender.

Aoi understood that participating in the U.S. classroom was more difficult than anything else. Based on her understanding, the main reason was her lack of experience in the new educational systems in the U.S. However, I analyzed that her central difficulty with her class participation came from gender-roles in Japan, which involved in part a hidden transcript. Frug (1992) states that human beings live within language. The power of language is practiced not only by direct oppression, but also through shapes of language and restrictions of reality. Lather (1991) states that "Language is the terrain where differently privileged discourses struggle via confrontation and/or displacement" (p. 8). Therefore, Aoi's speech was restricted by expectations of her as a Japanese female more than males, while she was unconsciously experiencing oppression.

The differences in class participation between American and Japanese female students became clear in this theme. The Japanese female graduate students were substantially influenced by the philosophy of Japanese Confucianism, gender roles and banking education systems in Japan. As a result, they had unexpected reactions and hesitated when joining U.S. classrooms where female students expressed their opinions logically and explicitly. Significantly, throughout the observations, the three respondents did not show remarkable differences in terms of class participation. If the respondent was quiet at the beginning of the quarter, she maintained the same behaviors during the whole quarter. This is not surprising since I believe one quarter is too short to get comfortable. From my own experience, I reckon that I was finally able to be more comfortable after my third year of being in U.S. graduate school. This finding showed that it takes a longer time to adjust to ones new borders. Similarly, the students experienced intercultural relationships with professors and American and international students while adjusting to

and learning in a new environment. The next theme will analyze intercultural relationships.

Intercultural Relationships

Japanese female graduate students interacted with several types of international and American people, including professors, friends, and administrative assistants in academic settings. This section will discuss interactions with professors first and interactions with their classmates next; each section will analyze positive and negative perspectives respectively.

Professors

Experiencing different organization styles between Japan and the U.S. was valuable for Japanese female graduate students. Japanese undergraduate programs do not provide them for students while U.S. universities commonly offer them for each student. Sakura reflected how American professors were less intimidating to talk to and their behavior motivated her to study:

> In Japanese education, there is no office hour for students. Also, professors in Japan are not as friendly as professors in the United States. As a graduate student, I prefer the educational style in the United States because I can experience and learn so much, and taking classes in the United States gives me a chance to broaden my views.

Sakura and other students valued the vertical relationships with professors in the U.S. As discussed earlier, organization theory considers the notion of individualist and collectivist societies (Hofstede, 2001). Etzioni (1961) provides two types of moral involvement in organization theory: pure and social. Pure moral involvement is within vertical relationships such as between teachers and students, and the relationship develops into leaders and followers which creates a large distance between them. On the

other hand, social moral involvement is within horizontal relationships in any type of group. The relationships tend to be close because both partners show less authoritative attitudes (Etzioni, 1961). In Sakura's case, she felt less threatened when she talked to her professors in the U.S. so their friendly behaviors encouraged her to study in many fields.

Furthermore, professors' awareness of international students and other students' language and class participation difficulties assisted Japanese female graduate students in pursuing their programs. Yuna's professors in the program understood the international students' challenges and provided extra office hours for their academic progress:

> I took two fundamental classes in my major at the beginning of the graduate program. They are taught by professors in my program. The professors were good at teaching international students because they were aware of language difficulties for us. I did not have any difficulty in understanding classes at all. I believed that these professors cared about international students in terms of understanding lectures and English barriers…For example, one of them had in-class written exams. I completed the paper and submitted it but the professor did not understand what I meant. He gave me an e-mail and we had a meeting to discuss the exam paper. He told me that he was not examining my English skills, but examining my knowledge and thoughts. We were able to discuss my thoughts in the paper before he graded it. It was very helpful. If he was not flexible in that sense, I might easily have failed the class.

Additionally, Hina remembered when American professors and students were supportive of her:

> My adviser gave me a suggestion. He said that I should know more about a classroom teacher in the U.S. and he recommended that I take a practicum. He realized that I did not understand the topic of the discussion because I did not know anything about classroom teachers in the U.S. I used to ask very easy and basic questions compared to other students. Luckily, however, the other students tried to listen to my voice and helped me. Some students kindly said, "Ask anything," when I had questions. They were nice. Although I did not want to join the discussion, I did not have the pressure of being laughed at and made fun of when I had something to say. I think I was lucky in that sense.

Professors' characteristics affect students' positive participation in class in terms of inclusiveness, approachability, feedback style and supportiveness (Liu, 2001). In the

case of Yuna, professors' flexibility supported her academic performance and their understanding of her language proficiency motivated her to continue her academic work. According to my six-year U.S experience, professors who were from other countries tended to be more aware of difficulties among international students than American professors. Moreover, American professors who were second generation, born in the U.S. of foreign parents, showed consideration and flexibility to international students in class. These professors were likely to call students' names when they required students to contribute to discussions in the same way as in Japanese classrooms. As well as professors, other students' positive support in the classroom assisted Hina to actively contribute in class. When American graduate students were willing to help Hina, she felt relaxed and was inspired to participate in the class discussion.

Interestingly, professors' gender had an impact on Japanese female graduate students. Miu confessed that talking with a male academic adviser made her tense:

> To me, Dr. A [female professor] was easy to talk compared with Dr. B [male professor]. Dr. A looked me in the eye and I could tell that she tried to understand what I said and she tried her best. So I felt that she listened to me. However, I always felt nervous whenever I talked to Dr. B. When he did not have any facial expression, I tended to believe, "Oh no, he does not understand what I said." Just going to his office made me nervous, too.

Having female professors is likely to positively influence female international students (Liu, 2001). Indeed, Miu contributed her thoughts at least twice in group works and in class discussion during four-hour observations conducted for this study when she took Dr. A's class. After the class, she reflected that she wanted to share other stories in class in the female professor's class because she felt comfortable being there. Similarly, Mio felt a high level of tension when she met and talked with her male academic adviser:

> My adviser was a sharp-eyed man so somehow I was uncomfortable talking with him and tried to avoid him when we were about to run into the building of the program. Whenever I felt that he was coming too close to me on the floor, I intentionally changed the way I went. Indeed, I met him only five times in two years for my thesis and other questions. I also felt that my adviser did not like international students who did not speak English well. In my program, Filipino and Japanese students usually had English issues. When Filipinos visited his office and asked some questions, my adviser never had time for them, saying, "I am busy now" and "I don't have time." But I often saw him visiting American students' research offices and talking with them cheerfully. Whenever I saw it, I could not stop thinking, "He has time. He just does not want to talk with students who cannot speak English well."

As a result of the high tension towards her adviser, she was not able to control her emotions during a meeting with him. Mio continued:

> When I had a meeting with him at his office last quarter, I suddenly started crying. I don't even know why it happened. Although I was unaware of it, my body was shivering from the beginning, and my eyes were full of tears. After my adviser asked me, "Are you okay?" I finally noticed that I was crying. Whenever I see him, I am still nervous now. I could have a meeting with him of only five minutes and it was our maximum meeting time.

Mio had a difficult time interacting with her male academic adviser due to his threatening look and the way he spoke to international students with limited speaking competence in English. Liu's (2001) research demonstrated that the majority of Asian female international students are self-conscious about their socio-cultural beliefs of how they should be quiet, polite, sensitive and responsible in their home countries. Power relations dominate Japanese society in terms of gender roles. Female students in Japanese schools experience hegemony and resistance where the school historically operates to promote gender domination so that members inside of the group are unaware of inequality (Weiler, 2003). Mio unconsciously experienced the power of male domination in Japan; as a result, her adviser intimidated her with his sharp eyes and careless attitudes towards Filipino and Japanese students.

Classmates

In addition to interactions with professors, Japanese female graduate students communicated with their American and other international students in the classroom. Their experiences varied depending on their programs, nationalities of the classmates, and other students' awareness of Japanese female graduate students. Similar to their interactions with professors, Japanese female graduate students struggled with interactions when facing new class participations and other students showed indifference. Alternatively, they were comfortable with talking to classmates who showed much interest in Japan and were supportive.

To begin with, Japanese female graduate students faced a type of culture shock in classrooms. Miu was threatened by how American students honestly expressed their emotions in the first quarter:

> I enjoyed a group discussion as a discussion leader because my group members supported me many times. At the beginning of the group work, I told my undergraduate student members that my English skills were this much [gestured to indicate not very fluent level], but I was able to talk about Japanese education and I had some knowledge because I am older than them so would they please be patient and listen as much as they could. Although my group members were kind and supportive, other groups often had arguments between undergraduate and graduate students. Some of the undergraduate students told a graduate student, "I don't want to listen to you." At the moment, I realized, "Scary! Undergraduate students are scary!" Then, I wondered how my group members really thought about me. Though some students trusted me in my group, others seemed to behave as if they did not know how much they could trust me during group activities. After all, the professor had graduate students grade undergraduate students in the class. I did grade anyway although I was sure they were going to hate me.

Miu realized how American students presented self-assertiveness and it shocked her emotionally. Barna defines culture shock as "the emotional and physiological reaction of high activation that is brought about by sudden immersion in a new and different

culture" (Bennett, 1998, p. 216). Miu used to maintain group harmony in Japan because Japanese society values collectivism. All of a sudden, however, she experienced a completely opposite society, an individualistic society, where uniqueness and self-assertiveness were valued in the group. Observing the situations threatened her enough to make her wonder what other students thought of her and how her grading reports would aggressively affect her students' emotions. Correspondingly, Mio reflected on a group work activity:

> I had group work projects every week in an Economics class. Five students were in each group, and each student had to complete assignments before the class. Our group met at the library the day before the class and discussed answers. Our group members were American, Brazilian, Vietnamese and I. The Brazilian student spoke English like a native and the Vietnamese student could not speak well but he was very smart. I could only say, "Yeah, yes. Yes," during the meeting while just sitting there because I could not explain or understand anything. I felt that other members were irritated by my very few contributions. Even though I read to my best ability and tried to look for answers, the members thought that I did not understand at all and I did not complete any assignment.

Mio also seriously wondered what her group members thought about her. Face-to-face interactions require a form of specific communication strategies, and one of these is called empathy. Empathy is defined as the imaginative participating of ourselves in another person's experience and perspective (Bennett, 1998). In Miu's and Mio's cases, each imagined how other group members negatively thought about her because she was aware of her language proficiency issues and lack of topics to discuss. This sympathetic understanding tends to be inaccurate at best, and will impede effective communication (Bennett, 1998).

On the other hand, the Department of Linguistics, for example, accepted the majority of international students from all over the world. Students were from Africa,

Europe, Asia, the Middle East and the U.S. In this kind of environment, Japanese female graduate students felt comfortable with being themselves as Yui recalled:

> Luckily, I did not have any bad experience related to my poor language skills mostly because my department has a lot of foreign students. The majority of the students were international students. So I was very comfortable in my department. Most of my college life, I was in the building of my program or the library. I cannot think of any bad experiences.

Riko happily remembered when realizing how important her friends were in her program of International Development where several international students studied:

> Making friends was so important to me. Whenever I had problems, people who helped me were always friends. I felt relieved to know that I had friends who knew about me well. I felt happy when these friends thought the same way about me. I was able to feel I was connected with them. When I did not understand a lecture, I was not able to take notes and did not know what to do for assignments. But these friends helped me and it encouraged me a lot.

Having and interacting with other international friends was more comfortable for Yui, Riko and other participants than it was with American students. The majority of international students shared similar culture beliefs and the situations of being international students in the U.S. allowed them to encourage each other. Extraverted participants could make American friends who were interested in cross-border relationships although some Japanese female graduate students had difficulty in establishing friendship with the host nation according to findings of interviews. Aoi, for instance, became friends with an American female graduate student who spoke Spanish and was interested in other cultures. Aoi met her weekly before the class, which they took together:

> I made an American friend. I read textbooks in advance and reviewed the lecture. I decided to ask questions as much as possible even if it was a basic question. If I did everything by myself, it took forever to complete. Also, I was not sure if I completely understood the lecture. After I made a friend in the class, I kept asking her a lot of things. She was very nice…I wanted to be

> aware that I was on the right track before attending classes as well. Then, I came up with some questions that I would be able to ask in advance.

In order to succeed academically, Japanese female graduate students discovered unique learning strategies by themselves. In Aoi's case, she made an American friend who was willing to assist her in understanding textbooks and class discussions. While discussing topics of the class and answering questions, Aoi ensured that her analyses were accurate and developed self-esteem to participate in the class. As did Aoi, other participants utilized several types of learning strategies while improving their English proficiency, developing self-esteem, and talking over matters with professors and friends. The final theme will discuss strategies for understanding classes.

Strategies of Understanding Classes

The importance of listening in language learning has been discussed over the years. For those who speak English as a second and foreign language, it is essential to develop listening skills because, in reality, listening is used far more than other language skills (Morley, 2001). It is required during day-to-day life, jobs, and lectures for the Japanese female graduate students in my study. Although all participants attained the required scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) before graduate school, their listening skills for classes were poor so that they had to explore strategies to understand classes. Hina used a recorder in class and reviewed it every day until the next class came:

> I decided to record the lecture and discussion during the quarter. After class, I used to listen to the tapes whenever I was free for the rest of the week. After I had listened to the recorded class over four times, by the end of the week, I finally understood complete lectures for the first time. However, I did not fully understand discussion, even on the tape. Whenever I listened to the tape, I thought it was difficult to understand the whole discussion.

Reviewing lectures with a tape recorder assisted Hina to understand class discussion. Due of lack of listening skills, she had to spend three to four times longer in reviewing and preparing for class than American students. At the same time, she tried to improve her listening and cognitive processing skills in English, while repeating lectures many times for the rest of the week with her tapes and memorizing patterns in conversations with professors and students. Hina utilized one language learning strategy for listening comprehension in English as a foreign language (Morley, 2001). Meanwhile, Sakura and other participants in this study dictated lectures and class discussions as much as possible while taking notes:

> For the time being, I tried to catch conversation and understand topics even if it was one or two words. I connected words to words in my brain to reconstruct what was going on in the discussion. Finally, I thought I might understand what they were talking about. Now I still use the same strategy to understand. If I do not understand the class discussion, I think and write a few words that I could catch during discussion.

Taking notes assisted her in understanding lectures and connecting thought to thought in class discussions although she was not fully able to understand the contents of the discussions. During observations conducted in this study, Miu, Riko, and Akari kept taking notes during lectures, small-group works and class discussion as well. Even though other students just listened to students and professors who contributed to the discussions, these Japanese female graduate students focused on taking notes in their classes in order to keep track of the discussion points, others' opinions and professors' comments. Their habits were attributed to the Japanese education system where students humbly listen to teachers' speech (Freire, 2000) and memorize all topics and contents for coming comprehensive exams and entrance examinations. They took advantage of the

experience in Japan and utilized it as a learning strategy while developing their listening skills in English.

In order to avoid overwhelming situations in a U.S. classroom, Aoi decided to become a passive listener:

> During the first quarter, I just tried to understand the class instead of participating in the discussion. I knew I was not going to feel like going to class if I had the pressure of participating. I just gave up speaking out in the class. For the time being, I tried to understand all topics and what they discussed. Then, I tried to say something if I felt like talking. Otherwise, I knew I was going to feel depressed.

Aoi realized that understanding class discussions and contributing to discussions would be too many tasks with her language competence and cognitive skills in English. Understanding class discussions fully required advanced comprehensive listening skills; moreover, participating in discussions needed a high level of confidence and speaking skills which were what Aoi had to develop at the same time. However, a second identity is created when human beings learn another language, called language ego. This new identity easily creates within the learner a sense of fragility and depression (Brown, 2001). Aoi felt comfortable just taking notes and listening to the lecture. Therefore, she decided to become an in-put listener to fully understand class discussion and improve her listening skills even while maintaining her emotions.

In terms of speaking, developing oral communication skills is one of the most challenging tasks for Japanese female graduate students. Traditionally, Japanese education does not require students to share their opinions in class (Hofstede, 2001) so Japanese female graduate students had to adjust to a new educational system where speaking up about critical ideas was encouraged in class along with solving questions,

completing activities, and having presentations. Yuna's strategy to cope with this difficulty was to have additional meetings with her professor:

> I often hesitated to talk about my thoughts in class. So I decided to make appointments with professors through e-mail and ask after class. Then, I asked questions in person.

Yuna chose to meet her professor and have face-to-face interactions after class. She realized that talking to this professor alone was more comfortable than talking in front of the majority of other classmates. In Japanese culture, it would be considered somehow disrespectful to the teacher if students shared their thoughts without being asked (Liu, 2001). Yuna thought that asking questions in class would disturb the class atmosphere. Moreover, female students tended to be quiet, polite and responsible in Japanese classrooms so Yuna hesitated to share her ideas in the U.S. classroom.

However, giving presentations always had to be done in the classroom and no professors allowed them to be done their offices alone. Miu clearly remembered how nervous she was about giving a presentation in class and how she prepared for it in advance:

> Honestly, I disliked presentations [she laughed a lot]. Whether in Japanese or English, I disliked having presentations because I easily felt tension in public places. I was not good at speaking in public although I had many things to say. So audiences didn't understand what I was trying to say. After making a Power Point, I always practiced anyway because I knew that other students and professors would not understand what I said […] Teachers of oral communications suggested that I make small cards for presentations and speak with my own words instead of reading scripts. Indeed, that way went well, but it did not work sometimes. So I just worried so much and I think that this anxiety is my disease. Whenever I made outlines of presentations, I asked many students to see if they understood my presentation plans. When they said, "It's good" I just practiced hundreds times in advance. Anyway, I was always nervous during the presentations no matter what.

In this case, Miu faced this worrying situation with two factors: the socialization process of females in Japan and worry. An essential reason for her modest attitude was to show triumph and dignity. In the Japanese society, the more individuals achieve higher education and qualifications, the more humbly they express themselves. Otherwise, others believe that the person is bragging about her or his achievements. For instance, Miu had an excellent presentation in terms of organization, time, speech form and a creative poster of teaching philosophy during the last observation. It was noticeable to pupils and professors that Miu had spent much time reading the chapter and carefully preparing the presentation. Interestingly, even if other students had many compliments about her presentation after applauding, she just smiled a little and looked down to the floor without saying anything. Thus, Miu understood her achievements and maintained her dignity while refusing compliments. Another factor was her worry; past failures made her worry about future presentations, and this worry led to low self-esteem regardless of her capabilities with oral communication skills. After her poster presentation, Miu reflected, “I was very nervous. I don’t remember what I said during the presentation. Now my brain is blank. Anyway, I practiced for it so many times at my house. So many, so many times of practice…so many…I was still nervous.” Though her hands were shaking and her voice was quavering due to her worry when she told me, it was clear that her problem was her low self-esteem, not her language proficiency issues. As Brown (2001) states, “Successful language learners generally believe in themselves and in their capacity to accomplish communicative tasks, and are therefore willing risk takers in their attempts to produce and to interpret language that is a bit beyond their absolute certainty” (p. 73). It is necessary for educators to encourage students such as Miu to believe that

they are capable of accomplishing communicative tasks. In the process, the Japanese female graduate students will develop self-esteem with their strong competencies. In any case, her worry motivated her to practice hundreds of times in advance; as a result, Miu was able to complete an impressive presentation.

As for assignments and projects, Japanese female graduate students spent substantial time and prepared for each class. Reading books and articles, particularly, took extensive time to build up background information with which they were unfamiliar. Hina, for example, read Japanese books in addition to the required books for the class:

> When I got a syllabus of the class before the quarter started, I read several books in Japanese which were related to the class topic. That was how I developed knowledge for the next class. Then, I took the class. Otherwise, I would be in trouble when some students or the professor asked me, "How about in Japan?" I would not be able to answer anything without reading in advance. Because my knowledge was still limited, I had to read Japanese books on special education. Even though I did not understand some sentences of the course textbook, I was able to understand topics because I explored them in Japanese before the quarter started. After reading Japanese books, I started reading abstracts of the course textbooks. Normally, classes in education met once a week, so I had time to read for a week. I usually stayed at the library on Saturday and Sunday, and somehow I was able to read everything.

Reading Japanese books on special education assisted Hina to participate in class discussions. While adding background knowledge of the topic in Japan, she felt comfortable with attending the class instead of remaining with limited knowledge. Usually, graduate students at the university completed all assignments according interviews, observations and my experiences. Not surprisingly, the textbooks and syllabi of Miu, Riko and Akari were highlighted with different colors and were full of notes in the margins. As they read, they gradually developed their cognitive skills in English. In other words, reading required texts as well as additional books not only resulted in

background knowledge, but also built up vocabulary and reading comprehensive skills. Completing reading assignments assisted their deep understanding during lectures as well.

An important key was to find their best learning strategies depending on their learning styles. Japanese female graduate students explored effective learning strategies and implemented them to catch up with classes and satisfy expectations. They improved listening skills, while taking notes, recording, and reviewing lectures after the class. Moreover, they had to develop self-esteem in a new educational environment in terms of speaking in public places in English as a foreign language. Findings presented that all of them spent more than half of the day completing assignments and projects. Simultaneously, they had to maintain their psychological emotions in peace; otherwise, their identity became fragile and they were not able to produce fluent English.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the themes that emerged from observations and interviews with nine Japanese female graduate students in a Midwestern university in the United States. The descriptive analyses of this study shed light on three main research questions posed in this study, discussed thematically, and supported with quotations from interviews, observations and other relevant literature. The findings unveiled the considerable amount of experience of the women selected for this study. Japanese norms, values, language and philosophy considerably influence Japanese female graduate students' participation in the U.S. university and ways of living. In a collectivist society, such as Japan, people seem to act and think similarly while maintaining group harmony. Japanese females behave quietly and politely and are modest in speech in public settings.

Their domestic language is Japanese which differs from English in terms of vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, structure, writing, reading and speaking styles. The main issue of this study revealed that the immense challenges of Japanese female graduate students remain to be heard and spoken. In academic and social settings, the Japanese female graduate students feel high levels of pressure due to a lack of language proficiency, background information and low self-esteem while coping with and adjusting to a new environment. In the process of adjustments in the U.S., their positive attitudes led to effective approaches of socialization processes and learning strategies for understanding classes.

CHPATER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of this study was to understand the experiences Japanese female graduate students faced while adjusting to speaking English, participating in classrooms, and socializing with peers in a Midwestern U.S. university. Through critical examinations of lived experiences in the voices of these women, poignant realities emerged. This chapter presents a summary and findings in addition to suggestions for future research and a conclusion.

Summary

This study contributed to research dealing with Japanese female graduate students on U.S. campuses. It examined the challenges they experience as Japanese females in the U.S. This study investigated answers to the following questions:

1) What are Japanese female graduate students' language-related experiences?
2) What are the on-campus and off-campus living experiences of Japanese female graduate students?
3) What academic difficulties do Japanese female graduate students experience?

To provide effective strategies on Japanese female graduate students' issues on U.S. campuses, it is significant to reveal the challenges and difficulties, spoken in their voices. There are a limited number of studies dealing with experiences of Japanese female graduate students in this particular environment. This research could be used by various communities in the selected university as justification of and awareness about why Japanese female graduate students behave in particular ways.

Review of related literature covered areas of history and philosophy in Japanese education, Japanese international students in the U.S., and the socialization process of

women in Japan. One of the main issues reviewed types of differences between Japan and the U.S. which became challenges to the Japanese female graduate students at the U.S. university. As a theoretical framework, organization theory and postmodern critical feminist theory were discussed for this study.

Interviewing allowed this research to realize the importance of individual voices that reflect on specific situations each participant faced and experienced in the U.S. Nine Japanese female graduate students at a Midwestern university were interviewed. These in-depth interviews and observations were utilized as instruments in a qualitative research; procedures of data analysis were followed by organizing all data, coding the data, creating themes and analyzing findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Three research questions were posed in this study.

The final discussion of the findings provided descriptive analyses of quotations through the participants' stories and observations. Based on the three research questions, the voices disclosed categories, patterns and themes which Japanese female graduate students experienced in reality. The data were supported by a diversity of research reports and literature. The summary discusses a background research process of understanding Japanese female graduate students' experiences for this study.

Major Findings

This section presents the major findings of the three research questions which guided this study. The major findings contained themes: Anxiety about speaking English, intercultural communications, self-esteem and identity development, influence from Japanese culture and education, gender roles and language proficiency.

Fear of Living in a New Environment

Speaking English as a foreign language in public was one of the most challenging tasks for the Japanese female graduate students. The U.S. is a very different country from Japan in terms of norms, values, religions, organization and language. These differences created fear about studying and living in a new environment. With limited language proficiency, Japanese female graduate students were afraid of not being understood when they tried to interact with others in public places. Additionally, they felt embarrassed about their speech performance so they gave up having conversations with people who provided services to the public.

This type of fear continued once they experienced the fear of being unable to succeed in public (Lin & Yi, 1997). Such social anxiety leads to avoidance of communication in society and schools when an individual speaks a second language. The anxiety creates a feeling of fear and it may have little to do with achievement goals (Gass & Selinker, 2001); it could disturb eating habits, for example. Japanese female graduate students experienced fear during the period of the ESL program as well due to the different educational expectations between Japan and the U.S.

On the other hand, Gass and Selinker (2001) argue that positive influence anxiety leads to motivation. It relates to a desire to attain a goal that someone is fearful of not achieving. Indeed, the participants completed the ESL programs with dedicated contributions, scores, and grades while they felt fearful because of structured class curricula and their low English scores. Therefore, it is important to understand both positive and negative effects of anxiety among Japanese female graduate students.

Intercultural Communications

As for communication challenges, it is important for Japanese female graduate students to understand and accept intercultural communications. While the Japanese communication style is high-context where most of the information is communicated with insufficient coded and implicit messages, American communication style is low-context where people interact with others as they need specific information (Bennett, 1998; Hall & Hall, 1990). Japanese female graduate students were frustrated by small talk and overwhelmed by discussions in which Americans kept providing information which seemed unnecessary. At the same time, Americans were at a loss when Japanese female graduate students expressed their thoughts very implicitly.

For example, when Akari experienced an activity called First Communication, she had to talk about herself for four minutes with new students who were strangers to her. She felt uncomfortable and tired after talking with 10 strangers because she was used to talking about herself only with her close friends and family members in Japan. She was overwhelmed in a low-context communication situation, to which she was not accustomed.

According to findings, mutual effect is an essential goal of intercultural communication. The main tool of communication is language because it represents awareness and thoughts (Bennett, 1998). Even though language is the main tool to socialize with others, language proficiency is not enough of a condition for satisfactory socialization across cultures (Ie, 2009). Indeed, Japanese female graduate students had a difficult time understanding and implementing American English as a tool in terms of rules, norms, and values although their language proficiency was advanced enough to

interact with Americans and other international students; as a result, their self-esteem was low in the process of adjustments to the new environment.

Self-Esteem and Identity Development

Self-identity is created based on an individual's knowledge, value and emotional attachment in a social group (Tajfel, 1974). According to Erickson's (1968) social identity development theory, individuals easily got confused about their roles in the group when some obstacles hindered the progress of their explorations. In case of Japanese female graduate students, different social contexts and language barriers led to low self-esteem when they experienced social integration within the U.S. campus town. Anxiety and fear in the new environment caused them to resist speaking English; not producing English as expected led to low self-esteem, which caused them to think they were more immature in the particular situations than they actually were.

No participants in this study were confident enough to interact with others who worked and provided services to the public. They considered their English skills as poor although they had achieved the required scores, were selected as some of the best scholars from the universities where they received their bachelors' degrees, and were individually admitted by the university's Graduate College with full financial aid for two years. In the case of Hina, her friends considered her a baby when she encountered language difficulties at the resident office. When she called her mother, her behavior became more insecure. She needed reassurance as she could not stop crying after hearing her mother's voice. These feelings could be grounds for serious psychological issues if they continued for a long time.

Anxiety of Class Participation

In terms of classrooms, Japanese female graduate students felt high levels of anxiety when they faced language difficulties and different expectations in U.S. classrooms. Different languages, particularly, are difficult to use and to interpret with appropriate behavior (Barna, 1998). Female international students from countries where women and men have different expectations seem to face higher levels of anxiety than males in a new environment (Bang, Muriuki & Hodges, 2008). According to the findings, discussion-style classes were one of the most stressful situations for the participants because Japanese education does not require students to speak in class unless they are asked to by the teachers. The analysis revealed the need of enough backgrounds on the topics, advanced language proficiency and high self-esteem in order to participate in the class discussions as expected. However, while their hearts were pounding, Miu wondered, “What will happen tomorrow?”, and Hina prayed, “Please don’t ask me anything, professor.”

They remained silent or made very few contributions in class due to poorly formulated ideas and anxiety over appearing unintelligent to other students (Liu, 2001). Although all participants had fluent language skills, their identity when they spoke English became fragile. As Brown (2001) states, “As human beings learn to use a second language, they also develop a new mode of thinking, feeling, and acting…the second language, can easily create within the learner a sense of fragility…” (p. 72). Akari, for instance, was a teaching assistant and spoke fluent English; however, during my observations, she did not contribute to the class discussion at all during the whole quarter although she shared her creative thoughts with articulate speech in small group activities.

Factors of anxiety in classrooms related to face-saving and different Japanese and U.S. education systems. Face-saving is commonly seen in Japanese culture, where people's positions are connected to their relations to group members and communities (Liu, 2001). Japanese female graduate students were unwilling to make mistakes and be ridiculed by other classmates and professors. Saying something inappropriate might result in a person not being accepted by other members in Japan. In terms of educational expectations, the Japanese education system relies on the philosophy of Confucianism where students are supposed to listen to teachers' knowledge. Therefore, Japanese female graduate students lacked the experience of sharing their thoughts prior to attending graduate schools in the U.S.

Therefore, finding and implementing effective support is necessary for Japanese female graduate students to foster self-esteem in the U.S. In the small group activity, for example, Miu felt uncomfortable because two American students dominated the discussions; the main issue must be more than just a small number. Certain conditions in which Japanese female graduate students actively participate in classrooms need to be examined.

Influence from Japanese Culture and Education

The fundamental factors which influenced behavior of Japanese female graduate students included Confucian philosophy and collectivist organization thinking. These factors affected most participants when they attended the U.S. university and created challenging situations that the women had to cope with.

Throughout Japanese history, the Confucian beliefs have developed national characteristics in all aspects of society and educational settings. Interpersonal

relationships are hierarchical and the society expects people's obedience, responsible behavior and polite manners; Japanese classes are likely to be teacher-centered lectures in traditional education (Wang, 2001). The educational system commonly utilizes tests, letter grades, and short-answer quizzes. Completing these tasks requires strong memorization skills, while students repeat the particular topics again and again. The strong memorization skills of the Japanese female graduate students effectively assisted them with handling exams, quizzes, and written tests at the U.S. university. On the other hand, the Japanese educational philosophy negatively influenced them in discussion-based classes. Speaking up and sharing thoughts were unfamiliar actions and took a lot of time and needed confidence for Japanese female graduate students. Moreover, when students in Japan are asked to share their opinions, teachers and students expect correct answers. This factor created pressure in the U.S. classrooms, and they hesitated to join discussions; this habit of sharing exact answers negatively impacted their participation.

In talking about organizations, Japanese female graduate students experienced a new organization group at the U.S. university. The definition of organization theory assisted in critically analyzing several cases; members of collectivism expect support from other group members while individualist group members are self-assertive and express uniqueness regardless of consensus (Etzioni, 1961; Hofstede, 2001). Coming from a collectivistic society, Japanese female graduate students struggled with accepting and practicing ways of communication, negotiations and class participation in an individualistic society, the U.S. As the findings demonstrated, I did not observe any major shifts in classroom behavior during the quarter; therefore, this study shows that a few months are not enough to adjust to these differences, and it may take years. In the

same way, the students were overwhelmed by self-reliant attitudes and affirmative comments during discussion in class with American professors and students.

Gender Roles

Japanese female graduate students had to cope with gender-related changes; they were astounded by American females' initiatives and self-assertive attitudes in classrooms. Gender roles became an influential factor that promoted Japanese female graduate students' class participation in the U.S. Midwestern university. As Hina stated:

> I was impressed that many female students took initiative. Oh, I was surprised that many students said in class, "Do you know what I mean?" Japanese female students rarely say something like this in class. American female students wanted to make sure that listeners understood their opinions clearly. Meanwhile, Japanese female students tend not insist on disambiguating questions and opinions.

Hina understood a characteristic of the individual education classrooms, where all students are encouraged to develop their self-esteem and critical thinking skills (Hosftede, 2001).

Postmodern critical feminist theory seeks to uncover structural oppression, to transform systems, and to liberate oppressed people. While exploring visible and invisible female experiences, critical feminist theory clarifies women's unequal social status. Postmodern feminism examines the power of language (Fay, 1987; Gordon, 1979; Lather, 1991). Traditionally, in the notion of Confucian, women are supposed to be subordinate to men. Therefore, power relations dominate Japanese society and school settings in terms of gender roles. Japanese women are oppressed in the fields of education in modern society; female students in Japanese schools tend to be quiet, responsible and modest in class.

Additionally, the findings presented decisive differences between the clear gender roles of Japanese females and American females. Mio described how Japanese females were curious about using makeup and dressing well to maintain their beauty. Although Mio did not realize how Japanese females were oppressed to satisfy expectations from Japanese society, she clearly shared a critical example of females' oppression in Japan. The analysis revealed that the Japanese female graduate students in the U.S. university were also oppressed by different educational expectations, language proficiency, and Americans' self-assertive personalities.

Generally, participants tended to show patterns of how they coped with challenges and adjusted to cultural differences depending on early exposure and personality. Participants who had studied abroad in the same university two years ago as exchange students for four months were likely to have several networks within the community, professors, and friends. Moreover, they were familiar with the environment in terms of administrative systems, grocery stores, accommodations, and educational settings in the university. Therefore, these participants had a better support base than Japanese females who came from other places individually. In terms of personality, extroverts were willing to socialize with others in both the classroom and outside of the campus so their communication skills were higher than those who were introverts. Interestingly, an introvert participant actively participated in the class discussion because she prepared for it well while extrovert students did not contribute much in discussions in class. These patterns could be anticipated as effective strategies for upcoming Japanese female graduate students.

Implications for Policy

The Institute of International Education (IIE) network (2007) reported the total number of international students in U.S. higher education institutions was 582,984 for the 2006-2007 academic year. Among all areas, Asia had the highest rate, 59% of total U.S. foreign enrollments. Japanese enrollment (6.1%) comes fourth after Indian (14.4%), Chinese (11.6%), and Korean (10.7%). The Japanese student population plays a significant role in U.S. higher institutions every year although the sharpest rate of decline occurred in the 2006-2007 academic year due to the low birthrate. In Japan, 62% of the college-seeking population hope to travel abroad to the U.S. and planned to apply for graduate programs in 2007 (JUSEC, n.d.). U.S. higher education policy should consider them one of the important contributors who empower the multicultural environment, foster cultural exchange and have an economical impact in the U.S. (Habu, 2000; Levin, 2002).

The implications of this study show it is important for policymakers to reexamine effective services in terms of cultural adjustments, learning strategies, and supportive environments. In addition to international student offices, the ESL programs, graduate service offices, student personnel and Japanese student associations could provide assistance with the combined needs of incoming Japanese female graduate students. As findings revealed, the first challenge for these women is to improve their communication skills in English as a foreign language. The policymakers of U.S. universities could provide several opportunities to practice English, particularly listening and speaking skills. Additionally, incoming Japanese female graduate students need strong support and environments where they are able to study and live without feeling threatened; otherwise

they feel isolated, different from others, and have low self-esteem. These negative psychological feelings lead to serious depression and physical illness. In order to minimize these situations, a policy could be implemented to organize consultants who recognize cultural awareness between Japan and the U.S., provide mental support, and motivate Japanese female graduate students to pursue their programs.

Implications for Theory

This study was to understand and examine the experiences of Japanese female graduate students in a Midwestern university in the U.S. through the theoretical framework of organization theory and postmodern critical feminist theory.

Organization Theory

The organization theory was beneficial because it addressed individualist and collective societies; the members of organizations show particular relationship differences between individualist and collectivist groups. Etzioni (1961) defines compliance as "both…a relation in which an actor behaves in accordance with directive supported by another actor's power, and…the orientations of the subordinated actors to the power applied" (p. 3). The form of compliance is created within a relationship between power and the individual's involvement in the organization. This compliance structure will change depending on types of goals and roles of satisfaction (Etzioni, 1961).

Members of a collective group, for instance, expect support from other members and they value cooperation. On the other hand, individualist group members express their assertive thoughts, disapproval, and different values in the organization because uniqueness is valued in society (Hofstede, 2001). Etzioni suggests two types of moral

involvement: pure and social. Pure moral involvement occurs in vertical relationships, including between teachers and students, and leaders and followers. These organization styles are commonly seen in collectivist groups, as in Japan. Alternatively, social moral involvement occurs in horizontal relationships in various kinds of groups. This social involvement is likely to be seen in individualist groups, including the U.S. Most Japanese female graduate students in this study revealed difficulties in understanding and accepting the notion of an individualist society. Their challenges influenced their communications with others and class participation in the U.S. university.

After a year of studying abroad, some of the participants' social identities were positively changed in the U.S. where social moral involvement is commonly seen. Japanese female graduate students were free to express and practice their decisions in the U.S. instead of being conscious about keeping similar thoughts with others. At the time, Mio realized, "I am alive" and Riko learned that being positive and acting on what she desired was important. In Japan, their decisions were made by parents, other friends, and authorities because collectivist groups tend to be the pure moral involvement in which people keep vertical relationships, maintaining group harmony. The organization theory revealed how Japanese female graduate students faced challenges and how they developed their social identity.

Postmodern Critical Feminist Theory

Lather (1991) makes a connection of feminism, postmodernism and critical educational theory, called postmodern critical feminist theory. When critical theory is respected as an important tool of social institutions to explore the construction of domination and oppression, feminist theory is used to analyze women's subordination

and to discover ways of changing the reality (Breitkreuz, 2005). It also clarifies women's unequal social status, while exploring both visible and invisible female experiences (Fay, 1987; Gordon, 1979). Postmodern feminism examines the power of language. Power is exercised not only by direct oppression, but also through the way in which language shapes and restricts our reality. "Language is the terrain where differently privileged discourses struggle via confrontation and/or displacement" (Lather, 1991, p. 8). Therefore, postmodern critical feminist theory examines structural oppression, to transform systems, and liberate oppressed female groups.

The philosophy of Confucius values understanding of interpersonal relationships in society. These relationships are hierarchical, and the social status demonstrates one's obedience, responsibilities and polite manners (Wang, 2001). Historically, Japanese women are supposed to be subordinate to men in the notion of Confucianism; gender roles are often critical issues in this philosophy. Power relations dominate Japanese society, and Japanese women are oppressed in educational settings, for instance. The relationship between gender and schooling reproduces the oppression and it demonstrates the notion of resistance of human experience in social activities that may limit females' capabilities; as a result, they have low self-esteem.

According to findings in this study, most Japanese female graduate students shared how they had low self-confidence in public and classrooms where English was the main language. Although my assumptions of their low self-confidence related to their personal traits, this postmodern critical theory revealed that treatment of women in Japan caused Japanese female graduate students in the U.S. to have the same low self-confidence they experienced in Japan.

Suggestions

In this section, the findings of this research provide recommendations to improve the experience of Japanese female graduate students in the Midwestern U.S. university. These recommendations are for Japanese female graduate students, ESL and academic professors, American and other international peers, and U.S. university communities.

Japanese Female Graduate Students

Japanese female graduate students should try to understand the differences between Japan and the U.S. in terms of beliefs, values, behaviors, institutions, language and organizations (Hofstede, 2001). These cultural differences, specifically, contain negotiation skills, cultural sensitivity, flexibility, and communication skills. In order to be successful, Japanese female graduate students should be willing to learn and adopt cross-cultural integration through active interaction with others and oral participation in class. By acquiring culture-sensitive knowledge through keen observation, mindful reflection, and constant practice, they will improve communicative competence through real communication. Additionally, Japanese female graduate students must develop cultural sensitivity by cultivating curiosity and accepting cultural diversity in order to minimize the cultural conflicts that occur as a result of misunderstanding, stereotypes and different communication styles (Liu, 2001).

An understanding of relationships between the individual and the group is important for the development of effective intercultural communication skills. The development of oral communication skills for Japanese female graduate students influences their attitudes, competence, personalities, and identities which are derived from Japanese culture (Liu, 2001). The communicative style of the Japanese is often

indirect, and context dependent, whereas the American communication style tends to be direct (Clancy, 1986; Ramsey, 1998). It is critical to understand and appreciate each culture while developing the target language and cultural expectations. “Successful language learners generally believe in themselves and in their capacity to accomplish communicative tasks, and are therefore willing risk takers in their attempts to produce and to interpret language that is a bit beyond their absolute certainty” (Brown, 2001, p. 73).

Building self-esteem is another important factor for Japanese female graduate students for a satisfactory experience in a U.S. university. In order to develop social identity, people need a balance of self-coherence and mental health (Erikson, 1968). Japanese female graduate students must develop their self-esteem while they interact with others in English as a foreign language. Most participants admitted that they were not able to produce English in public places due to lack of confidence, fear and influences from Japanese culture. The empowerment of their self-image could be one of strong approaches to be successful students in a Midwestern U.S. university.

ESL Instructors, Academic Professors, Administrators

Japanese female graduate students’ successful academic journey requires strong support from people around them. Academic advisors, course instructors, ESL teachers, administrators, significant others and those to whom these students commonly look for assistance and support should make an effort to understand the Japanese culture a little bit more. Otherwise they are prone to react to the needs of these students through what the Indiana Department of Education (n.d.) refers to as the iceberg concept of culture. Godwyll and Annin (2006) argue that perceptions formed based on a small fraction of a

people's culture would be incomplete and judgments or decisions made based on this fraction of knowledge would most certainly lead to error.

Consequently, it is important for these people to provide an environment in which Japanese female graduate students can consult about issues and contribute to active participation. The positive ESL classrooms encourage Japanese female graduate students to develop self-esteem and comfort levels for active oral participation in their content courses and vice versa. Teachers should be sensitive to Japanese female graduate students' needs in class and make an effort to balance participation among all class members (Liu, 2001).

In academic classroom settings, professors should actively facilitate Japanese female graduate students' participation without pushing them to speak up, while confirming their efforts in classroom involvement whenever possible, providing opportunities for them ask questions and express opinions, and inviting them to share their culture and knowledge with the rest of the class when appropriate. When Japanese female graduate students' speech is unclear and incomprehensible, professors can try to clarify their meaning unassertively by giving them opportunities to restate their sentences. These efforts will enhance their self-esteem, language proficiency, cognitive skills, flexibility and emotional richness (Liu, 2001).

Professors in the U.S. classrooms can utilize a strategy for culture-sensitive perception to ensure the thinking process is not hidden in silence when Japanese female graduate students remain quiet most of the time. This perception involves the use of clear statements and verification questions. For instance, professors could ask, "You look

confused by what I said just now. How do you understand it?" to encourage them to participate in the class and to learn if they actually understand (Liu, 2001).

Additionally, professors can develop empathy and patience for Japanese female graduate students who experience linguistic challenges in the U.S. classrooms. While facilitating classes, professors should pay attention to both their verbal and their nonverbal messages before evaluating (Liu, 2001). As Yuna experienced, her professor asked her to come to his office before grading her papers because he wanted to clarify what Yuna meant in the written exam instead of judging her English competence. His patient attitude towards Yuna inspired her to pursue her academic work. It also helped both Yuna and her professor to manage emotional vulnerability while minimizing misunderstanding and developing mutual understanding.

U.S. University Communities

When planning orientations and community related programs, U.S. institutions should encourage Japanese female graduate students to be receptive to the U.S. culture because coping with challenges in the U.S. for them is connected to academic, social, financial, cultural, and language issues. Assisting with their English skills could be a beginning point; their advanced language proficiency would reduce their anxiety and fear of living in a new environment (Liu, 2001). All participants experienced anxiety towards interacting with others in public places so that improving their English skills would help to develop their self-esteem through activities, interactions, and events.

University communities could provide workshops and panel discussions on topics concerning the adjustment of Japanese female graduate students. Although the program of college student personnel in the university where I conducted this study holds sessions

for international students, it is for all international students. The office of International Student and Faculty Service (ISFS) also assists and provides services for international students, renewing visas and consulting with international students' issues; however, the office does not provide consultants for specific countries. If the office could organize sessions of learning and living strategies particularly for Japanese female graduate students, they would greatly appreciate and feel comfortable with studying at the Midwestern university. Experienced Japanese female graduate students who are at different stages of adaptation in the U.S. should be invited to discuss their experiences and offer suggestions in order to help newcomers be psychologically ready to face the challenges of a new culture and to accept the differences in their journey in the U.S. (Liu, 2001).

Suggestions for Future Research

This study of examinations is a first step to find issues, challenges and strategies of Japanese female graduate students in the U.S. Follow-up research in this area should address key issues such as the finding that Japanese female graduate students feel fearful and anxious when they speak English (Bang, Muriuki & Hodges, 2008). As discussed, very little research in this area has been conducted so that it would be beneficial to explore the effective coping and adjustment strategies for Japanese female graduate students in a new environment. Future research could compare levels of fear and anxiety of women and men, for example. Due to the hierarchical social systems in Japan, one can observe decisive gender roles. While Japanese female students tend to be quiet and modest, and maintain polite speech mannerisms, male students in Japan are likely to be

self-assertive and loud. It would be interesting to see how their perceptions differ or complement each other.

This study examined nine Japanese female graduate students who have lived in the U.S. for one to two years. It would be insightful to conduct a study on this same topic beyond these nine students to other Japanese female students who have lived the same length of time at other universities in the Midwest to make a generalization, to female graduate students from a non-western country studying at the same university. The comparative study of the experiences in suburban and urban university communities would expand the scope of research pertaining to Japanese female graduate students in U.S. universities.

Conclusions

Japanese female graduate students face several types of challenges at the Midwestern U.S. university and those challenges continue. These challenges include intercultural communications, language proficiency, different class participation styles and gender roles between Japan and the U.S. Indirect speech styles confused Americans and other international students though Japanese female graduate students used these indirect communications to be polite. On the other hand, affirmative discussions and much information in interactions overwhelmed the Japanese though Americans meant to be friendly and caring. Mutual understanding is always necessary when practicing intercultural communications. The women's identity while speaking English as a foreign language became fragile (Brown, 2001) so the participants were not able to produce English when experiencing anxiety. Japanese female graduate students speaking English needed adequate language competence, willingness to interact with others, and high self-

esteem. These factors also affected the U.S. classroom performance; different expectations of class participation between Japan and the U.S. created anxiety and low self-esteem. Moreover, the different socialization process of females in Japan affected their performances in the U.S. In the collectivist society that exists in Japan, they used to share similar thoughts and behaviors with others, and had to be obedient to older friends and professors. However, an individualist society, they were surprised by the assertive attitudes of American females regardless of their age.

In the findings of this study, Japanese female graduate students who lived in the U.S. for less than two years were unlikely to express their worry and anxiety or ask questions in public because it ran counter to their cultural characteristics in Japan. Sharing anxiety and asking many questions might disturb others in the Japanese culture; as a result, they were silent about these thoughts and their predicaments and not many people realized their challenges. Findings of this study clarified that maintaining silence did not mean that they did not know anything, had nothing to share or were not interested in something. All participants often questioned different norms, values, and communications in the U.S. Although they tried to explore coping and adjustment strategies to satisfy living in a new country, they had difficulty in finding appropriate people to talk to and facilities to utilize. Due to a lack of sources and experiences, they felt anxiety and their self-confidence dropped in a new environment.

A major approach is to propose an effective learning method of teaching and learning language that Japanese education could reform English classes to improve language proficiency among Japanese students. Instead of utilizing banking methods in English classrooms, language learning in Japanese education could include a problem-

posing style that encourages students to share their creative thoughts in words (Freire, 2000). Because of entrance examination styles in Japan, classes emphasize memorization in most subjects, including history, mathematics, biology, science and language. Not surprisingly, English classes also utilize banking methods for upcoming examinations; as a result, students barely have a chance to actually speak English even in the English class. Therefore, problem-posing styles in language learning could create a place where students could develop their practical language abilities. As an example of learning English as a foreign language, teachers could create discussion time for students in the same way as in U.S. universities. Teachers and students could read a few pages at first, and then form small groups and share reflections in English about the stories. It is possible as well for teachers to ask students some questions during discussion in small groups. Finally, these small groups could share their summarized opinions with the whole class. In this way, students would have a chance to speak the target language while nurturing critical thinking skills in English. The more students have opportunities to use the target language in a practical way, the more they could use it without many difficulties.

People living in the same countries in which they were born may achieve a lot of things in social and academic settings as well as develop a complex network of cultural and social capital. But overnight, as a result of their decision to become border crossers, they could become afraid, socially incompetent, lacking in social and cultural capital. Such was the cases of the participants of my study. They were selected as among the best scholars in schools and companies, and their objective of studying the U.S. was to pursue

further education with honors. However, when they crossed the border, they became handicapped by the new environment.

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APPENDIX A: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR JAPANESE FEMALE GRADUATE STUDENTS

The first round

- Could you talk about yourself before you came to the U.S?
- Which program are you in?
- Why did you decide to come to the U.S.A. to get a degree? Why not in Japan?
- How did you improve your language skill in English as a foreign language?
- How long did it take to meet the requirement of academic skills?
- Do you remember an experience when you had to overcome the language barrier? Could you tell me how you felt? Why?
- What did you do when you had a problem?
- How do you think about your class participation?
- What differences did you see between Japanese classrooms and American classrooms?
- As a Japanese female, what were your challenges in U.S. classes?

The second round

- How did you develop yourself in terms of class participations?
- What challenges did you face?
- Could you tell me your most memorable classroom experience?

APPENDIX B: LETTER FOR CLASS OBSERVATION

Dear Dr. _____,

I defended my proposal last Spring and now I am working on the research for my dissertation. The topic of my dissertation is "Japanese female border crossers: perspectives from a Midwestern U.S. university." I am interviewing and observing of my participants in this quarter. I have realized that _____is taking your class in this quarter. To see her class participation in the U.S. university, I would like to observe your class from the back of the room. If you allow this, I may ask you to let me observe your class three times in this quarter, week 2 (tomorrow), week 5 and week 10 to see her change. I will greatly appreciate if you allow me to research in your class. Please let me know what you think. I have attached the consent form, which includes additional procedures of the research. Thank you so much.

Sincerely,

Sumiko Miyafusa