Study Abroad As Contested Space of Global and Local Discourses:
Japanese male students' study abroad experiences in Vancouver

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined Japanese students' study abroad experiences in Vancouver. I conceptually framed study abroad as contested space where global and local (national) discourses converge and shape these students' experience. Based on this conceptual understanding of study abroad, I reviewed three global and local (national) discourses that were relevant to Japanese students' study abroad experiences: neocolonialism, "internationalization," and nihonjinron (discussions of Japanese uniqueness). These three discourses were monitored throughout Japanese students' study abroad experiences to examine how they would shape these students' experiences and how these students would negotiate to construct their experiences in the midst of these discourses. Furthermore, as the sub-theme of the study, I examined Japanese students' study abroad experiences in terms of Edward Said's (1995) hope for the creation of non-essentialist, non-dominative, and non-coercive form of knowledge. I examined the possibility of study abroad experience as a transformative educational experience that helps students decipher the hegemonic and ideological limitations on their knowledge of "race" and nation.

From May to November 1999, I conducted participatory observations and semi-structured interviews with seventeen Japanese male students who had resided in Vancouver for more than six months. The data suggested that the three discourses of neocolonialism, "internationalization," and nihonjinron (discussions of Japanese uniqueness) were manifested to shape the Japanese students' experiences. I argued that as a consequence of the manifestation of these three discourses, the Japanese students rendered "Canadians" into the "Other." Furthermore, this bi-polar and essentialist understanding of "Self" and "Others" led to their objectification and commodification of "Canadians" as a medium for "internationalizing" themselves.
I conclude that study abroad experiences in Vancouver was not effective in helping the Japanese students go beyond the global (neocolonial) and local (national) ideological discourses. Rather, the study suggested that the Japanese students' study abroad experiences reinforced their preconceived sense of human difference, leading them to view "Canadians" as discontinuous from "us," which enabled them to commodify them merely as a medium for "internationalizing" themselves. Given the findings of the study, I suggest for employing a postcolonial perspective in the examination of foreign students' study abroad experience. I also call for critical re-evaluation of study abroad experiences of foreign students, in particular, Japanese students and for the attempt to turn study abroad into a transformative learning opportunity that helps students move beyond hegemonic imperial discourses of "race" and nation.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

As transnational interactions have accelerated since the late 1980s, "internationalization" has been an important social phenomenon in Japanese society. Japanese industrial, business, and educational institutions actively promote study abroad as one of the most effective means to "internationalize" Japanese youths. In the midst of the present boom of "internationalization," a number of Japanese students attempt to study abroad to gain "international" exposure and English fluency.

Canada is one of the most popular destinations for Japanese students' study abroad. According to the latest statistics from the Canadian Bureau for International Education (hereafter, CBIE) (1997), the number of Japanese students studying in Canadian educational institutions has increased steadily over the past ten years. By 1996-97, Japan was the country of origin of more international students studying in Canada than any other country. The number of Japanese students significantly increased from 7,196 in 1994-95 to 9,832 in 1996-97.

More detailed analysis of the statistical data shows that while the number of Japanese international students levelled off in traditional post-secondary institutions, a sharp increase was witnessed in non-degree post-secondary institutions (CBIE, 1997). Between 1994/95 and 1996/97, the enrolment of Japanese students in these institutions experienced a dramatic increase from 1,935 to 5,708. This increase amounts to 73 percent of the total increase of Japanese international students during the same period. In 1997, Japanese students in these institutions amount to 58 percent of the total number (9,832) of Japanese international students.

Vancouver has become one of the most popular destinations for Japanese students who wish
to gain "international" experience. Due to the picturesque scenery, relative safety, and easy access from Japan, Vancouver enjoys the largest concentration of Japanese nationals in Canada. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Vancouver hosted 3,602 Japanese nationals in 1998 as visitors.\(^2\) This figure places Vancouver 22nd in the top 50 cities around the world (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1998).\(^3\) In addition, my internet search shows that in the spring of 1998, there were 7118 ESL students enrolled in 24 English language institutes in the Greater Vancouver area.\(^4\) Approximately 30 percent of these students were Japanese students. Out of these schools, 21 schools listed students of Japanese origin as one of the top three national groups in their student body (Seikōsuru ryūgaku, Study Abroad Success Book, GIO Club, 1998).

Statement of Purpose

The general purpose of the study is to examine Japanese students' study abroad experiences in Vancouver. I view study abroad as contested space where global (neocolonial) and local (Japanese nationalist) discourses converge. Postcolonial theory forms the key analytical framework for the study.\(^5\) Postcolonial scholars such as Said (1995, 1993, 1978) argue that the persisting colonial hierarchies of knowledge and value continue to nourish the legacy of Western imperialism.

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1. These institutions include private and public colleges, trade/vocational/technical schools, and non-traditional providers of education offering language, business, and health programs (CBIIE, 1997).
2. On top of this figure, according to the Japanese consulate, in 1998, there were approximately 2000 Japanese people in Vancouver with working-holiday visa (MacLellan, 1999).
3. This figure does not include short-term visitors who are not required to have any sort of visa. Given the large number of Japanese short-term visitors in Vancouver, the total number of Japanese nationals in this city can be estimated as higher than this figure.
4. The schools surveyed are Vancouver English Center, ASPECT International Language Schools, Canada Language Centre, Canadian as a Second Language Institute, Canadian Business English Institute, Canadian College of English Language, Columbia College, Fraser Pacific College, Dorset College, Global Village English Centres, Tamwood International College, Union College, Vancouver English Centre, Vancouver West College, International Language School of Canada, Kester Grant College, Language Studies Canada, Language Studies International, Pacific Language Institute, Robson College. This figure could double count those who attend two schools simultaneously.
and colonial discourse in the contemporary postcolonial world in political, ideological, economic, and social practices. Postcolonial studies aim to revisit, remember, and interrogate the colonial past to better understand and subsequently change the present condition of postcoloniality (Gandhi, 1998). Using this theoretical approach, I view the transnational movements of foreign students as a manifestation of the hierarchical relations of values and knowledge in the present postcolonial world. I also view as a significant factor in examining foreign students’ experience, the local ideological discourses unique to the particular domestic context that these students come from. Foreign students bring to the transnational context, the specific local and national discourses of their home country. These two understandings of study abroad both from local and global perspectives have led me to a new conceptual approach to the examination of foreign students’ experience: study abroad as contested space of globalism and localism. Thus, the present study examines how Japanese students negotiate to construct their experiences in the midst of these global and local ideological discourses.

Furthermore, as a larger question for the present study, I examine Japanese students' study abroad experiences in terms of Said's (1995) call for the creation of a non-coercive, non-dominative, and non-essentialist knowledge. Since the publication of Orientalism (1978), Said (1995, 1993, 1978) continues to encourage us to critically examine the ideologically constructed nature of human "differences." His academic work has been driven by his strong belief in the importance of transcending the simplistic understandings of "racial" and national essence by discovering a world not constructed out of conflicting essences (Gandhi, 1998). As Said warns us, naive essentializations of cultures, peoples, and nations, as seen in cultural nationalism, nativism, and Orientalism, can result in turning human beings against each other (Said, 1993). His argument seems rather persuasive merely by recollecting an increasing number of ethnic conflicts all over the world in a

5 I purposely use “postcolonial,” instead of “post-colonial,” to emphasize the chronological continuation of colonial discourse and condition in the contemporary world.
past decade. Only by unlearning the ideologically constructed human “differences,” can we realize what Said (1993) calls, “postnational consciousness:” the awareness of multiple identities that enables us to move beyond our myopic national (local) identities. This postnational consciousness, I believe, should form the ultimate goal of the increasingly internationalized world in the 21st century. Study abroad, which has been conventionally viewed as the best means to promote international interactions among youths, should strive to live up to this Said’s idealism. I incorporated this ideal in the examination of study abroad and formulated a general research question; “Can study abroad provide a transformative learning opportunity that helps students to move beyond the hegemonic imperial discourses of “race” and nation”? This question serves to re-examine the conventional assumption on study abroad experiences: the direct exposure to foreign culture and people helps students understand human and cultural differences from a non-essentialist and non-hegemonic perspective.

For the purpose of this study, I reviewed the colonial and neo-colonial power relationship between Japan and the West. Through this review, three local and global discourses emerged as a ramification of this neocolonial power relations between the West and Japan: the discourses of neocolonialism, "internationalization," and nihonjinron (discussions of Japanese uniqueness). These three discourses were traced to see how the Japanese students would negotiate to construct their experiences in the midst of these discourses and how these discourses would shape their experiences.

For another analytical framework, I drew a parallel between Japanese students' study abroad experiences and Western Orientalist discourse. According to Said (1978), the Western colonialists viewed their journeys to the Orient as stepping over the “fundamental boundary” between Western "Self" and Oriental "Others," and desired the Orient for exotica and self-transformation. The Orient was discursively constructed as different and inferior "Others" which served to reinforce the homogeneous and purified sense of Western "Self." In a similar way, backed by economic affluence,
the Japanese students desire to explore and commodify the "Otherness" of the West that provides a sense of excitement and challenge as they "internationalize" themselves.
Significance of the Study

Study abroad has been a popular topic in the field of international education. A number of sociological, linguistic, anthropological, and psychological studies have been conducted on foreign students' experiences such as the issues of second language acquisition, culture shock, cultural adaptation, and acculturation to host countries and cultures. Nonetheless, few studies have examined this topic from a post-colonial perspective. In this thesis, I attempt to fill in this gap in our knowledge. The present study could have an important implication for understanding experiences of foreign students in the West from culturally marginalized non-western nations in the present Eurocentric neo-colonial structure.

Chapter Overview

In Chapter II, I present my personal anecdote about study abroad experience in Canada. Taking a constructionist approach to social science research, this is my attempt to actively use my own subjectivity for the benefit of the present study. In Chapters III and IV, I identify and locate the key sensitizing concepts for data analyses. In Chapter III, I begin by discussing my theoretical approach to the theme of study abroad. I argue for the importance of a post-colonial approach for the examination of study abroad experiences. Second, I review the literature surrounding study abroad in Japan's context. I discuss the shifting role of study abroad in Japan in the past one hundred years and situate the contemporary form of study abroad in this historical continuum. This review clarifies the long history of the neo-colonial relationship between the West and Japan and how the neo-colonial discourse has shaped the role and content of study abroad for the Japanese. Third, I examine the socio-cultural background out of which emerged the present popularity of study abroad: kokusaika, "internationalization."
In Chapter IV, I identify another key concept for the study, the discourse of *nihonjinron*. First, I discuss the role of the West as "Others" for the Japanese, reviewing Japanese discourse of cultural nationalism. In particular, as a clear example of this discourse, I review the neo-nationalistic discussions of Japaneseness, so called *nihonjinron*. Drawing on Said's *Orientalism* (1978), I situate the Japanese essentialist and bi-polar understandings of Western "Other" and Japanese "Self" into Western Orientalist discourse of "Self" and "Others." Through these literature reviews in Chapters III and IV, three key discourses merged as sensitizors for the present study: neocolonialism, "internationalization," and *nihonjinron*. These discourses were carefully traced throughout observations and interviews and eventually used as analytical concepts in examining the Japanese students' study abroad experiences.

In Chapter V, I discuss the methodology and research design. Chapter VI and VII present the analysis of the interview data of seventeen Japanese male students, employing the theoretical concepts from Chapter III, and IV as sensitizors. In the conclusion, I summarize the key findings of the study. Given the findings of the study, I argue for the importance of a post-colonial approach for comprehensive understandings of foreign students' experiences. I also discuss the implications of the study and suggestions for future research on foreign students' experience.
CHAPTER II
IDENTIFYING SUBJECTIVITY

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the examination of my subjective involvement in the present study. For this purpose, first I present my own personal anecdote of study abroad experiences. It serves to reveal my subjective relationship to the study. Second, I discuss my own subjectivity in this study in the current discussion over the relation between researcher's subjectivity and research methodology.

Self Reflection on Robson Street

Robson Street is one of the most thriving and fashionable shopping districts in downtown Vancouver. Flanked with dozens of international designer shops and high-class restaurants, the street creates a distinctively different atmosphere from its vicinity. Walking down the street, within a second, one cannot help noticing an unexpected phenomenon in this North American city: the ubiquitous presence of the Japanese and their language. A number of shops on the street put up signs both in Japanese and English and employ Japanese nationals to cater to the Japanese customers. Japanese restaurants and grocery shops selling everything that Japanese sojourners would need, appear at every step you walk through the street. The street is literally full of Japanese youths who are window-shopping, enjoying a cup of afternoon tea on a terrace, or relaxing in Robson Square. This surrounding strikes me as if I were standing right in the middle of downtown Tokyo. In the late afternoon of mid-September, 1998, observing Japanese youths in downtown Vancouver caused me to reflect on my own study abroad experience.

In my first year at a Japanese college, I started thinking of studying in a Western English speaking country. I studied at a university in Tokyo, which was known for its "international"
reputation; the university hosted a large number of foreign students and professors and Japanese returnee students who had spent an extended period of time overseas. Due to this image, the graduates from this university were assumed to be highly "international," having sufficient overseas experiences and English fluency.

Contrary to this "international" image of the university, I was the least "internationalized" student, having grown up in Japan without any overseas exposure. Upon entering the university, it became apparent that I was different from other students who were already "internationalized." The majority of my classes were conducted by foreign professors in English. The university assumed that all the students had already gained a sufficient level of English proficiency. Never having had any previous training in conversational English, I was suddenly thrown into this English speaking world. For me, English was not simply a tool of communication. Mastery of the language indicated the level of "internationality," "intelligence," and even the "sophistication" of an individual. The lack of English ability meant the lack of these associated qualities.

The university certainly seemed highly "internationalized" but the benefit of its "internationality" was enjoyed exclusively by those who were already "internationalized" or who were prepared to be so. Although opportunities to "internationalize" myself seemed easily accessible everywhere on campus, an invisible wall existed that physically and psychologically excluded those like me, who were not "international" enough. Being the least "international" student in the most "international" university in Tokyo, I was desperate to "internationalize" myself so that I could join the "international" circles that I could barely see over the high wall of exclusion.

At that time, studying in the West seemed to me such a significant experience. It was another world that I could only "virtually" experience through Western English teachers and American movies. I was rather nervous about what would be in store for me in the West. Given my limited English, it was obvious that I would face many problems in this unknown world. However,
the foreseeable challenge did not discourage me from venturing to the West. Rather, I was willing to
make any effort and sacrifice to obtain the ticket to the "international" circles. I imagined what it
would be like to be back in Japan after a year of study abroad experience in a Western English-
speaking nation. I dreamed of finally joining the "international" circles that I could only watch from
a distance.

I spent two semesters as an exchange student at the University of Alberta, Canada. The
images of Canada I had embraced were limited to those in a tour guidebook: Canada as a country of
picturesque scenery, spectacular ski resorts, grizzly bears, and, most importantly, as a Western
country, a White nation. Prior to my departure, I assumed that all the friends that I was going to
make would have blue eyes, white skin, and blond hair. I had a limited understanding of the
multicultural aspect of Canada. I was familiar with the term, "multiculturalism" not as a term that
would describe the nature of Canadian society but simply as one of the terms I needed to memorize
for social studies exams. From the term, "multiculturalism," I imagined that there would be "some"
non-White population in Canada. In my mind, "multi-coloured" dots were evenly spread out over
the vast "White" land, and thus rendered invisible. Canada was undoubtedly a Western nation, in
other words, a White nation. I often imagined myself among many White faces. Despite this initial
expectation, the campus was diversified in term of "race" and ethnicity. This reality finally brought
real meaning to "multiculturalism." Before long, I began to appreciate the multicultural aspects of
the Canadian society, but my initial reaction was disappointment. For it became impossible for me
to be completely immersed in "Canadians" and their culture.

Reflecting upon my first study abroad experience, the discursive image of the West and its
embodiment, "Canadians," were significant factors in the way I perceived and interacted with people.

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6 Throughout this thesis, I use "Canadians" to refer to Anglo-Canadians. This is to emphasize the hegemonic
and ideological nature of the term.
Since I was preoccupied with improving my English, I always attempted to expand my friendship with native English speakers. However, I was seeking more than an opportunity to practice the language. I remember experiencing a sense of more satisfaction from my association with "Canadian" than with non-White Canadians, despite the fact that they were both Canadians. I consciously participated in activities such as ice hockey games and dormitory parties, in which I was one of few non-"Canadians." In these situations, being the only Japanese, I felt privileged to be immersed in "Canadians." I enjoyed an irresistible sense of joy and privilege in being the sole yellow dot on the White snow.

Since I spoke better English than other Japanese peers, I was privileged to have easier access to "Canadians." This gave me a sense of pride and privilege over other Japanese students who could not make it to the White world. Other Japanese students were stuck with each other, though desiring to become more exposed to "Canadians." Being frequently asked to introduce some of my "Canadian" friends by my Japanese peers, I could sense the jealousy of others at my success.

Throughout my ten-month study abroad experience in Edmonton, I remained highly conscious of "internationalizing" myself. Since I understood what would be expected in Japan for those who had studied in the West, that is, being "international," I needed to bring back home something that would prove my acquired "internationality." English fluency was the most visible and easily identifiable indicator that would show how functional I had become in the West, and thus "internationalized." Photographs of me among "Canadians" were another means by which I could prove this point. By showing them to my peers upon returning home, I was almost trying to make a point that I was a part of the West. My favourite pictures were those in which I played hockey among many White faces.

Reflecting on those days, for me, study abroad was a means by which to "internationalize" myself. It was an investment in my future because I believed that my increased "internationality"
would bring me a better job opportunity and even social status. I expected that this experience would put me ahead of others who had no "international" exposure. This view of studying abroad as future investment naturally led to my preoccupation with using every moment of my time in Edmonton for this particular objective. Time was limited; I needed to "internationalize" myself within ten months. Thus, every minute had to be directed towards the goal of "internationalizing" myself. From the beginning, I decided not to socialize with other Japanese at all. Full immersion among "Canadians" was, I believed, the best way to give myself the maximum exposure to "Canadian" culture and language.

Upon my return to Japan, I was finally a part of the "international" circles. Speaking English with my foreign friends on campus or in a crowded train in Tokyo, made others envious just as I had been a year earlier. I could proudly display my acquired "internationality." The study abroad experience, together with my drastically improved English, was a tremendous asset in obtaining jobs. The advantage I enjoyed after my study abroad experience made me cognizant of the high social value associated with the West under the guise of "internationalization" in Japanese society.

Four years after my first study abroad experience in Edmonton, I returned to Canada. Having resided in Vancouver for more than two years, I still feel some irresistible sense of pride or joy when associated with "Canadians." The same discourses of "race" and nation, which have been revealed in this story, still seem significant as of today. The only difference is my critical awareness of global and national forces that shape my experience in the West. Social theories help me to understand why I view the world in a particular way. This awareness involves me in continuous struggles against the constant manifestation of the hegemonic imperial discourses of "race" and nation in my current sojourn life.
Researcher's Subjectivity: Reflexivity

Traditionally, social science research takes a positivist approach with a premise that there is a "reality" that waits to be discovered. Positivists attempt to maintain a bias-free position in relation to their research "object," based on the belief that they can become "objectively" engaged in research on social phenomena. To secure the reliability and validity of the research, positivists attempt to erase the subjective influence of a researcher on the phenomena studied. Traditional ethnographers and qualitative researchers also take this positivist approach. Based on the belief that the subject (knower) and the object (known) can be separated by "scientific" procedure, they attempt to objectively describe social phenomena by marginalizing themselves in the field (Adler & Adler, 1987).

Recently, many critical theorists and feminist scholars have questioned this traditional ethnographer's naturalistic approach (Adler & Adler 1987, Hammersley & Atkinson, 1996). They deny the principle of subject-object dualism, based on the belief that "all human knowledge is fundamentally influenced by the subjective character of the human beings who collect and interpret it." (Adler & Adler, 1987) Researchers' subjectivity is a clear reflection of their own complex composite of values, attitudes, beliefs, interests, and needs (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Thus, there is no way of eliminating researchers' subjective influence on the research process.

This awareness of researcher's inevitable involvement in a research context leads to the concept of reflexivity. Reflexivity connotes that the orientation of researchers and the findings of the research are shaped by their subjective existence (Hammersely & Atkinson, 1996). The concept of reflexivity clarifies the significant impact of researcher's subjectivity on the construction of social knowledge. Thus, this concept encourages researchers to make explicit, prior to and throughout the research, their own assumptions and subjective involvement in their research focus.
In short, before examining others, researchers themselves must re-examine who they are and what they are bringing to the research context. This awareness is crucial for conducting an ethical study to the participants. In *Beyond Subjectivity* (1995), Krieger argues for the use of researchers' insights about themselves to understand research participants better. According to Krieger, researchers' statements about those they study are closely linked with statements about themselves. Thus, she argues that to treat research participants with sincerity and fairness, researchers must identity their own assumptions and any hidden personal agenda with regard to the research he or she is about to launch.

The great danger of doing injustice to the reality of the "other" does not come about through use of the self, but through lack of use of a full enough sense of self, which concomitantly, produces a stifled, artificial, limited, and unreal knowledge of "others."(p.190)

Given the researchers’ subjective involvement in the process of constructing social knowledge, it is more productive to view researchers’ subjectivity as something to capitalize on rather than to exorcise (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Taking this constructionist approach, I view the awareness of my own subjectivity as a strength I bring to the whole research process. Through my own personal anecdote of study abroad experience presented above, I intended to bring to my consciousness, my own personal and emotional involvement in the present study. I believe the above story has clarified my presupposition and personal involvement in the present research. Taking the constructionist approach further, in this thesis, I intentionally used a subjective statement, "I," to clarify my personal involvement in this study. Given the nature of the present study, I concluded that it would be inappropriate to follow the traditional custom of writing in the third person.

The present study is closely related to myself. Seventeen participants and myself were in a similar situation, being Japanese men studying in Vancouver. My experience and theirs overlapped
in many ways. Thus, as I examine their experiences, I continuously reflected on my own study abroad experience. I believe that my personal involvement in the present study should be viewed as an advantage, because our shared experiences allowed me access to the insider's perspective into the participants' world.
CHAPTER III
SENSITIZING CONCEPTS (1)

Introduction

In Chapter III and IV, I identify the key concepts that informed my research. According to Blumer, who is quoted in Hammersley & Atkinson (1996), unlike "definitive concepts" that provide well-defined explicit analytical models for empirical data analysis, "sensitizing concepts" present a general focus for further data analysis; they merely suggest a general sense of reference and guidelines in approaching empirical data. Through the following literature reviews, I will provide background to three key sensitizing concepts: neocolonialism, "internationalization," and nihonjinron (discussions of Japanese uniqueness).

Study Abroad from a Postcolonial Perspective

This section provides my theoretical understanding of study abroad: a postcolonial approach to the examination of foreign students' experience. This clarifies the larger framework in which I examine the study abroad experiences of Japanese students in the following pages. For this purpose, I review the shifting flow of world's and Japanese foreign students during the past century. This review demonstrates the clear parallel between the shifts in global power and the flow of foreign students.

The United States is undoubtedly the leading nation as the destination of study abroad for students throughout the world in the post-war period. According to the UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1998, 1,610,100 students studied overseas in 1995-96 and approximately 30 percent of these students were in the United States. The popularity of the United States becomes more significant in the case of Japan. In 1996-97, over 70 percent of 64284 Japanese foreign students
were enrolled in American higher educational institutions (Institute of International Education, 1998, UNESCO, 1998).

Prior to World War II, the United States did not attract as many international students and was surpassed by European industrial nations such as France, West Germany, and Britain. For instance, in 1923, these three European nations respectively received 17.5 percent, 17.5 percent, and 9.5 percent of the world's international student body, while the United States received 19% (Inkeles & Sirowy, 1985). As the United States became the super power in the post-war period, the flow of foreign students to the United States accordingly increased to the present level.

The flow of Japanese foreign students in the past 100 years also followed this shift of global power dynamics. By the end of the 19th century, the Japanese viewed Europe, in particular Germany, as the best place for academic study, especially in the fields of science, medicine, and the humanities (The Task Force for Transnational Competence, 1997). According to Watanabe (1977), during the entire Meiji Period (1868-1912), the early period of Japan's modernization, approximately 80 percent of the 683 Japanese students sent overseas by the government, studied in Germany. In this period, the United States was considered less civilized and thus less advanced in academic research than European nations (Ishizuki, 1972, Masuda, 1970).

Not until the post-war period did the flow of Japanese students gradually shift to the United States as the nation gained political and economic power. The American occupation of Japan in the aftermath of World War II further promoted the concentration of Japanese students in the United States. During the Cold War period, the United States financially and politically supported Japan's rejuvenation from post-war devastation to keep Japan under its ideological influence. The United States remains the most important political and economic partner for Japan. All these factors contributed to the present over-concentration of Japanese students in the United States.
The juxtaposition of the shift in global power and the flow of foreign students in the past century reveals the major force determining the movement of foreign students: the geopolitical and economic power structure of the world. The concentration of economic and political power is translated into more resources and funding for higher education and research, which helps maintain the high quality of education. The high quality of education, backed by wealth and power, attracts foreign students from countries where similar opportunities are less available. In addition, the above examination has led me to the understanding of study abroad as the by-product of global asymmetrical relations of knowledge. Nations with power have exclusive rights to produce the "legitimate" and "the most advanced" knowledge which attracts foreign students from marginalized areas to the "advanced" nations. In other words, the transnational flow of students would not take place had there been no pre-existing unequal relations of cultures, values and knowledge among nations.

In the rhetoric of globalization, study abroad has been actively promoted with a belief that it will foster intercultural understandings and communication, thus ultimately contributing to world peace. Contrary to this "interactive" image of student exchange in the world, Ishizuki & Suzuki (1988) and Inkeles & Sirowy (1985) point to the asymmetrical exchange rate of foreign students between the developed and developing nations. Based on UNESCO's statistical data during the 1960s and 1970s, Inkeles & Sirowy (1985) show that approximately 75 percent of the world's foreign students studied in but two regions, North America and Europe. Furthermore, nearly 60 percent of these students enrolled in the tertiary institutions of four nations, the United States, France, West Germany, and the United Kingdom. Based on these findings, Inkeles & Sirowy (1985) conclude that two-thirds of the world's international students come from developing nations and that three-fourths of all foreign students are studying in developed nations. In general, foreign students flow from developing nations to developed ones, not vice versa.
Though Inkeles and Sirowy's findings are dated, the disproportionate student exchange rate still continues. According to UNESCO Statistical data 1998, in 1995-96, approximately 74 percent of students studying overseas concentrated in the following eight developed nations, Australia (3 %), Canada (2%), France (11%), Germany (10%), Japan (3 %), Russian Federation (5%), United Kingdom (12%), and United States (28%). Thus, it can be argued that the level of development of both sending and host nations is a significant factor that determines the flow of foreign students.\(^7\)

However, this development-level theory does not seem applicable to the current disproportion seen in the student exchange ratio between Japan and the West. Given the present economic prosperity, measured in any perspective, Japan is not a developing nation. Nonetheless, Japan faces the same disproportionate exchange of students with the West. According to UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1998, among 64284 Japanese students studying abroad, the number of students going to the major Western countries such as Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, New Zealand, and the United States counts for 54288, or 84 percent of the total. In contrast, approximately 90 percent of foreign students studying in Japan are from neighbouring Asian nations; mainly from Korea, Taiwan, and China.

More specifically, in Japan's relationship with Canada, in 1995-96, while there were 774 Japanese students enrolled in Canadian universities, there were only 131 Canadian students enrolled in Japanese universities (UNESCO, 1998). This one-sidedness becomes more significant in the student exchange ratio between Japan and the United States. In 1995-96, 45531 Japanese students were enrolled in American universities. In 1994-95, only 1164 American students were studying in

\(^7\) Students also flow among the developed nations. For example, approximately 70 percent of European foreign students and 60 % of North American foreign students stay within respective regions. (Siowry & Inkeles, 1985). However, it must be noted that this intraregional flow of foreign students takes place exclusively in these two regions. For further discussions, see Inkeles & Siowry (1985).
Japan (UNESCO, 1998). This is a tiny fraction of the total number of U.S. students who were studying abroad.\(^8\)

The above analyses show that the student exchange ratios between Japan and the West and between Japan and other Asian countries are overly lopsided. While thousands of Japanese students study in the West, disproportionately few Western students study in Japan. Much in the same way, far more Asian students are in Japan than Japanese students in other Asian countries. The one-sided flow of students between the West and Japan, one of the most developed nations, clarifies a need for an alternative explanation as to the factor that determines the flow of foreign students.

I propose as an alternative explanation, a postcolonial understanding of foreign students' movement. Postcolonial scholars such as Said (1993, 1978), Sarder (1997) and Willinsky (1998) argue that the legacy of colonialism and imperialism still remains potent and shapes the contemporary cultural, political, and economic discourses in the world. This analytical approach pays particular attention to the historically and culturally constructed dominance of the West over the rest of the world. Despite its post-war success, Japan has never been a part of the dominant West, being "racially," culturally, and linguistically marginalized in the Eurocentric global power structure. Apart from its economic role, Japan is still culturally and politically marginalized in the contemporary Eurocentric world (Hasegawa, 1989, Miyoshi, 1989, Yamazaki, 1989). Japan's marginality in the global power dynamics continues to keep alive the Japanese traditional attitude popularized during Meiji period (1968-1912): "Datsu-A Ny-Yō" (leaving Asia and entering the West) (Ebuchi, 1985, Tsuruta, 1989). The West still possesses the psychological significance to the non-West as a source of modernity: knowledge, technology, English language, and cultural sophistication.

\(^{8}\) According to the UNESCO Statistical Data 1998, 30359 American students studied overseas in 1995-1996.
Therefore, transnational movements of Japanese students must be examined as a phenomenon deeply imbedded in this historically constructed global hierarchical structure and discourse. Study abroad can be viewed as a venue where the global hierarchical relations of culture, "race," and nation manifest themselves throughout foreign students' experiences. This study demonstrates how the neo-colonial discourse underpinned by the hegemonic global domination of the West, shapes study abroad experiences of Japanese students in the West. With the postcolonial understanding of study abroad as the larger framework of my study, now I turn to literature reviews on the issues related to study abroad for the Japanese.

Study Abroad in Japan from a Historical Perspective

In this section, I discuss the changing role of study abroad in Japan over the past century. In doing so, I maintain that the meaning and significance of study abroad for Japanese must be understood in Japan's power relationship with the West. Furthermore, this examination provides a way of understanding the present form of study abroad in Japan by situating these programs in the historical context.

Study Abroad as a National Mission

Study abroad has been an important means for Japan to absorb two advanced civilizations: China in the pre-modern period and the West since the late 19th century. In Japan, the tradition of studying abroad began in the sixth century when students and monks travelled to China to learn the wisdom of Buddhism. Japan viewed China as the origin of civilization and thus as the destination of study abroad missions. Upon returning home, these students played crucial roles in spreading Buddhism and laying out the social foundation of the nation (The Task Force for Transnational
Competence, 1997). In those days, study abroad was an important means for national development through which Japan learned from "more civilized" China. This definition of study abroad as a national mission became clearer after Japan's exposure to Western civilization.

In the middle of the 19th century, the United States forcefully ended 250 years of Japan's isolationist foreign policy and Japan opened its door to the outside world. Japan suddenly faced the militarily and technological "advanced" West and consequently viewed the West as the model of modernization. Under the slogan, "Datsu-A Nyū-Yō" (Leaving Asia and Joining Europe), government policies aimed to transform Japan into an industrialized and militarily powerful nation to rival Western imperial powers. With education as an important means to develop the necessary talents for military and industrial advancement and to unite the feudal domains into a homogeneous nation-state, the Meiji leaders started building a modern, comprehensive, integrated educational system. The fundamental Code of Education was set up in 1872, based on elements of the French, German, English, and American educational systems. It placed emphasis on acquiring Western, utilitarian, practical knowledge and methods (Sharma, 1995).

In Japan's attempt to become a modern nation-state, studying abroad became an important means for importing and domesticating the West. During this early stage of Japan's modernization, the Japanese government sent many public officials to Europe and the United States to obtain Western knowledge and technology. A trip abroad was viewed as a rite of passage for the Meiji elite, a finishing school of worldly tastes and Western life-style (Tobin, 1992). Many of these students, upon their return to Japan became prominent in their different fields and became mediators introducing "high" culture of Europe and the United States to Japanese society (Wilkinson, 1990). As the Second World War approached in the late 1930s, the number of students studying abroad decreased drastically due to the shift of national priority and anti-Western sentiment.
In the aftermath of World War II, the presence of the American occupation government re-established the relations of domination and subordination between Japan and the West. The American occupation dismantled the major Japanese institutions and the ideals that had characterized what it was to be Japanese (Bennett, 1958). Consequently, Japan's post-war devastation brought Japan back to the status of a learner with the West as a teacher. Study abroad in the West regained its popularity as a means for rebuilding the nation and entering the "advanced" West. Due to the geopolitical importance of Japan in Cold War power dynamics, the United States forged close economic and political ties with Japan. As a result, the United States became the major study abroad destination for post-war Japanese people. This marked the clear shift from Europe as the major study abroad destination in the pre-war period.

In the early post-war period, due to the weak value of the Japanese yen against Western currencies, study abroad continued to be the exclusive privilege of the social elite. A small number of elite students went to the West on scholarships provided by the United States, Britain, France, West Germany and other European nations. As Japan's economy gradually recovered in the 1960s, the Japanese government started sponsoring students to the West. Throughout the post-war period, these students educated in the West became a driving force in leading Japan from the post-war devastation to the present economic prosperity (Kawano, 1988).

The historical review of the role of study abroad in Japan has clarified that study abroad is a by-product of the larger power disequilibrium between Japan and two cultural hegemonies: China in the early period, and the West since the 19th century. As Wilkinson (1990) concludes in his examination of the historical relationship between Japan and these two hegemonic powers, "it became second nature for the Japanese to see themselves in the role of a learner or student" (p. 46). This student-teacher relation between Japan and these two major cultural hegemonies, especially the West in the post-war period, points to the existence of neo-colonial discourse between these two
parties. For culturally subordinated Japan, study abroad became an important means by which the subordinated nation attempts to learn from more "advanced" nations.

Present Form of Study Abroad in Japan

The economic affluence of Japan, which started in the 1980s, has made studying and travelling abroad relatively accessible to the general public. Due to the rapid appreciation of the Japanese yen over Western currencies, the cost for studying abroad has become reasonable and, in some cases, it is no different from living and studying in major Japanese cities (Ishizuki, 1992). Studying abroad is no longer a privilege for the social elite and bright students sponsored by Japanese government or foreign scholarships. Following China and the Republic of Korea, Japan was the third largest sending nation of foreign students in 1997-98 with 64284 students studying overseas (UNESCO, 1998). As stated earlier, Japan was the leading sending nation in American higher educational institutions in the year of 1997-98 (International Educational Institute, 1998). Japan also sends the largest number of foreign students to Canada.

The present form of study abroad for the Japanese drastically differs from the national mission style prior to the 1970s. Ishizuki (1992) summarizes three characteristics of contemporary study abroad in Japan as "massive, popularized, and diversified" (p. 37). According to Ishizuki (1992), students attend a wide range of educational institutions including English language schools, technical and vocational schools, community colleges, and universities. Many academic exchange initiatives provide opportunities for high school and university students. Some students go abroad for short-term English program or for acquisition of specific skills like fashion designing and cooking. Students come from various social backgrounds, ranging from high school students, high

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9 UNESCO statistics data includes only students who are enrolled in higher educational institutions. It excludes a large number of Japanese students who study English in language institutes.
school dropouts, housewives, ex-"office ladies,"¹⁰ university students, corporate employees, and academic scholars and researchers. Major Japanese companies and government agencies also sponsor their prospective employees for an advanced degree in specific fields in post-secondary institutions of Western English speaking nations. A large number of university students also study English abroad during school vacations.

Ishizuki (1992) also explained the objective of the contemporary study abroad for the Japanese by terming the central focus as "cultural learning." Instead of learning only specialized knowledge and skills in an institution as was the case in the traditional concept of studying abroad, the contemporary study abroad focuses more on the exploration of culture and society outside of the specific institution. The mere exposure to foreign societies and cultures is believed to foster the transnational competency of students: the acquisition of English speaking ability, intercultural understandings and communication skills, and an international and global perspective.

Furthermore, Ishizuki (1992) points out the investment-oriented nature of the present study abroad. Ogawa (1998) supports this point in her study of Japanese female students studying in American universities. She shows three main motivations and goals behind these students' study abroad attempt: the improvement of their English, acquisition of educational credentials, and global perspective and awareness. In the current boom of kokusaika, or "internationalization," those with "international" exposure became highly marketable. For instance, kikokushijo, returnee students, are now often seen as possessors of an "elite 'cultural' or 'symbolic' capital" that guarantees them entry into the most prestigious universities and jobs (Goodman, 1990). Thus, study abroad has become an important mechanism for Japanese students to "internationalize" themselves for future career development.

¹⁰ "Office ladies (OL)" is a widely used term in Japan that refers to female employees whose work is limited to "supportive" roles for male coworkers. It is well known that many Japanese women study abroad after losing hope in their workplace in a male-centred Japanese company (See Kelsky, 1994, Koizumi, 1999).
Kokusaika, "Internationalization"

First, this section reviews the concept of kokusaika, "internationalization." This is an important discourse for the present study since the present popularity of study abroad emerged against the socio-cultural background of kokusaika. Second, I critically examine Japan's recent fad of "internationalization," in particular, its impact on education from a post-colonial perspective. This critical examination reveals the overly Western biased nature of Japanese "internationalization."

In the 1980s, Japan experienced a series of trade conflicts with the United States and other Western nations. Japan's trade surplus during the 1980s, together with the trade deficit of the West, produced a negative response among the Western trade partners that imported Japanese cars and electronic products. Western nations, especially the United States, demanded Japan reform its "peculiar" business customs and abolish its protective trade policy with regards to such agricultural products as rice, beef and oranges. Thus, Japan's economic success created Western pressure on Japan to restructure Japanese economic and business systems so that they would conform to the "international" standard.

The end result of these conflicts was the emerging awareness of the particularity of Japanese economic and political systems. In response to the Western demand, Japanese political and economic leaders began emphasizing the importance of "internationalizing" the Japanese economy and society. This call reflected their concern that Japan needed to adopt more "international" standards and norms to stay competitive in the increasingly globalized world. The impact of globalization became more significant in the late 1980s. Accordingly, kokusaika has become a national slogan in the area of politics, industry, economics, and education (Ebuchi, 1997). With increasing cross-national interactions in all aspects of the society, employers demanded from their future employees "international" perspectives and communication skills, not to mention English speaking ability. In the late 1980s, then Prime Minister, Yasuhiro Nakasone posited
"internationalization" of the society as one of the eight major political goals for his term. With his strong incentive, the Ministry of Education started putting as its primary agenda making students "internationally" competitive, particularly addressing the importance of English education. To spearhead this movement, Nakasone established JET (Japan Exchange Teacher) program through which approximately 5000 English native speakers were recruited as assistant language teachers in the Japanese public school system.

This trend of "internationalization" continues to the present day. The boom of "internationalization" has intensified to the extent that the word kokusai or kokusaiteki, "international" has become fashionable. People associate these terms with something fine, new, rich, pleasurable, sophisticated, and beautiful (Ebuchi, 1997). Ebuchi further points to the ubiquitous uses of the term in the society; the word kokusai, "international" is widely used as a fashionable adjective, as seen in kokusai toshi (international city), kokusai hoteru (international hotel), kokusai takushī (international taxi), kokusai daigaku (international college), kokusai kankei gakubu (department of international relations). Thus, being kokusai-jin, an "international" person has become a popular trend in contemporary Japanese society. Furthermore, over the past several years, there has been a debate over Japanese English language education. In January 2000, the Education ministry set up an advisory panel to produce recommendations on improvement of Japanese English language education. Key issue was the introduction of English language education at elementary schools and communicative English education (The Japan Times, Jan. 26, 2000).

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The objective of the advisory panel is to map out recommendations to produce more Japanese who can communicate effectively in the international community in the 21st century (The Japan Times, Jan. 26, 2000).
"Internationalization" as an Educational Commodity

The boom of "internationalization" is seen particularly in the field of education. A large number of Japanese universities attempted to reorient themselves as "internationalized" institutions to appropriate the desirable image to increase their popularity and bolster their reputation. For instance, a large number of Japanese universities established many departments that placed "international" before the fields of economics, business, marketing, law, literature, and culture (Ebuchi, 1997). The hiring of native English speakers was another attempt to augment the "international" image of the campus. As one of the most bold attempts of this kind, Asia University in Tokyo hired 23 native English speakers through whom the university offered the "Freshman English Program" to all the first year students (Etô, 1993).

Another attempt to increase "internationality" on campus was to form "international" exchange programs with universities in Western English-speaking countries. In the early 1990s, the aforementioned Asia University in Tokyo established the largest study abroad program in which every year, more than 700 Asia University students study for one year in five different American universities (Etô, 1993). Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto also established a similar study abroad program with the University of British Columbia, Canada. Ritsumeikan University annually sends 100 students for a one-year study abroad experience at the Canadian counterpart. Purchasing one's own branch campus overseas is another means to increase the "international" image of campuses. In the peak of economic affluence in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, several Japanese private universities purchased college campuses in the U.S., Canada, and England (Chambers & Cummings, 1990 & Etô, 1993). The declining number of students for higher education partly explains the recent fad for "internationalizing" university campuses.¹² Chambers and Cummings (1990) argue that the

¹² In 1995-1996, Japan’s population growth rate was 0.2% (Statistics Canada, 1999).
decreasing number of students has been a particular concern for less prestigious private institutions. For their survival, these universities are more likely to resort to "international" images to attract students.

Underlying these attempts of Japanese universities for "internationalization" is the heightened value of the "international" image as an educational commodity. In the present hype of "internationalization," Japanese educational institutions attempt to secure their status and reputation by creating on campus the highly valued image of "internationality." The present popularity of study abroad among the Japanese has evolved in this particular socio-cultural context.

Western Bias in Japanese "Internationalization"

Despite the desirable images of "internationalization," it is important to recognize that the Japanese discourse of "internationalization" seems heavily concentrated on the West (Befu, 1993, Task Force For Transnational Competence, 1997). Ishizuki & Suzuki (1988) cite a national survey by a Japanese government agency that examined the nations that Japanese people would identify with the term, kokusaika, "internationalization." Two-thirds of the responses centred on Western "advanced" nations such as the United States, Britain, France, Australia, and Canada. On the other hand, only one-fourth of the responses referred to Asia and other regions. Ishizuki & Suzuki (1988) further point out that this Western-centredness of kokusaika was more significant among the youth than older generations. Japan has certainly started to focus on non-western countries, as trade and investment partnerships with neighbouring Asian nations became more important in the late 1990s (Ebuchi, 1997). However, it is undeniable that Japan's "internationalization" still centres on the West. Broadening the focus of international education to non-western nations is raised as one of the key issues currently facing Japanese international education (The Task Force for Transnational Competence, 1997).
The Western bias embedded in the Japanese discourse of "internationalization" is clearly reflected in the way Japanese universities seek exchange relations with foreign institutions. Most of the "international" exchange initiatives discussed earlier focus particularly on the relationships with universities in Western English-speaking nations. Quoting a report issued in the early 1990s, the Task Force for Transnational Competence (1997) shows that almost 50 percent of all Japanese four-year institutions had formed at least one exchange relation with a foreign institution. Among them, there are as many as 500 exchange agreements recorded between Japanese and American higher educational institutions. In clear contrast, a 1991 survey, which is also quoted by the Task Force for Transnational Competency, shows that only 23 out of more than 600 Japanese universities had an exchange relationship with Asian universities. Even among these institutions, the availability was extremely limited when compared to their exchange agreements with American universities. For example, the aforementioned Asia University in Tokyo sent only seven students to Asia and approximately 700 students to the United States (The Task Force for Transnational Competency, 1997). Clearly, many Japanese institutions attempt to establish an exchange relation with Western institutions but are not so interested in those with non-western ones.

Japanese students' choice of study abroad destinations also reflects this inclination to the West. According to the aforementioned UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1998, the number of students going to the major Western countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada accounts for 84 percent of the total number of Japanese students studying overseas. The Task Force for Transnational Competency (1997) critiques this Western centrality and lack of attention to non-western nations, in particular to other Asian nations, in contemporary Japanese education:

The rules and regulations that shape Japanese schools currently place strong emphasis on the cultural integrity of Japan, and from that base provide young Japanese with tools to relate to the English-speaking West. The rules do not encourage relations with other parts of the world, nor do they allow major questioning of Japan's national
identity. (...) The school curriculum focuses on the West, and is virtually oblivious to the dynamics of other parts of the world. Asian students and those from the South are welcome as students in Japan's universities but not as teachers. (p.23)

Japan's "Internationalization" as Neocolonial Discourse

In this section, I continue the critical examination of Japan's "internationalization" by situating it in the context of global neo-colonial discourse. A neo-colonial understanding of globalization discloses the true nature of Japanese "internationalization," the inherent influence of Western cultural hegemony. The objective of this examination is to present the particular socio-cultural context in which the current popularity of study abroad in the West for Japanese students has evolved and must be understood.

The further understanding of Japan's "internationalization" requires situating it in the global context of Western, and particularly American cultural hegemony over Japan. Japan has historically had its cultural discourse marginalized in the face of two cultural hegemonies: Chinese and Western Cultures (Befu, 1993, Yoshino, 1997). As discussed earlier, the West supplanted China as the cultural hegemony over Japan in the late 19th century. The significance of the West was further intensified by the aftermath of World War II. The American occupation reinforced the hierarchical relations between Japan and the West. I argue that these relations of the dominant and the subordinate remain intact as of today. Even after Japan has achieved the present economic prosperity, cultural discourse remains flowing from the West, in particular from the United States.


Domination and inequities of power and wealth are perennial facts of human society. But in today's global setting they are also interpretable as having something to do with
imperialism, its history, its new forms. The nations of contemporary Asia, Latin America, and Africa are politically independent but in many ways are as dominated and dependent as they were when ruled directly by European powers (p. 19).

In the contemporary world, though direct colonialism has largely ended, colonial discourse is still manifested in cultural, political, ideological, economic, and social practices.

Under the guise of globalization, Western cultural hegemony covers the entire globe. The globally extended information network functions as a means by which Western cultural norm is "naturalized" and disseminated throughout the world. According to Said (1993), the global information network has long been monopolized by a handful of Western, in particular American, transnational corporations. Given their exclusive ownership of the means of producing and circulating images, they serve to reinforce the colonial discourse in a non-coercive and subliminal way. In the present post-colonial world, the West is not simply a geographical category but a distinctive "imaginary" entity in the mind of people excluded from the West.

This colonialism colonises the minds in addition to bodies and it releases forces within colonised societies to alter their cultural priorities once and for all. In the process, it helped to generalize the concept of the modern west from a geographical and temporal entity to a psychological category. The West is now everywhere, within the West and outside, in structures and in minds (Nandy, quoted in Gandhi, 1998, p. 15-16).

The image of the West becomes discursively constructed and remains the model for modernity, a source of "sophistication," "higher" civilization, and "advancement" for non-western nations.

Japan presents an example of the subordinate people who have been immersed in this very colonial discourse. Katsuichi Honda, the influential Japanese journalist and social critic poignantly expresses his concern about the excessive and uncritical adoption of Western cultural norms in Japan (Honda, 1993). Covering many instances of Western cultural encroachment in many aspects of

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13 For example, Thornton (1986) and Russell (1998) argue that the Japanese acquired an Eurocentric racist view of blacks partly based on the racist stereotype of blacks brought through Western mass media.
Japanese daily life such as aesthetic standards, lifestyle, and language usage, he argues for the importance of critical consciousness against people's subconscious participation in Western cultural domination. Honda goes on to argue that in a fundamental sense, the Japanese are more colonized than they were in the aftermath of World War II, demonstrating the colonized mentality of the contemporary Japanese vis-à-vis the West (Honda, 1993, p. 75).

While most of Honda's writing tends to be based on personal anecdotes, many academics share his point. Creighton (1992), Ivy (1988), and Kelsky (1994) argue that the excessive domestication of the West has rendered Japan itself exotic and foreign for the present Japanese generations. Uncritical acceptance of a Eurocentric perspective has altered the way the Japanese view themselves, rendering themselves as "Others." Clearly, what Said calls the 'dreadful secondariness' (cited in Gandhi, 1998) of the Japanese and their culture has been perpetuated by the existing hierarchical relations of knowledge and values. Similarly, Miyoshi (1991) points to the imbalance between Japan's economic power and the absence of its cultural hegemony, describing it as the cultural passivity and economic aggressiveness of contemporary Japan. Japan's economic success has not undermined the unilateral flow of cultural discourses from the West to the non-west (Miyoshi & Harootunian, 1989). Despite its present status as an economic power, Japan still largely depends on the West for the production of its cultural discourse.

The post-colonial examination of Japan's positionality vis-à-vis the West has clearly revealed the hierarchical power structure that explains the particular nature of Japan's "internationalization." As Hasegawa (1986) and Yamazaki (1986) argue, "internationalization" is synonymous with conformity to "international" rules and norms pre-established by the dominant Western powers over the past several hundreds years. Despite the amicable image at least in Japan, the discourse of "internationalization" exerts a ruthless coercive power over all non-western nations including Japan.
Following this logic, what Japanese society highly values as "international" understandings and "global" perspectives are extensive knowledge and understanding of "Western" culture and society and fluency in English (Befu, 1993). "Internationalization" encourages Japan's conformity to the values, customs, and practices of Western modernity (Hasegawa, 1986). Under the guise of a seemingly universal notion of "internationalization," the West has been naturalized and become the pseudo-universal norm against which "Others," including the Japanese, measure themselves.

This is the larger context for understanding the present popularity of Japanese students' study abroad in the West. Studying abroad, in particular, in Western English speaking nations, is viewed as the best way for "internationalizing" themselves (Ogawa, 1998, Segawa, 1998). Clearly, the neo-colonial discourse lies behind the present popularity of studying in the West and thus it could shape Japanese students' study abroad experience.
CHAPTER IV
SENSITIZING CONCEPTS (2)

Introduction

Besides being the dominant and a teacher (superior) to Japan, the West plays another important role as the complete "Other." To elucidate this point, first I draw on Said's Orientalism (1978) to discuss Western Orientalist discourse of "Self" and "Others." Second, I discuss the discourse of nihonjinron, the Japanese essentialist and dialectical understanding of "Self" and Western "Others" and situate this discourse in the framework of Western Orientalist discourse. Lastly, I review existing literature to demonstrate how nihonjinron discourse becomes manifested in the representations of Whites in Japanese literature and media and Japanese interpersonal relationship with Whites.

Orientalism: The Discursive Construction of "Self" and the "Other"

In Orientalism (1978), Said attempts to unmask the ideological disguises of Orientalism. He argues that Orientalism is an epistemological construct designed to study, describe, analyze and understand the Orient. Orientalism is an inter-textual network of rules and procedures that regulate anything that could be thought, written, or imagined about the Orient (Gandhi, 1998). In this sense, Orientalism is best understood in Foucauldian terms as "discourse": a manifestation of power/knowledge (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 1999). Unequal power relationships between the Occident and the Orient enabled the former to construct the "reality" of the Orient as inferior and

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14 Foucault defines discourses as heavily policed cognitive systems that control and delimit both the mode and the means of representation. Discourses are modes of utterance or systems of meaning that are both constituted by, and committed to, the perpetuation of dominant social systems (Foucault, 1987).
subject to the Occident, which in turn served to justify the subjugation of the Orient in the name of Western civilizing mission.

Said (1978) points to the dialectical operation of "Self" and "Others" in Orientalist discourses of culture and difference. He demonstrates the constructed nature of the representation of the Orient as "Others." In Orientalist discourse,

(t)he construction of others conceived as fundamentally different from, and inferior to, White/European self-construction is fundamentally tied to the process of discursive production of others, rather than pre-existing that process (p, 63).

Through this "othering" process, the alien "Orient" is reduced to a timeless essence that defines the "reality" of the people and the culture. Western colonial expansion necessitated the production of this particular mode of knowing that rationalized colonial domination and produced ways of conceiving "Other" societies and cultures (Frankenberg, 1993).

The imperial / colonial production of "Others" is also an attempt to create the purified "Self" images. As Frankenberg (1993) argues, "while discursively generating and marking a range of cultural and racial others as different from an apparently stable Western or White self, the Western self is itself produced as an effect of the Western discursive production of its Others" (p. 17). In attempting to reinforce the fundamental difference and their inherent superiority over non-western "Others," the Western imperialists essentialize not only the images of "Others" but also those of Western "Self." In the process of producing the homogenized and sanitized images of "Self," the West displaced its fears, anxieties, and contradictions onto the non-western "Others." In other words, the discursive images of "Others" mirror what is deeply within "Self" (Sarup, 1996).
Orientalism and Japan

Though Said's examination of Orientalism deals mainly with Western representation of the Middle East, the same discourse is seen in the Western representation of any non-western regions. As Wilkinson (1990) explains:

The phrases, 'the Orient' and 'Oriental', were applied indiscriminately to many countries and peoples, being gradually extended to cover Persia, Arabia, India, China, Mongolia and, last, Japan. As contacts were made with each new country, past images were simply transferred to them (p. 99).

The West has traditionally viewed Japan as the "Other," associating Japan with characteristics that are opposite of what presumably characterizes the West. In Western Orientalist discourse, Japan becomes discursively constructed as feminine, emotional, and traditional, as opposed to the West as muscular, rational, modern, and progressive (Ben-Ami, 1997, Moeran, 1989, Nagatani & Tanaka, 1998).

This Western discourse on Japan continues to the present day as seen in the representation of Japan and its people in Western mass media and academic discourse. Ben-Ami (1997) argues that the premise of Japanese cultural difference from the West runs through the contemporary Western academic discourse and popular journalism on Japan. He provides an historical examination of Western academic discourse on Japan and shows how the notion of "fundamental difference" between the West and Japan has been uncritically employed in many studies on Japan.

Many analyses on the representation of Japan in the Western press also show the common underlying premise in various types of coverage on Japan: how different Japan is from the West (Hammond and Stirner, 1997, Mayes and Rowling, 1997). Hammond and Stirner (1997), in their examination of British media, conclude that Japan tends to be represented as odd, weird, and eccentric and that those representations of Japan ultimately serve to assert the assumed British moral
superiority. Undoubtedly, the legacy of Western Orientalist discourse over Japan is significant today.

Affirmative Orientalism\textsuperscript{15}

Since the publication of \textit{Orientalism} in 1978, a number of scholars have critiqued Said’s theory of Orientalism and some limitations of the theory became clear. For Bhabha (1994), Said’s theory fails to recognize that cultural stereotypes in colonial discourse are considerably more ambivalent and dynamic. Bhabha maintains the importance of recognizing the indeterminate nature of colonial stereotypes and the process of how these stereotypical images are constructed.

The analytic of ambivalence questions dogmatic and moralistic positions on the meaning of oppression and discrimination. My reading of colonial discourse suggests that the point of intervention should shift from the ready recognition of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the processes of subjectification made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse.(Bhabha, 1994, p.67, emphasis original)

Bhabha’s claims for the indeterminate and ambivalent nature of colonial discourse are supported by others critics who recognize the radical affirmative uses of Orientalism (Gandhi, 1998). Fox (1992) critically maintains that Said’s theory of Orientalism fails to recognize that Orientalism came to enable anti-colonial nationalist resistance against Western domination (Fox, 1992). According to Fox (1992), in the case of the Indian liberation movement against British imperialism in the early 20th century, the pejorative stereotypes of India in Western Orientalist discourse were turned into "affirmative Orientalism" that reversed the negative image of India into a positive one. In “affirmative Orientalism,” anything that appeared in Eurocentric Orientalism as India’s ugliness and weakness became its beauty and strengths. Fox (1992) goes on to argue that this affirmative

\textsuperscript{15} Fox (1992)argues that Indian anti-imperialist movements turned the derogatory Western Orientalist discourse on India and the people into "affirmative Orientalism" that served the cause for Indian cultural nationalism.
Orientalism owed much to Europeans who were dissatisfied with Western capitalism and modern industrial society and that it was subsequently employed for the cause of anti-imperial movements by Indian cultural nationalists like Gandhi. Said's theory, because it bounds the West from the East, misses this grey area that lies between the Orientalist binarism of "Self" and "Others." Fox (1992) argues that his theory ends up reaffirming the very binary structure between the West and the Orient that it set out to attack. Attention to this grey area of colonial discourse is essential in understanding the Japanese neo-nationalistic cultural discourse, *nihonjinron*.

*Nihonjinron: discussions of Japaneseness*

Through the Allied occupation from 1945 to 1949, the West, particular, the United States, directed social, political, and economic reforms for reconstructing a "new" Japan. The material wealth and higher living standard of the West became the ultimate goal that the Japanese people strove to reach in the post-war period. This hierarchical relation between the West and Japan led to the sudden influx of Western cultural influence across the society.

The ubiquitous presence of the West in Japanese society became a threat to Japanese cultural autonomy, leading to Japanese insecurity about their cultural identity (Befu, 1993, Dale, 1989, Yoshino, 1997). Japan's cultural marginality to the West created a pressing need for reaffirming its own cultural uniqueness against Western (American) cultural encroachment. In asserting their cultural autonomy and distinctiveness from the West, the Japanese have appropriated the essentialized image of the West as the complete "Other" against which Japanese "Self" becomes articulated (Befu, 1993, 1981, Dale, 1989, Ohnuki-Tierney, 1993). This tendency to view the West as the "Other" consistently appears in the nation-wide neo-nationalistic discourse of Japaneseness, *nihonjinron* (Befu, 1981, Dale, 1989, Yoshino, 1997).
Nihonjinron, or discussions of Japoneseness, refers to a cultural discourse that focuses on the "uniqueness" and "distinctiveness" of Japan and its people (Befu, 1993, Dale, 1989, Yoshino, 1999).

Befu (1993) explains the prevalent dissemination of nihonjinron in the following manner:

The Japanese manifest consuming interest in the question of who they are in a cultural sense, so much so that the discourse on Japanese identity may even be called a minor national pastime. Numerous writers have articulated the nature of this cultural and national identity in voluminous publications. This discourse constitutes a well-recognized genre, with its own appellation. (p.107)

A detailed discussion of the content of nihonjinron is beyond the scope of this study. To sum up, the main theme of this discourse is that the Japanese and their society are unique and different from other nations linguistically, racially, and culturally (Goodman, 1990). In nihonjinron, the Japanese have "unique" characteristics such as group orientation, consensual human relations and non-confrontational patterns of interpersonal communication. Yoshino (1997) maintains that Japanese assertions of "uniqueness" are based on the notion of tan'itsu minzoku, which means the racial and cultural purity and homogeneity of the Japanese and the society.

In nihonjinron discourse, Japanese uniqueness is asserted by putting Japan in clear contrast to the West (Befu, 1993, Dale, 1989, Miller, 1982). The contrasting images of Western "Others" are selectively employed for the purpose of reaffirming the "artificial" sense of difference between Japanese "Self" and Western "Others." The Japanese tend to view Japanese society and the people as "group-oriented," "harmonious," "ethnically homogeneous," and a "shame culture". These images are contrasted to those of the West and Westerners as "individual," fond of "conflicts," "ethnically plural," and the "guilt type of culture" (Befu, 1993, Morean, 1989). Similarly, Bennett

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16 For a detailed discussion of nihonjinron, see Befu (1993) and Dale (1989).
17 According to Benedict's The Chrysanthemum and the Sword (1946), one of the most influential book among academic studies of Japan, in "shame" society such as Japan, people's behaviour is regulated by a sense of a "shame;" they are concerned about looking bad in front of the group they belong to. In contrast, in Western "guilt" cultures, people's behaviour is regulated by individual conscience (cited in Ben-Ami, 1997).
(1958) points to the conviction amongst the Japanese that Japan and the West, in particular the
United States, are at the opposite ends of a cultural continuum.

Where Japan is feudalistic, America is democratic; Japan is backward, America
advanced; Japanese are strained, reserved, socially ill at ease, Americans flexible and
outspoken; in Japan women are suppressed, in America they are free; Japan is
spiritual, America is materialistic (Bennett, 1958, p.22)

Thus, the reaffirmation of Japanese "Self" becomes possible only by presenting the dominant West
as the complete "Others" which presumably possess any opposing natures. In nihonjinron, the West
is defined as the symbolic world of "Otherness" from which the Japanese feel a fundamental sense of
difference. Ultimately, it enables them to experience a secure sense of cultural identity. Once
reduced and essentialized, the West no longer poses a threat to Japanese cultural identity. Through
the "othering" process, its image becomes contained and controlled and serves to reinforce the
artificial sense of difference between Japan and the West. The danger of this essentialization of
Japanese "Self" and Western "Others" is that it inevitably leads to the false sense of difference and
discontinuity.

The above description of nihonjinron leads to what Fox (1992) defines above as "affirmative
Orientalism." As Moeran (1989) and Nagatani and Tanaka (1998) argue, the Japanese themselves
have actively supported and appropriated Western Orientalist discourse that "otherizes" Japan. As
with India, the Japanese employ Orientalist discourse on themselves as an oppositional discourse
against Western cultural imperialism.

By adopting orientalist tactics - such as, for example, a refusal to account for human
plurality - and by giving positive values to characteristics like 'emotion' hitherto used
as a form of denigration by Westerners writing on the Orient, the Japanese have
turned the tables on their would-be material and spiritual conquerors. (Moeran, 1989,
p. 183-184)
Moeran (1989) further argues that Japan's success in appropriating Western Orientalist discourse for self-assertion makes Japan different from other parts of the world orientalized by the West.

Befu (1993) views *nihonjinron* as a hegemonic ideology, presenting the active involvement of intellectuals, private corporate establishment, and the government in the creation and dissemination of *nihonjinron*. Befu describes the ideological persuasiveness of *nihonjinron*:

> It is an ideology in another sense, in that it not merely "describes" the constructed world view, but prescribes what is normatively right and therefore how one should conduct oneself. (p. 126)

Befu (1993) also cites Bellah who argues that *nihonjinron* is a form of "civil religion" (p. 127). Without being obviously religious, it performs a religious function by providing normative orientation as well as motivation for action and also giving order to the external world. This description of *nihonjinron* leads to the Foucauldian concept of "discourse;" *nihonjinron* provides a coherent and strongly bounded area of social knowledge that prescribes the "reality" of Japanese "Self" and Western "Others." Thus, in the same way Orientalism imposed limits upon what people could either experience or say about the Orient, *nihonjinron* determines Japanese understandings of "Self" and Western "Others."

Yoshino (1999) points to the manifestation of *nihonjinron* especially in a cross-cultural context. In his sociological study on *nihonjinron*, Yoshino shows that many internationally-operated corporate establishments create cross-cultural manuals. These manuals consist of handbooks, English conversation materials and glossaries that deal with the "distinctiveness" of Japanese behaviour and society manifested in Japanese business customs (Yoshino, 1999, 1992). What underlies these cross-cultural manuals is the widespread belief that the "distinctiveness" and "peculiarity" of Japanese thought and behaviour could obstruct "international" communication. The understanding of cultural difference is regarded as essential for facilitating interactions with non-Japanese. As Yoshino (1999) explains, this attempt to disseminate *nihonjinron*, in cross-cultural
organizations, results from the benign intention: to promote smooth “international” interactions between the Japanese and non-Japanese. Ironically, this attempt could result in strengthening cultural nationalism and excessively stressing Japan's cultural “distinctiveness” (Befu, 1993, Yoshino, 1999).

As discussed in the previous chapter, study abroad is viewed as the best means for Japanese students to become kokusajin (an "international" person), who is highly valued by the Japanese corporate society. Taking into consideration the significance of nihoninron discourse in cross-cultural contexts, Yoshino (1999) defines kokusajin in the following manner;

The status of a kokusajin (international person), desired by increasing numbers of the well-educated Japanese, is considered to be achieved by acquiring the ability to use practical English as well as knowledge of cultural differences (p.22).

Yoshino's definition of being “international” shows that Japan's discourse of “internationalization” does not necessarily lead to the deconstruction of essentialist binarism between Japanese "Self" and non-Japanese "Others." Yoshino (1999) warns that an attempt to promote "international" interactions, accompanied by an excessive emphasis on Japanese “distinctiveness,” could result in creating the heightened sensitivity to cultural difference “to the extent of neglecting the commonality between Japanese and non-Japanese”(p. 23). In this sense, nihonjinron and “internationalization” can be viewed as two sides of the same coin.

Orientalism and nihonjinron as Essentialist, Coercive, and Dominative Discourses

Both in Western Orientalism and Japanese nihonjinron, the discursive images of Japan and the West are dialectically employed; Orientalism necessarily presumes Occidentalism and vice versa. Creighton (1995) argues that Japanese "othering" of the West involves both Japanese self-orientalization and Japanese occidentalization of the West. Threatened by the cultural domination of
the West, the Japanese need to orientalize themselves by essentializing their own culture to the
authentic cultural myth: homogeneity and uniqueness of the Japanese. Thus, both the discourse of
Orientalism and *nihonjinron* are the manifestation of a more general process by which a set of people
seeks to intensify its own sense of "Self" by dramatizing difference from "Others" (Carrier, 1995).
Borrowing Said's words (1995), these two discourses represent "coercive," "dominative" and
"essentialist" modes of knowing "Self" and "Others."

Difference exists between any two cultures in the world. The recognition of difference
between two cultures is certainly essential for better intercultural understandings. The point of the
argument here is not to deny the reality of cultural difference but to acknowledge the ideologically
constructed nature of essentialist and ahistorical notions of cultural difference. Lindstorm (1995)
reminds us of the danger of the essentializing discourse of difference:

> Essentialization of either Orient or Occident can lead to an exaggerated and even false
sense of difference. Difference itself can become the determining, though perhaps
unspoken, characteristics of alien societies, so that signs of similarity become
embarrassments, to be ignored or explained away in terms that maintain the purity of
Us and Them (p. 34).

The hegemonic discourses of Orientalism and *nihonjinron* can create not only knowledge but also
the "epistemological reality" that denies possibilities of any other alternative perspectives. The
essentialist approach to the representation of "Self" and "Others" precludes a more nuanced and
multi-dimensional understanding of each other, leading to distortion, exaggeration, and even crude
caricature (Nagatani & Tanaka, 1998). Said (1978) poses an important question on the nature of
representation of "Others;" "Is a true representation of 'Others' ever possible"? If all representations
are embedded in the language, culture and institutions of the representer, then one must recognize
that a representation is intertwined with many other things besides the truth which is itself a
representation (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 1999).
In this section, to present the manifestation of *nihonjinron* discourse, I examine the representation of the West, in particular, Whites in Japan. The use of the discursive image of the West as the “Other” can be seen in a wide range of Japanese cultural and social products. *Re-made in Japan* introduces a number of anthropological studies that demonstrate the contemporary Japanese use of the image of the West from homes, department stores, to night clubs (Tobin, 1992). For example, in one of the articles in the book, Creighton (1992) demonstrates the clear juxtaposition in the way Western and Japanese goods are displayed in Japanese department stores. She concludes that through their parallel offerings of Western and Japanese goods and services, Japanese department stores help customers define their cultural identity. Similarly, Miller (1982) argues that any aspect of Japanese life or culture is thrown into sharp relief when it is brought into direct confrontation with a foreign phenomenon. The "Other" must remain distinctively different and exotic at the same time that it is domesticated for internal consumption.

Whites are an essential part of the discursively constructed image of the West. In the same way the Japanese render the West "Others," Whites are also essentialized as the complete "Others." The Japanese have traditionally utilized the reduced images of Whites as rational, individualistic, and materialistic, to reaffirm their fundamental difference from the Japanese "Self." In clear contrast, the Japanese "Self" is essentialized as nuanced, sensual and group-oriented; the contrasting images attributed to the essence of Japanese-ness.

Various forms of media representation offer abundant examples of this “othering” of Whites in Japan. Examining representations of foreigners in Japanese advertisements, Creighton (1997) explains that although Westerners are generally depicted in a positive manner, they tend to play the

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18 Russell (1998) and Sharma (1995) explain that the term, *gaijin* literally means foreigner but in practice it refers specifically to the Caucasian foreigners. This is another example that shows the assumed Otherness of
role of outsiders that goes beyond the Japanese cultural norm. For instance, Whites are used in making assertive and individualistic comments in Japanese advertisements, which supposedly contradicts the assumed essence of Japanese: the suppression of individuality for the harmony of a group. The presence of Whites in Japanese advertisements, therefore, "functions to delimit Japanese identity by visual quotations of what Japan and Japanese are not" (Creighton, 1995, p. 136).

The "othering" of Whites is also abundant in the representation of Whites in Japanese literature. According to Tsuruta's (1989) analysis on the portrayals of Westerners in Japanese literature, Whites tend to be described in two extreme ways: preferably or undesirably. On one hand, they are glorified as the absolute beauty of humankind. On the other hand, they are rendered over-sexualized beast-like creatures. What underlies these two opposite ways of depiction is the assumption that Whites are fundamentally different from the Japanese. Tsuruta (1989) provides the following observation.

The Japanese have tended to locate Western people within the terms of two extremes--as object either of unqualified abhorrence or unequivocal admiration--but seldom have Westerners been understood as "real" people (p.1)

Thus, nihonjinron, with its excessive emphasis on "difference," could lead to the objectification and dehumanization of Whites. Whether positively or negatively presented, the essentialized and distorted descriptions of Whites deny their individual personality and uniqueness. They are discursively objectified as "Others" that the Japanese appropriate to define the essence of Japanese. Furthermore, this "othering" of Whites is reported in the actual perceptions of the Japanese towards Whites at an interpersonal level. Wagatsuma's (1968) study on social construction of skin colours in the Japanese case, provides one of his interviewees' comments in the following manner;
When I think of actual Caucasians walking along the street, I feel that they are basically different beings from us. Certainly, they are humans but I don't feel they are the same creatures as we are. There is, in my mind, a definite discontinuity between us and the Caucasians. Somehow, they belong to a different world (p. 421).

Wagatsuma explains that the Japanese tend to view Whites as "discontinuous" from themselves, in other words, as the complete "Other."

Given the assumed cultural and "racial" discontinuity of Whites, it is unthinkable for the Japanese that Whites speak fluent Japanese and understand the culture (Befu, 1993, Yoshino, 1999). Miller (1984) explains the Japanese tendency to assume that foreigners, in particular Whites, cannot speak or understand Japanese. The mastery of the Japanese language by Westerners becomes "an upset of the natural order of things" (Miller, 1982, p. 159). Thus, the Japanese dub foreigners who speak fluent Japanese as henna gaijin, strange, odd foreigners (Miller, 1982). Sharma (1995) shares a similar point in arguing that the Japanese tend to believe that Westerners cannot truly understand "the splendour of their sublime culture" (p. 52). The assumed discontinuity of Whites prevents the Japanese from imagining that they could acquire a part of "us," the Japanese language and culture.

The above examples have shown the construction of reduced and simplified images of Whites that serve to provide the contrasting images of the "Other." According to hooks (1992), stereotypes abound when the distance between "Self" and the "Other" is assumed to be so huge that the real knowing of the "Other" is impossible. Thus, overtly stereotypical depictions of Whites reveal the assumed sense of distance and discontinuity that the Japanese experience from Whites. The sense of Otherness that is attributed to Whites, exists deep within the minds of the Japanese who are unaware of ideologically constructed nature of the image.

19 Miller (1982) explains that Japanese race and language are closely linked and form the core of the Japanese identity. Thus, any attempt to learn the language by a foreigner can be interpreted as an attempt to acquire Japanese racial, cultural identity and to enter the society.
The Vertical Discontinuity of the West, Whites

In the previous section, drawing on Said's Orientalist and *nihonjinron* discourses of "Self" and "Others," I have examined the significant role of the West and Whites as "Others" in the perception of the Japanese. In this section, I further examine this sense of "otherness" from a different analytical angle. In the following pages, I argue the sense of difference the Japanese experience vis-à-vis the West and Whites is further accentuated by the assumed sense of a "hierarchical" gap between Japan and the West. The existing neo-colonial relations of domination and subordination create the hierarchical order of culture, "race," and nation between Japan and the West. This hierarchy leads to the psychological sense of what I call "vertical discontinuity" that the Japanese feel towards Whites and the West. Thus, the Japanese sense of "discontinuity and remoteness" must be understood in terms of both *nihonjinron* and neocolonial discourses.

Western dominance in the neo-colonial global structure enables the dissemination of the hegemonic Western knowledge as the "norm" and "standard" in a subliminal way. Japan has been culturally marginalized from the centre of the "universe" and thus depends on the West for the production of its cultural discourse.\(^{20}\) That the Japanese accept this "universal norm" is seen in the rejection of Japanese cultural norms and the uncritical acceptance of this "universal" standard in, for instance, the concept of human beauty.

All mass media in Japan such as movies, magazines, TV commercials and advertisements spread the image of Whites and Western cultural forms as symbols of beauty, sophistication, and wealth (Applbaum, 1992, Creighton, 1997, Haarmann, 1984, Koizumi, 1999).\(^{21}\) In contemporary Japan, proximity to the image of the Whites has become the determining measure for human beauty.

\(^{20}\) For instance, in 1998, there were 23 megahit films (films grossing over one billion yen). Only nine of them were Japanese films and altogether they earned 18 billion yen (approximately $150 million). On the other hand, 14 Hollywood megahits earned 42 billion yen (Fazio, 1998).

\(^{21}\) Applbaum (1992) states that some 20 percent of television commercials feature foreign, or gaijin models or
Wagatsuma (1968) illustrates this with the tendency among young movie actresses to dye and bleach their hair and to have plastic surgery to alter their eye folds and build up the bridge of their noses. The same trend is seen within contemporary Japanese youth culture. For instance, a Japanese youth magazine ranks Japanese female actresses and singers according to the proximity of their appearance to those of gaijin (Western foreigners). Ma (1996) also reports the extreme form of Japanese admiration for Westerners, describing it as "Token Gaijinism." Referring to the over-presence of Western figures in Japanese mass media, she maintains that Western models with blond hair and blue eyes are more popular than some of the Japanese pop stars.

Bhabha's (1994) concept of "mimicry" explains the Japanese attempt to "mimic" the customs, lifestyle, language, and thought of the dominant West. This particular psychological orientation of the Japanese vis-à-vis the West resembles that of the colonized in the period of Western imperial expansion. The following is a quote from Memmi's Colonizer and Colonized that provides the psychological analysis of the colonizer and the colonized in the colonial context of Algeria and France.

A blonde women, be she dull or anything else, appears superior to any brunette. A product manufactured by the colonizer is accepted with confidence. His habits, clothing, food, architecture are closely copied, even if inappropriate. (Memmi, 1965, p. 121)

The sense of vertical distance the Japanese experience from the West leads to the sense of inferiority on the part of Japanese individuals. Historically, in the process of Japan's modernization, Japan's marginal status in the world of Western dominance clearly impacted the perception of the Japanese towards Westerners. Tsuruta (1989) regards the Japanese inferiority complex as the inevitable price for Japan's modernization process. In the early Meiji era (1868-1912), the sense of cultural and racial inferiority was acutely felt among Japanese leaders and intellectuals. Mori

personalities.
Arinori, one of the intellectual leaders and a minister of education during the Meiji period, suggested that the Japanese language be replaced with a “superior” European language (Befu, 1993). Furthermore, other intellectuals suggested the Japanese caucasianize themselves through interracial marriages with the Whites (Hayashida, 1976).

Japan's defeat in World War II reinforced the Japanese sense of "racial" and cultural inferiority vis-à-vis Whites, thus the Japanese sense of discontinuity from them. In his analysis of the depictions of Westerners in Japanese literature of the post-war period, Tsuruta (1989) provides a number of passages from Japanese literature exhibiting the inferiority complex of Japanese protagonists vis-à-vis Whites. The following quote from a Japanese novel (Eden made, 1954) presents a sense of inferiority felt by a Japanese male protagonist studying in France:

I do not know why and how only the White people's skin became the standard of beauty. I do not know why and how the standard of human beauty in sculpture and paintings all stemmed from the White body of the Greeks and has been so maintained until today. But what I am sure of is that in regard to the body, those like myself and Negroes can never forget miserable inferiority feelings in front of people possessing White skin, however vexing it might be to admit it. (quoted in Tsuruta, 1989, p. 15)

Gender is also deeply involved in the construction of a Japanese sense of "discontinuity" and inferiority complex towards Whites. Analysing Western female representation in modern Japanese literature and poems, Rabson (1989) points to Japanese men's general tendency to romantically adore Western females. This tendency is also seen in the world outside literature. Ma (1996) demonstrates a particular obsession of the Japanese male for blond women and attributes it to the influence of Western mass media. Japanese men, she argues, tend to admire and glorify White women to the extent that they dehumanize White women as an object without a trace of individuality and humanity. Wagatsuma (1968) agrees with Ma in pointing to the Japanese men's sense of "remoteness and inaccessibility" with regard to White women. In supporting his point, he provides the following interview quote by a Japanese male who resides in the United States.
Looking at white skin I feel somehow that it belongs to a different world. People understand each other a great deal but there is something which people of different race cannot quite share. It sounds foolish and irrational, I know, but somehow this is the feeling I have, looking at the white skin of a Caucasian women (p.424).

Tsuruta (1989) explains that Japanese men's admiration towards White women results from the belief that "the West represents a superior culture, that Westerners are the physical embodiment of that superiority and also that these differences are insurmountable" (p.21). Thus, the Japanese sense of hierarchical "racial" and "cultural" differences from Whites, particularly White women, lead them to assume the unbridgeable gap between Japanese "Self" and Western female "Others."

The hierarchical structure of human difference leads to the adoption of the dominant Western image at a global level. The difference from the "norm" is not simply a difference in a relativistic sense but a difference that has been historically constructed and deeply embedded in the global power disequilibrium between the West and the rest of the world. Human difference from this "norm" becomes exoticized or undesirable and if the difference is unerasable, for instance, in a biological sense, it leaves an individual with a sense of inferiority. Hall demonstrates the debilitating psychological devastation that this colonial discourse causes to those who are subject to the oppressive discourse;

It is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that "knowledge," not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, but by the power of inner compulsion and subjective conformation to the norm. (quoted in hooks, 1992, p.3)

As the Japanese economic success achieved its highest peak of prosperity in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, Western nations started looking to Japan for the cultural essence that supposedly led Japan to economic success (Tobin, 1992). They were eager to learn Japanese business customs, work ethic, management styles, and education in an effort to increase industrial productivity and efficiency. Japan's economic success gave its people national confidence and thus the inferiority
complex seems less prevalent than in the aftermath of World War II (Ma, 1996). Despite this emerging sense of confidence towards its own culture and economy, Ebuchi (1985) and Sharma (1995) argue that the contemporary Japanese still feel inferior to the West and superior to the non-west. This explains the continuing traditional thinking among the Japanese: Datsu-A, Nyū-Yō (Leaving Asia, Entering the West). At the same time the West turns to Japan for new ideas, the Westernization, or rather Americanization, of Japanese everyday life continues today (Tobin, 1992). Thus, Japan’s recent economic prosperity has not undermined the Eurocentric racial and cultural hierarchy in which Japan has been marginalized. One cannot assume that Japan’s recent economic success has subverted the legacy of Western domination that continues from the days of Western imperial expansion.

Commodification and Domestication of the West

The most notable difference between contemporary Japan and other marginalized and colonized non-western nations is that the contemporary Japanese do not suffer the material, overtly coercive oppression of Western colonialism. Different from the latter, Japan does not experience the direct form of material colonialism underpinned by the disproportionate distribution of political and economic power between the colonized and the colonizer. Instead, it is mostly in a cultural and hegemonic sense that Japan is currently under the global oppressive force of the West.

One phenomenon that has resulted from the coexistence of colonial mentality and material wealth in the case of Japan, is Japan's commodifying tendency toward the West. As seen in the Japanese desire to mimic the dominant West, the colonial discourse exists in Japan’s relationship with the West. Nonetheless, Japan's current material and economic wealth, which was clearly absent
in colonial Africa and India, enables the Japanese to express their desire for the West through the act of buying, commodifying, and domesticating the West (Tobin, 1992).

Japan has a tradition of importing, domesticating, and commodifying the West as seen in the active acceptance of Western culture in its history. The economic affluence of Japan since the late 1980s has intensified this tradition of importing, consuming, and commodifying the West. The domestication of the West is seen in every aspect of Japanese society. For instance, the images of the West play a key role in the negotiation and display of social class. The "higher" value of the West drives the Japanese to appropriate things Western for enhancing their social class (Tobin, 1992). This is clearly seen in the popularity of Western originated things among the Japanese such as Western brand-name commodities, Western knowledge, English, and Western lifestyle.

The commodification of the West also extends to Western people, Whites. Ma (1996) reports that the Japanese seek to associate with Whites for a heightened sense of status and privilege. In particular, she refers to the popularity of White women among Japanese men as "the trophy-wife syndrome" (p. 220). Similarly, MacLellan (1999) also reports on a large number of Japanese women in Vancouver seeking relationships with "Canadian" men. She explains that some Japanese women are involved in this cross-cultural relationship for "the accessory on their arm that beats any Prada bag," "English lessons," "the thrill of dating a rare specimen," and "a few souvenir snapshots to prove it" (Vancouver Sun Mix, E3, 1999). The commodification of humans was a central part of Western Orientalist discourse (Loomba, 1998). Western Orientalists viewed "the Orientals" as an "object" to study, to appropriate, and to govern. The sense of Otherness attached to the Orient in Orientalist discourse served to justify the dehumanization of "the Orientals." In the same way, the assumed sense of Otherness that the Japanese associate with Whites, leads to the dehumanizing tendency toward them.
Education does not escape the Japanese desire to commodify the West. As previously discussed, many universities appropriate and purchase the image of the West in their attempt to "internationalize" campuses. In the recent boom of "internationalization," a close association with the West possesses significant social value and status. The present popularity of study abroad in the West can be understood in the same manner. The mere fact that one has studied English in an English speaking country gives people a better impression of oneself (Becker, 1990). Attracted by the "higher" value of educational credentials from Western universities and the social value of English speaking ability, a number of Japanese students invest in studying in the West. While the West is still the distinctive psychological entity that allures and simultaneously oppresses the Japanese in a subliminal way, Japanese yen enables them to purchase the West and appropriate its associated higher value and status for the domestic consumption. Within the hierarchical relations between the West and Japan, the commodification of the West is an active and conscious act on the part of the subordinate to confine and control the encroaching West. This leads to an understanding of studying in the West as an attempt to domesticate and commodify the West.

Summary

Through the discussions in Chapter III and IV, three key themes emerged as the sensitizing concepts for the examination of Japanese students' study abroad experiences: neocolonialism, "internationalization," and *nihonjinron*. First, I presented the larger conceptual framework of the study: my understanding of study abroad as a venue where global and local discourses converge to shape foreign students' experiences. Hence, I examined the three global and local discourses that were related to Japanese students' study abroad in the West. Taking a postcolonial perspective, I discussed study abroad as a manifestation of the global neocolonial discourse. I presented the
juxtaposition of global power dynamics and the flow of foreign students to support the view of study abroad as a by-product of the global hierarchical power structure. Furthermore, I examined the existing neocolonial discourse present between the West and Japan. The discourse of neocolonialism is viewed as the global discourse that needs to be monitored throughout Japanese students' experience in the West.

Second, I turned to the local discourses surrounding study abroad in Japan. The discourse of “Internationalization” was examined as a socio-cultural discourse that created the present popularity of study abroad among Japanese students. The discourse of “internationalization” rendered study abroad an important investment for students’ future career. Furthermore, the critical examination of Japan’s "internationalization" disclosed its nature as a ramification of neocolonial discourse, the discourse of domination (superiority) and subordination (inferiority). “Internationalization” must also be noted as an important local discourse that could shape Japanese students’ experience.

Another local discourse reviewed above is the discourse of nihonjinron. I situated this discourse of Japanese cultural nationalism in the larger framework of essentialist, coercive, and dominative discourse of "Self" and "Others" in Western Orientalist discourse. Nihonjinron, as a discourse in the Foucaudian sense, is influential in disseminating and naturalizing, among the Japanese, the bi-polar and essentialist concept of difference between Japan and the West. Drawing on Yoshino's (1999, 1996, 1992) analyses of nihonjinron, I also showed the close link of nihonjinron discourse with the discourse of "internationalization." As Yoshino demonstrated, nihonjinron could become manifested in a highly cross-cultural context such as study abroad. Furthermore, to demonstrate the manifestation of nihonjinron discourse, I reviewed the existing literatures that examined the representation and image of the West, in particular, Whites in Japanese mass media and society in general. This local ideological discourse must be noted as one of the discourses that can be traced through the Japanese students' experience in Vancouver.
These three discourses have brought to the fore some conceptual understandings of Japanese students' study abroad in the West. First, given the commodity value of “internationalization” in Japan, studying in the West becomes a means for Japanese students to “internationalize” themselves. Second, I argued that the sense of Otherness attached to the West must be understood in terms of both the discourses of neo-colonialism and nihonjinron. This allows for the understandings of the Otherness of the West not only as a difference in a relativistic sense but also as a difference that is deeply embedded in Japan's neo-colonial hierarchical relations with the West. The Otherness of the West for the Japanese must be understood in these double contexts. This leads to the second conceptual understanding of Japanese students' study abroad: study abroad as their attempt to experience and explore the Otherness of the West.

Lastly, the literature reviews have shown that Japan's economic prosperity has enabled the subordinate Japanese to commodify and domesticate the superior West. This understanding leads me to the view of study abroad in the West as the manifestation of their desire to commodify the West for the domestic consumption: “internationalizing” themselves. Combined with the significance of the West as the “Other,” study abroad can be viewed as a means for commodifying and appropriating the Otherness of the West for “internationalizing” themselves. The following interview analyses demonstrate how these three local and global discourses become closely intertwined in the Japanese male students' study abroad experiences and how they negotiate to construct their own experiences in the middle of these discourses.
CHAPTER V
DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The present qualitative study employed participant observation and an interview method as the main means of data collection. The study was inductive; the theories that guided my analysis emerged as I conducted the series of interviews and observations and analyzed the collected data with the input of the participants.

Interview Method

During the period from May to November 1999, I conducted interviews with seventeen Japanese male students studying in Vancouver. Each interview lasted for one and a half-hours to three hours. Follow-up interviews were conducted when it was necessary for further clarifications. All the interviews were conducted at the most convenient and comfortable place for the interviewees, which varied depending on individuals. Some interviews were conducted in my home and my office, some at coffee shops, others in the interviewees' homes. All the interviews were conducted in Japanese, tape-recorded, and transcribed. The interview data was translated in English only when it needed to be used as quotes for this thesis. I did all the transcription and translation of the data.

The interviews took a semi-structured and open-ending format. I created an interview guide that consisted of 29 questions prior to the interviews (See Appendix B). The interviews were flexible. Although I prepared the interview guide, I did not always follow it during the interviews. I tried to let the interviewees speak in the least restricted way. Sometimes the interview was guided more by the stories that interviewees wished to tell me than by my interview schedule. These questions were meant to monitor the manifestation of the aforementioned three key discourses in the Japanese students' experiences: neo-colonialism, "internationalization," and nihonjinron. The interview questions focused on three stages of their study abroad experience: 1) pre-departure
motivation and expectations about the study abroad experience, 2) their experiences during study abroad, and 3) their expectation after the study abroad experiences. In the first stage, my questions centred on their initial motivation and anticipation about their study abroad experiences in Vancouver. In the second stage, I asked them to talk about their study experiences, specifically their socialization and friendship patterns during their stay in Vancouver. Questions in the third stage focused on their expectation upon returning home as a consequence of their study abroad experiences.

Data Collection Strategies

Though I was not aware of my research intention until I started writing the research proposal in January 1999, my socialization with other Japanese students throughout my stay in Vancouver provided me with ample opportunities to sensitize my understanding of Japanese students' experiences. As my research intention became clear, I attempted to expand my friendship network with other Japanese male students. I participated in many social gatherings of Japanese students and through these casual interactions, attempted to grasp their perspective on study abroad experiences. Simultaneously I started taking field notes, which turned out to be a valuable source of information in shaping and organizing the present study.

My immersion in the Japanese students' network provided me with many opportunities to make connections with prospective research participants. Many of those whom I became familiar with through a number of social gatherings expressed their interest in and eventually agreed to participate in my study. My familiarity with some participants prior to the interviews helped reduce the anxiety and tension in the actual interview process. Furthermore, my extended friendship network with other Japanese students also became a valuable source of information for data
triangulation. The accuracy of my data analyses was confirmed by the information that I gained through my casual observations of and conversation with many other Japanese male students that I became acquainted with, including those who were not a part of this study.

Sampling Selection

For the purpose of this study, the interview participants had to meet the following criteria. They had to be Japanese, male, and aged between 20-30. I recruited only male students because of the lack of research on Japanese male students' study abroad experiences. I also intended to examine the specific role of gender in Japanese male students' experiences. I purposely chose those who had been studying in Vancouver for over six months, which I believed would give them sufficient exposure to the new environment. I used a snowball sampling method to recruit Japanese students who met the above criteria. Given the limited number of Japanese students in Vancouver, this method seemed best suited for the present study.

I started the recruiting process with my own Japanese acquaintances and then through them gained access to other Japanese students. Of great importance for recruiting participants for this study was my job as a Japanese language instructor and a teaching assistant at a university. I looked for Japanese volunteers for my class activities. It provided me with opportunities to become familiar with many Japanese students from various backgrounds. This access became vital since it enabled me to become acquainted with prospective research participants and thus to establish a sense of rapport with them ahead of the interviews.

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22 I had approximately 25 Japanese male acquaintances at the time of data analysis.
23 The lack of studies on Japanese male students' study abroad experiences is notable when compared to a large number of studies on Japanese female students' experiences as in Kelsky (1996a, 1996b), Ogawa (1998), and Segawa (1998).
To insure the spontaneity of these students' participation, I asked them for an interview only when they showed some interest in my study. When the participants asked me about the objective of my interviews, I answered that the interviews would attempt to examine these students' study abroad experiences in Vancouver. When students showed some interest in participating in my study, I explained further about the details of the interview: the expected length of an interview, the possibility of another follow-up interview, and the main focus of the interview questions.

Conscious of the dangers of the snowball sampling: it could result in recruiting the same kind of people (Palys, 1997), I intentionally started several different snowballs with different groups of people. This attempt led to a certain level of diversity among the participants in terms of the purpose of their staying in Vancouver and their membership in organizations. The background information of the seventeen participants is shown in Appendix A.²⁴

Research Site

In this section, I discuss two main sites for data collection, interview and observation sites. I considered the participants' comfort level as the utmost priority in the selection of interview locations. Thus, I left the decision entirely to each participant. The locations varied depending on the participants' preference. I interviewed Kazuo, Shōji, Saburō, and Yōhei at my place. At the time of the interviews, I was living in campus housing of the University of British Columbia. Because none of them were students at the university, they were interested in university students' lifestyle and living environment and thus wanted to come to my place. Every time they came to my place for interviews, I cooked lunch or dinner for them prior to the interviews. I interviewed Jirō, Kengo,

²⁴ To maintain the confidentiality of the data, I have included only minimal details about each participant. I have assigned each participant a pseudonym and included the following information: age and institution that each participant studies at.
Masa, and Yūya at their respective places. On my way to their houses, I bought refreshment and light snacks for us to eat during the interviews. The interviews with Gon, Jun, Ryō, and Shinji took place at their English language institute. I interviewed them after classes so that there were nobody in the classrooms where I conducted the interviews. When the participants did not have any particular preference, I suggested my office at University of British Columbia. After eating lunch together and showing them around, I interviewed Takeshi, Toshi, and Yasu at the office. I interviewed Eigo, Saburō, and Shōji at coffee shops near the University of British Columbia.

Participant observation was conducted at various locations as well. From April to November, 1999, while conducting interviews, I spent an extended period of time socializing with the participants. After completing interviews, I visited their houses, joined several parties with them, went out for coffee and dinner, invited them to my place for dinner, and once in a while visited the student dormitory where three exchange students were living and one of the English language institutes where five participants were studying. I also participated in several social events organized by the language institute and the student exchange office, where I met several participants. These occasions provided opportunities to observe the participants interacting with other non-Japanese students. Upon finding me in a crowd, they often approached me and asked me about my research progress and talked about their reflection on the interview experience. Through these causal interactions, I could check the accuracy of my interpretation with the participants. These interactions also enabled me to triangulate my analysis of the interview data with the observations.

Participants

I recruited seventeen participants by a snowball sampling method. The participants came from diverse backgrounds. At the time of interviews, out of seventeen participants, four students
were exchange students at a local university, two participants were studying at a local community college, and eleven students were studying at English language institutes. All the participants had been enrolled in an English language institute at one time in their stay in Vancouver. The six participants who were studying at a college or a university at the time of interviews were initially enrolled in the English language institutes. Except for three exchange students, they had homestayed with a Canadian family, mostly at the beginning of their stay. At the time of the interviews, seven students, who were all studying at an English language institute were homestaying with Canadian families. The eleven participants studying at the English language institutes were on a study abroad program organized by a Japanese agent. The program consisted of homestaying and studying at an English language institute. All the seven participants who were homestaying, were living with a family that the agent assigned them to. Four exchange students were living in campus housing in the local university. Six students (two college students and four ESL students) were living in an apartment or a house (three were living on their own and three were living with other non-Japanese people).

In terms of their educational background in Japan, three had graduated from Japanese universities. Twelve students were second or third-year university students. Two were graduates from a Japanese high school. The average age of the participants was 23 years old. The average length of time spent in Vancouver at the time of interviews was 10.6 months. All the participants cited improving English as the most important goal for their study abroad. The participants’ level of English proficiency varied: some had only “survival” English, a few had the high proficiency sufficient for university lectures. None of them described themselves as fluent in English and all expressed that they needed to improve their English.
Researcher's Role

To develop a sense of rapport sufficient for the participants to comfortably reveal deeper layers of information about themselves, researchers must become aware of the power dynamics that lie between researchers and participants. There are many attributes over which researchers have lesser degree of control such as gender, age, class, and ethnicity (Glesne & Peshikin, 1992). Among these attributes, the most significant in my relationship with the participants was my status as a graduate student in a Canadian university. This factual information about myself reveals far more information than this mere description itself implies. It discloses to the participants my level of education, the extent to which I am supposedly immersed and functional in Canada, and my level of English, in other words, my "internationality." Given the high social value associated with "internationality" in Japanese society as previously discussed, the fact that I am a graduate student in a Canadian university can significantly shape the power dynamics between seventeen participants and myself.

I became aware of the social significance of my status as a graduate student through the pre-research socialization with other Japanese students. In talking with many Japanese students who were studying English in a language institute, I understood their particular reaction to me upon knowing that I was a graduate student and also teaching at a Canadian university. This power dynamics was acutely felt on my first meetings with the participants, when they made the following comments; "your English must be good since you are a graduate student," "you must have many Canadian friends," "which school did you go to in Japan"? and "how did you improve your English to get into a graduate school"? These comments revealed a sense of envy and admiration on their

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25 From July 1998 to April 2000, I taught several Japanese language courses either as a teaching assistant or an instructor at the University of British Columbia.
26 Due to the rigidly hierarchical structure of universities in Japan, the name of a university one graduates from carries a great significance. For detailed discussion on the Japanese hierarchical educational system, See
part that made me aware of my own privileged status and the power relationship between these students and myself. In fact, regardless of participants’ age and status, all of them used polite expressions in talking to me in Japanese, which clearly showed their perception towards me. Thus, it was evident that my privileged status as a graduate student could greatly affect the nature of the interviews.

In addition, my Westernized or “Canadianized” physical appearance seemed salient in shaping the power dynamics between the interviewees and myself. I am rather tall for a Japanese male, 6 feet and 2 inches and I have long hair reaching my shoulders, which is rare among Japanese males. Besides I tend to dress in a rather casual style, which surprised some participants. Many of the interviewees mentioned that I did not look Japanese. Some students even thought that I was a Japanese-Canadian born in Canada or a person of Canadian First Nations and thus kept speaking English until they realized I was Japanese from Japan. Together with my status as a graduate student and English fluency, my Westernized or “Canadianized” appearance might have indicated my familiarity to the West, thus could have affected the power dynamics between the interviewees and myself.

Having realized that this power imbalance could cause them a sense of tension and discomfort in the interview process, I felt the need to establish a sufficient sense of rapport with the interview participants prior to the actual interviews. For this purpose, I spent at least a few hours prior to the interviews with each participant so that they would feel less tension, anxiety, and distance in the interview process. Prior to each interview, I invited the participants for lunch at my place or a restaurant and attempted to familiarize myself with the participants. In many cases, our casual talk over lunch centred on their concerns with regard to their study abroad experience and the


27 In Japanese language, the hierarchical differences such as age and status are expressed through the use of *keigo*: honorific and humble expressions.
improvement of their English. With this regard, my status as a graduate student, who had been in Canada for more than two years, turned out to be useful since many students viewed me as a resource person on these issues. The majority of the participants asked me for advice as to the problems that they were facing in their study abroad experiences. These pre-interview interactions proved to be effective in reducing the distance between the participants and myself.

Data Analysis and Writing

The sensitizing concepts, which have been reviewed in the previous two chapters, provide a particular perspective through which I examined the more than 200 pages of interview transcription. With these key concepts in mind, I coded and categorised the common themes throughout the transcripts. In the following pages, I present the manifestation of these common themes that consistently appeared in the interview records. This does not by any means suggest that all the seventeen Japanese students had identical experiences and perspectives in their study abroad experiences. The interview transcripts revealed rich diversity in their study abroad experiences. Thus, not all the students shared the themes presented below. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to note that some of the themes, by virtue of their repetition, appear to have achieved greater prominence and acceptance than others. The findings of this study focus on these commonly shared themes among the participants. In doing so, I acknowledge the danger of reducing and essentializing their experiences.

Reflexivity

In Chapter II, I have already discussed the concept of reflexivity and presented my personal story of study abroad experience as an attempt to demonstrate my reflexivity as a researcher. In this
section, I further demonstrate my reflexivity by stating the assumptions, theories and perspectives that I brought to the present study. This attempt is crucial since my subjectivity explicitly or implicitly shaped the choices and decisions that I made throughout the research process.

From the beginning of my research, I was cognizant of certain assumptions that I carried in examining Japanese students' study abroad experiences. These assumptions drove me to pay more attention to certain aspects of their study abroad experience, while preventing me from focusing on other aspects. I started my research with a theoretical assumption that study abroad was contested space where global and local ideological discourses would converge and shape the Japanese students' experiences. This assumption led me to identify the local and global discourses surrounding Japanese students' study abroad experience in the West. In addition, I must point out my deep inclination to postcolonial theorists, mainly, Edward Said. As Said and other postcolonial scholars argue, I believe that the legacy of colonialism and imperialism continues to shape the cultural, political, and economic discourses of the contemporary world. In this postcolonial world, any human differences such as cultural, national, "racial," and ethnic differences must be understood in the unequal power structure in which the differences were constructed as such. Based on this postcolonial understanding of human "difference," I assumed the specific gender and "race," and culture and nationality of Japanese students would result in their particular experiences in Vancouver. I attempted to identify their common experiences as Japanese males studying in North America.

Furthermore, I believe that global neocolonial discourses and local nationalistic discourses impose ideological limitations on our epistemology and knowledge. They force us to see the world in a certain way that serves to perpetuate the hegemonic and ideological cause of the dominant. As Said (1995) warns us, the ideological discourse of cultural difference as seen in Orientalism and nihonjinron, can create unnecessary divisions of the world that inevitably leads to tribal, ethnic, and
national conflicts. I believe that education can and should play an important role in eliminating this division of the world. To create an oppression-free society and the conflict-free world, we need to help our students to understand how their epistemology and knowledge are shaped by these local (nationalistic) and global ideological forces. The understanding of close relationship between power and knowledge will enable them to become more vigilant against many forms of oppression such as racism, sexism, and heterosexism. I hope that my study will contribute to this cause.

I, as a critical educator, view the goal of education as fostering students' critical consciousness that liberates them from the hegemonic discourses of “race” and nation. I also believe that study abroad experience has a potential to help students understand the hegemonic and ideological limitations on their knowledge. At the beginning of this thesis, I posed a question, drawing on Said (1995): "Can study abroad provide a transformative learning opportunity that helps students to move beyond the imperial and national ideological discourses of “race” and nation?" This question reflects my belief in the possibility of study abroad experience for helping generate non-hegemonic form of knowledge. Given the significant impact of study abroad experiences on myself, I believe in the transformative possibility of study abroad.

Reliability and Validity

The validity of qualitative research designs depends on the degree to which participants share researcher's interpretations (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). In order to maintain the validity of the study, I employed two techniques, participant review and data triangulation. One of the ways to enhance the validity of qualitative research is to let participants review the data interpretation. Sharing the interpretation of data could lead to the possibility of new interpretations of which a researcher is unaware. After each interview, I spent approximately thirty minutes to one hour to
share with the participants how I interpreted their comments and ask for their opinions. At the later stage of data analysis, I shared the interpretation of the interview data with the participants and asked for their feedback. While some expressed their surprise at my interpretative approach, overall the majority of the participants provided me with affirming comments on my analyses. Data triangulation was accomplished by comparing participants’ comments to my observations on the research participants and other Japanese male students. Triangulation helped confirm my analysis of the interview records and identify discrepancies in my data analysis.

Reciprocity of Research

Qualitative research depends itself on the generosity and volunteerism of the participants. To prevent the exploitative nature of research, researchers must do their best to make their research as reciprocally beneficial as possible. The present study achieved a certain level of reciprocity with the participants. Many participants told me that the interview process helped them to think about and understand their own feelings and experiences in the study abroad experiences. In particular, the sharing of my interpretation of the interviews with the participants, which immediately followed each interview, seems to have been appreciated by the participants. Many participants showed some interest in my interpretation of the data and asked me more about the findings. They found my analytical approach new and appreciated the different perspective through which to re-examine their own study abroad experiences. In fact, many students found the experience of being interviewed interesting and fun and were willing to have a follow-up interview. In this sense, to some degree, the concept of reciprocity was realized in the present study.
Generalizability

The issue of generalizability must be discussed to understand the orientation and objective of the present study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose to replace the positivistic concept of generalization as "rationalistic, propositional, and lawlike" (p. 120) with the concept of "working hypotheses." This concept is based on their belief that no two contexts are exactly the same and thus conditions specific to each context make it impossible to generalize from one context to another. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue, "any generalization is a working hypothesis, not a conclusion." (p. 124) "Working hypotheses" signifies a series of ongoing attempts to expand our horizon of knowledge and reach a larger and more comprehensive and inclusive theory. Thus, any attempt to create knowledge like the present study must be interpreted as a tentative contribution to this larger knowledge construction. Taking this concept of "working hypothesis," I attempt to contribute to the ongoing process towards more comprehensible understandings of foreign students' experiences. This study, drawing on a postcolonial approach to this topic, will add a new insight to the general knowledge base on foreign students' experiences.

All studies are conducted in a specific condition and circumstance that to a certain degree affect the outcome of the studies. Thus, the specific factors involved in the present study such as specificity of time, space, the researcher and participants etc, should not be viewed as undermining the external validity of the study. For others to examine the transferability of the findings of the study to other contexts, it is important to provide "thick description," sufficient information about the context in which I carried out the present investigation (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). The description must provide every specific information necessary for others to understand the findings and transferability of the study. The transferability of the present study to other contexts depends on the similarity of the two contexts, what Guba and Lincoln (1985) term "fittingness" (p. 124).
Limitations of the Study

The presentation of the possible shortcomings of the study is an essential part of making research findings trustworthy, helping readers understand how the findings should be read and interpreted (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Taking this idea, I present the possible limitations of the present study. First, I must note the danger of the snowball sampling method, which was the main sampling method for the present study. Palys (1997) refers to the negative consequence of this method as soliciting a similar kind of participants. Though I started several different snowballs with different groups of people, the limitation of the snowballing sampling method should be noted here.

Another possible cause of limitation lies in the similar situation between the participants and myself as Japanese male students studying in Vancouver. Throughout the research process, due to our shared experiences, I often found it difficult to step outside the participants' epistemological world to take a removed standpoint as a researcher. This similarity could prevent me from exploring alternative interpretations of their experiences. While this could become a shortcoming of the study, my awareness of this danger helped me to become more cognizant of the importance of occasionally taking one step back from the participants' viewpoint. I believe that this awareness allowed me to view things both from the insider's and outsider's perspectives.

The unavailability of follow-up interviews must be noted as a possible source of the shortcoming of the study. Since the majority of Japanese students in Vancouver tend to stay for a short time, it was difficult to find participants who were available for follow-up interviews. In the early stage of my interview, there were a few interviewees who returned home immediately after the interviews. I was unable to solicit co-operation from them and thus failed to conduct follow-up interviews.
Lastly, another possible limitation of the study has something to do with the translation of the interview data from Japanese to English. I initially planned to have another Japanese-English bilingual person check the accuracy of the data translation. However, due to the time and financial constraints, I checked the translation with a bilingual person only when I was not sure about the accuracy of the translation.
CHAPTER VI

DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCT: "CANADIANS"

Introduction

This chapter demonstrates how the three key analytical discourses: neocolonialism, "internationalization" and nihonjinron became closely intertwined through the Japanese students' study abroad experiences. Monitoring these three discourses helped to demonstrate the essentialist binarism between "Self" and "Others" that was manifested in the Japanese students' experiences in the West. I illustrate how the discursively constructed image of the West and its symbolic embodiment, "Canadians" significantly shaped friendship and socialization patterns of the Japanese students.

Internationalizing "Self"

Gon: It might sound strange but I found English so cool. I was not interested in English, as a subject to get into a university but English in conversation, music, and culture was very attractive. I guess that's why I came here.

KT28: What do you mean by cool?

Gon: Everybody says that English is essential for a job. Being able to speak English, like Japanese businessmen, is cool. It is a kind of admiration. After all, I might have been just deceived though.

KT: What do you mean?

Gon: People all say so, even mass media say so.

KT: What do they say?

28 KT are the researcher's initials.
Gon: English is important. With English we can communicate with billions of people. I don't think this is true any more. But I think I was made to believe so. Thus, I find being able to speak English is so cool.

Shinji: In my third year, job-hunting became so important. In job-hunting, it is generally believed that English would give you some advantage. I personally don't strongly believe that though, not to that extent anyway. Nowadays, there are many who speak English, even among Japanese people. So, I view this experience as solidifying my foundation of English so that it would make it easy for me to go overseas once my boss asks me to go overseas.

The current trend of "internationalization" in Japan certainly made the Japanese students aware of the importance of English speaking ability and "international" exposure in Japanese society. As the motivational factor behind their study abroad attempt, the majority referred to the presence of many returnee students in their high schools and universities, who grew up in English speaking countries. These Japanese students expressed a sense of envy and admiration for these returnee students, viewing them as highly "international." Shinji was a third year university student in Tokyo with international commerce and law majors. Most of his classmates were returnee students from Western English speaking countries and were fluent in English. Before job-hunting season started in the spring of 2000, he thought he needed to go abroad to study English so that he could emphasize his "international" experience and English fluency in his job-hunting.

Shinji: Everybody talks nowadays about the internationalization of society. So I thought I should go abroad. And in Japan once you work for a company, there is no way you can quit the job and study abroad. So, it is only now that I can do so.

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29 I call the Japanese male participants "the Japanese students" in this thesis.
30 Koizumi (1999) explains that Japanese men tend to study abroad while they are still students. They study abroad while in vacations or take one-year leave from their Japanese universities so that it will not disadvantage them for being late for job-hunting season. Koizumi explains this tendency as Japanese males conforming to the normative gender role as a breadwinner.
Ryō was also a third year university student in Kyoto with international and comparative culture major. His college was known for a large number of returnee students. Being surrounded by these students who were fluent in English, Ryō was also envious of them and wished to be like them. This "international" environment encouraged him to spend some time overseas. Similarly, Jun, majoring in international economics, had many returnee friends from London and New York, who spoke fluent English. Jun also shared a sense of envy and admiration towards these returnee students;

KT: So they speak English right?

Jun: Probably as good as gaijin.

KT: How did you perceive these people?

Jun: I thought they were cool, I felt envious of them. Also I had a little admiration to them(...)

KT: So you admire them because they speak English fluently?

Jun: Yes, that was when I recognized that English was very important.

The so called "internationalization" of Japanese society has created social pressure upon those who do not possess "international" exposure. For those who grew up in Japan, studying abroad becomes an essential means for catching up with those returnee students and moving ahead of others who are not "internationalized."

Whether studying at a university as an exchange student or as an independent student at an English language school in Vancouver, most of the Japanese students were aware of their limited amount of time in Vancouver. Except for Gon and Kazuo who planned to stay for a few years to complete a bachelor's degree in a Canadian institution, the other students planned to stay in
Vancouver for no more than one year. Thus, throughout their stay in Vancouver, they remained highly conscious of the need to make the best use of their time for “internationalizing” themselves.

Throughout their study abroad experiences, their lives upon returning home seemed to preoccupy these students’ minds. Most of the students cited finding a job as a major concern upon returning home. This was particularly the case for Jun, Masa, Ryō, Shinji, and Toshi who took a one-year leave from their respective Japanese universities to study abroad upon completing their third year. They planned to return home just in time for the job-hunting season in spring, 2000. These students expected that their study abroad experience would improve their future career opportunities in Japan. In the present economic recession in Japan, these students were desperate to arm themselves with anything that would give them some advantage in the forthcoming fierce competition for jobs.31

Most of the students mentioned English language ability as the most important indicator useful for job-hunting. In order to achieve the goal within the limited time span, they needed to be fully exposed to “Canadians,” through which they expected to learn the language skill and knowledge necessary for “internationalizing” themselves. In the following pages, it becomes evident that this desire for “internationalizing” themselves shapes a wide range of these students’ study abroad experiences.

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31 Japanese students with study abroad experience used to be highly marketable due to their English proficiency and “international” perspective. However, the Asahi newspaper reports that due to the recent economic recession, these students also face difficulty in finding a job. The unemployment rate in Japan marked a record high, 4.9 percent in June 1999 (Asahi Shinbun, June 30, 1999).
Discursive Image of the West

Jirō: I was thinking that people in gaikoku are all White people. That's why I thought there would be White people in Vancouver.

KT: So, you are saying that you thought that people in gaikoku were all White people?
Jirō: Yes, something like that.

KT: Sounds like you are limiting the meaning of gaikoku only to Western nations?
Jirō: Yes that's right.

KT: What about, let's say, China? Does it belong to your image of gaikoku?
Jirō: Well, China is in a sense gaikoku but those countries that I wanted to go to were those like the United States, Canada, and European nations.

KT: What was your initial image of Vancouver?

Saburō: I imagined that it would be gaikoku.
KT: What do you mean by gaikoku?

Saburō: You know, if you walk down a street, you will hear English, and there should be many White people.

Gaikoku is a word consisting of two Chinese characters, "outside" and "nation," literally meaning "foreign countries." Its definition is supposed to include all nations outside Japan. However, the way these students used gaikoku shows its limited definition: gaikoku exclusively means Western, particularly English speaking, nations. Therefore, when these students thought about studying abroad, the world outside Japan is the West. The rest of the world was erased from their travel map.

From the students' definition of gaikoku emerges the discursively constructed image of the West. Anything they would experience and see in gaikoku must conjure up a sense of surprise and exoticism, even putting them in a state of culture shock. Thus, gaikoku in their mind is not just any
nations outside Japan but the imaginary "Others," the West where they would explore the complete "Otherness." For example, this expectation was clearly expressed in a postcard that Shōji sent to his parents upon arriving in Vancouver. He remembered writing the following content in the postcard.

Shōji: There are many Japanese, Chinese and Koreans here. It is different from how I had initially imagined. I feel like I am in Japan, living in a Japanese town that I have never gone to.

Contrary to the preconceived image of Vancouver as gaikoku, there are many Asians and Asian Canadians in Vancouver, which unexpectedly made him feel at home in gaikoku, the world of Otherness.

Another important aspect in these students' discursive images of gaikoku is the associated sense of "higher" sophistication and cultural superiority. In the context of study abroad, gaikoku, as destinations for study abroad trips, must be nations that these students perceive as superior to Japan, where they expect to learn something valuable and unavailable at home. In this sense, the West, gaikoku, is not just a world of difference in a relativistic sense. The following comments elucidate the discursive construction of the West, gaikoku, in the way these students initially imagined Vancouver.

Jirō: Gaikoku was always cool places for me. I dreamed of going there.

KT: What countries are you talking about by gaikoku?

Jirō: That is the United States. It is the representative of gaikoku, so first I went to San Francisco.

(...)

Kengo: To put it simply, the reason why I came here, to gaikoku is to make contacts with White people.
KT: Why did you want to make foreign, White friends?

Saburō: I know that the reality is different from the idealized world but it is a world in a movie, where people dance and party over weekends. Things like that.

KT: So, that is, what you call the idealized world?

Saburō: Yes, Yes.

KT: So, you thought you could do things like that once you become a friend with White people.

Saburō: That's right.

Shinji: Before I came here, I was under the impression that all Canadians were White people.

KT: What kind of White people are you talking about?

Shinji: They are tall, blond, their eyes are... How should I put this? They are those who appear in movies. They are slender and good-looking.

For these students, gaikoku, the West becomes a distinctive imaginary world that allures them with the images of wealth, cultural sophistication and advancement. The role of mass media seems significant in shaping this imaginary picture of the West. The West is the virtual world that they had been exposed to in many forms of Japanese media representations of the West. The sense of geographical and psychological distance of the West is clearly demonstrated in the metaphor they used: the West is an idealized world as seen in Hollywood movies. Their destination, Vancouver; was supposed to fit this image of gaikoku: the world of the Otherness where "White people" speak "English" in a "Western" cultural environment. Vancouver was supposed to be a city full of Western style architecture, many large White houses with swimming pools and large well-maintained front yards. No other languages but English should be spoken. In sum, the images of Vancouver that
these students initially embraced, reveal how these students had internalized the essentialized
hegemonic images of Canada as the discursive West.

This essentialized image of the West is widely shared among the Japanese students who
attempt to study abroad. According to Ryō, the study abroad centre that organized his trip held a
preparatory seminar for the program participants in Osaka. There, the organizers repeatedly
emphasized the fact that not all the host families would be like those in American movies. Ryō
explained what a guidebook for studying abroad said on this.

Ryō: Borrowing the exact wordings from the book, it said something like “It is not
realistic to imagine a family with a White mother, a White father, a cute White girl or
boy with big eyes like a doll, living in a large White house with a swimming pool and
green grass yard. Also a car in front of the house.” Something like this.

KT: Was there really such a precaution?

Ryō: It was in a handbook for studying abroad. This is written in almost any books of
this kind, in a section called something like “Common-sense in Home Staying.”

This image of home staying in the West clearly captures the discursive picture of the West in the
mind of the Japanese students. The West is the dreamed world of sophistication, wealth, and beauty,
as depicted in many American movies and Japanese mass media. This idealized image of the West
clearly lies behind these students' motivation and expectation for studying in Vancouver. Through
the study abroad experiences in Vancouver, they expected the full immersion in this dream world of
Otherness. This clearly resembles Western imperialists and Orientalists' expectation for
encountering "pure" "Others" for exotica.
Imaginary West and Real West

Keita: What was your image of Canadians before you came to Vancouver?

Shōji: In terms of race, I thought of White people.

KT: How about anybody other than White people?

Shōji: I never thought about them.

KT: Did you think there would be a lot of Asians in Vancouver?

Jun: It was something that I did not expect. I never imagined there would be this many Asians here. I knew there would be some but I thought there would be half the size of this. It was definitely a surprise.

KT: How did you feel about it?

Jun: I was afraid that people might be speaking languages other than English.

Eigo: The West in general is White. I imagined Canada as the West. So simply the West is same as White. I never think of Asians.

Vancouver was supposed to perfectly match their discursive images of a Western city: "White" people, "the English language" and "Western" culture, the three key components of Western Otherness. Contrary to this discursive West, Vancouver is one of the most multicultural cities in Canada and the world. A large portion of the population consists of immigrants with a concentration of recent Asian immigrants.32 Thus, these students' discursive image of Canada contradicts this reality of Vancouver. Prior to their arrival in Vancouver, some of these students were aware of the

32 In 1996, immigrants consisted of more than one-third of the population in Vancouver Metropolitan Area. For immigrants who lived within this area, 53.5 percent arrived after 1980. This must be understood with the fact that approximately 70-80 percent of the recent immigrants are from Asia, mainly from Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, and South Korea (Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations, 1997).
multicultural nature of Canada. But most of the interviewees were under the impression that the majority of the population in Vancouver would be Whites with "some" "multicultural" population.

After realizing the ethnic diversity in Vancouver, most of the Japanese students viewed it as a positive aspect for their experience. Being able to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds was perceived in a positive manner. Nonetheless, the White majority was essential for Vancouver to remain a city of the discursive West that they desired to explore. Ethnic diversity was welcomed in so far as it did not affect the imaginary picture of Canada as the West. Having witnessed the large presence of Asians and Asian Canadians in this city, many expressed their negative view towards them. Asked about their initial impression once realizing this multicultural reality, all the participants expressed a sense of shock and even disappointment on the gap between their initial idealized picture and the reality of Vancouver.

*Takeshi:* My initial understanding was that Canadians are all White people.

*KT:* What did you feel when you found many Asians here?

*Takeshi:* I was disappointed by that.

*KT:* What was your initial image of Vancouver?

*Saburo:* I thought it was going to be gaikoku.

*KT:* What do you mean by gaikoku?

*Saburō:* If I walk down a street, I will hear English, and there will be many White people.

*KT:* So, with that image you came here, right?

*Saburō:* (laugh). There are many Chinese.

*KT:* How did you feel about it?

*Saburō:* I was rather disappointed.
Shōji: My image of Canada has long been a White country. So I thought if I come to Canada, I should be able to live with a White family. It was not a sense of admiration towards White people or anything. It was more like an automatic assumption, Canada = White people. If I come to Canada, I should be meeting White people. So, if my host family were immigrants, I would have felt strange.

These comments illustrate the students’ uncritical internalization of hegemonic view of Canada as a White nation. The presence of a familiarity, Asians and Asian Canadians in the West prevented them from fully enjoying the sense of being in gaikoku, the world of Otherness, thus disappointing them.

The prospect of living and studying with "Canadians" was a significant factor in most of these students’ decision to study in Canada. Studying abroad becomes a means through which these students can enter the dream world of the West, the world of the Otherness. The close association of Canada with White people is the primary condition on which their exploration of Canada becomes valuable and rewarding. Undoubtedly, the breach of this association causes a sense of shock and disappointment for these students.

Throughout their study abroad experiences in Vancouver, even after acknowledging the multicultural nature of the city, the majority of the students continued to cling to their initial desire to explore "Canada," the discursive West. Even after having befriended many non-White Canadians who were either born or had long lived in Canada, the initial assumption of Canada as a White nation remained significant in their minds. For them, the large presence of non-White citizens in this city rendered Canada into something different from their initial image of the "true" Canada. The "true" essence of Canada was believed to exist somewhere in this country where White dominance would

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33 What I mean by “familiarity” is people and things that are not a part of the discursive image of the West, the “Other” to the Japanese students. It particularly refers to Asian people and things that these students tended to assume to be culturally similar to themselves.
still remain intact. After spending ten months as an exchange student, Kengo and Tatsuo made the following comments.

Kengo: I still feel that somewhere in this country, there is Canada that I initially imagined, where only White people are living.

Tatsuo: Most of people in my dorm seem to be immigrants. They are not those who have been living in Canada from their grandparents' generation. So, I was disappointed because I felt I would not be able to experience true Canada.

Many others also stated that "true" Canadians were those who had lived in Canada for many generations. As seen in this comment, they avoided using an explicitly racialized definition of "authentic" Canadians. Their racially specific definition of "Canadians" was expressed through seemingly non-racialized expressions such as "native English speakers," "those who were born in Canada thus in Canadian culture," and "those who have lived in Canada for several generations or from the grandparents' generation." However, their interchangeable uses of "true Canadians" and "native English speakers" with "hakujin (Whites)," shows how these non-racial terms were often used to refer specifically to a racially specific group of population. In their imagination, only White people are the "true" carriers of the "Canadian essence."

Purifying the West

In the discourse of Western Orientalism, the images of "Self" and the "Other" become purified and homogenized so that they demarcate a clear gap. With a view of Vancouver as a Western city: a world of "Otherness," the city was essentialized and homogenized to be "purely"
Western. The West should not contain any similarities with Japan; impure (non-western) components must be eliminated from the West.

Contrary to this essentilized images of the West, Vancouver boasts a large number of Asian Canadians. The Japanese students assumed that Asians, including other Japanese students, were, regardless of their nationalities and birthplaces, too culturally and physiologically similar to conjure up a sense of "Otherness" and exoticism. The majority of the students juxtaposed other Asian and Asian Canadian immigrants with "Canadians," referring to the former as *uchira, nakama,* and *nihonteki,* "those inside, comrades, and Japanese-like" as opposed to the latter as *acchi, karera,* and *gaijin,* "those over there, them, and foreigners." These two groups were clearly distinguished according to the assumed sense of proximity to and distance from Japanese "Self."

*Gaikoku* was supposed to be the world of the "Other." Thus, those who belong to "us" are irrelevant in *gaikoku.* They have no role to play in this purified picture of the West. Naturally, these students tended to view things and people that did not fit in their imaginary picture of the Western "Others" as stumbling blocks for their objective of immersing themselves in the "truly" Western world.

*KT: How did you initially think it would be in Vancouver?*

*Takeshi: I imagined there would be only White people and like, if I walk in downtown, I thought I would not hear any other languages than English. But the reality is that it is almost always that we hear other languages like Chinese and Korean. I did not expect things like this at all. I thought people would be speaking English only. I did not expect to be speaking Japanese this much, either. Well, the reality was just different from how I had imagined.*

I interviewed Jirō after he had spent ten months in Vancouver, two weeks before he returned to Japan. Reflecting on his friendship group, which consisted mostly of Asian international and Asian Canadian students, he made the following comment:
Jirō: I feel like this is not how it was supposed to happen.

KT: What do you mean?

Jirō: Yes, to some degree, I should have been able to make more White friends.

Takeshi and Jirō's comments reveal their sense of disappointment for not being able to immerse themselves in the preconceived images of gaikoku, the West. They felt that the presence of familiar people and things, like Japanese, other Asians, Asian Canadians, and their languages and cultures would undermine the atmosphere of the Otherness of the West, which they had dreamed of experiencing in Vancouver.

Furthermore, some even found things associated with Asians undesirable in the West, as seen in the following three remarks;

Toshi: I came as far as to gaikoku, and then I found that there are many Taiwanese here.

KT: Were you disappointed?

Toshi: Well, I was disappointed. I came all the way to gaikoku and then why is it like this, you know.

KT: How did you feel when you found out that there are a lot of Asian immigrants in Vancouver?

Jirō: I was rather shocked. I wondered why there are this many Asians here. I find it strange.

KT: What do you mean by "strange"?

Jirō: In my mind, I expected the same situation as in the States. As you know, there are many Whites and Blacks in the States. So, I expected it is gonna be the same. But the fact is that more than half of the people are Chinese. I wonder if this is really gaikoku. It is almost like living in Asia.
Kazuo: As you know, the purpose for my coming here is to improve my English and, at the same time, to absorb Canadian culture. Nonetheless, Chinese culture has entered this city, and Canadian culture got mixed with it. Wherever I may go to, like at my school, people are all Chinese. They are irrelevant. I have not met the kind of race (jinshu) that I imagined.

KT: Are you talking about White people?

Kazuo: That's right. Having seen these irrelevant and unexpected people, I felt something was wrong. That's why, I was concerned that my life would go into a negative direction.

The presence of “familiarity” in Vancouver obstructed them from enjoying the sense of living in gaikoku, the West where they expected to be immersed among “Canadians.”

The large presence of Japanese students certainly prevented these students from enjoying the sense of being in gaikoku. Many expressed their disappointment upon finding out the large number of Japanese people in Vancouver. According to these students, any of the English language schools that these students attended had a significant number of Japanese students. While many acknowledged that socializing with other Japanese students contradicted their initial objective of studying abroad - being immersed among “Canadians” - most of them ended up spending much time with other Japanese peers.

Dreaming of studying in gaikoku, Ryō took one-year leave from his Japanese university. This means that he would enter the job market one year later than others at his age. Given the significance of age in the Japanese job market, delaying graduation by one year could cause him a disadvantage. Thus, he was desperate to make full use of the limited time in Vancouver to make himself more marketable, “international.” However, the large presence of “us” stopped him from fully enjoying the benefit of studying abroad.

Ryō: Walking down a street, I hear the Japanese language. When I realized this, I thought I should have gone to Calgary or somewhere.
KT: Why do you not want to hear Japanese?
Ryō: Because I came as far as to gaikoku.
KT: Can you elaborate on that more?
Ryō: I delayed my graduation by one year to come here. But here I feel as if I were in Japan, especially when I hear the Japanese language in town.

He regretted that he had chosen Vancouver instead of Calgary, which he believed would have fewer Japanese people. The familiarity of other Japanese students ruined the Otherness of Vancouver, which would have made his study abroad experience worthwhile.

Most of the students experienced conflicting feelings towards socializing with other Japanese students. While they needed some Japanese friends for psychological comfort, they did not desire to make too many Japanese friends. Eigo spent much of his time with other Japanese friends. The following comment illustrates dilemmas many students faced as to socializing with other Japanese students.

Eigo: There were conflicting feelings in me. They are Japanese that I met here, they are new friends so it was fun to hang out with them but I was feeling inside that I did not come here to speak Japanese. “What am I doing here?” So, on one side there was me who was enjoying time with them, on the other side, there was me who was mad.

KT: What were you mad at?
Eigo: I was mad at myself, I knew that I did not have a strong will. Before I came here, I thought I would not need any Japanese friends and did not want to be in a situation where I spoke Japanese. Despite that, I found myself hanging out with Japanese friends and speaking Japanese. I was doing a completely different thing from what I initially wanted to do here.

The unexpected presence of “us” in gaikoku disappointed the Japanese students who dreamed of exploring the “pure” West. This disappointment clearly reveals their desire to
experience the discursive West that is essential for “internationalizing” themselves. Despite their
new realization that Canada is multicultural, the Japanese students clung to the purified image of
“Canada” and continued to desire it throughout their experience in Vancouver.

The Otherness of "Canadians"

In this section, first, I discuss the manifestation of nihonjinron discourse in the way the
Japanese students understood cultural, national, and “racial” differences between Japanese “Self”
and Canadian “Others.” The internalization of this discourse drove the Japanese students to view
“Canadians” as culturally discontinuous "Others." I demonstrate how the artificial sense of
Otherness became constructed in the way the Japanese students perceived the West and more
specifically "Canadians" and "Canadian" women. In doing so, I examine this Otherness from two
analytical perspectives: in view of neocolonial discourse and nihonjinron discourse. This attempt
leads to the multiple understandings of Otherness that the Japanese students attached to "Canadians."
Lastly, I demonstrate the material significance of the symbolic sense of Otherness on the way the
Japanese students interacted with "Canadians" and non-Canadians.

 Manifestation of nihonjinron

The Otherness of “Canadians” needs to be discussed by juxtaposing it with the manifestation
of nihonjinron discourse. As discussed in Chapter IV, the Japanese belief in the “particularity” and
“uniqueness” of Japaneseness underlies the preconceived notion of discontinuity of Whites from the
Japanese (Befu, 1993, Yoshino, 1999). The majority of the Japanese students, though to a various
degree, showed their internalization of nihonjinron discourse. They often used expressions such as
nihon-teki (very Japanese), nihon-dokutoku (unique to Japan), and yuniku (unique). The belief in the
uniqueness of Japanese emerged particularly when they attempted to explain the cultural difference between Canada and Japan or Canadians and the Japanese. All the students held the view of the Japanese as a homogeneous, mono-cultural, mono-racial nation, which was contrasted to Canadian multiculturality. Ryō and Tatsuo epitomized the general perception of the Japanese students on Japanese homogeneity.

Ryō: I think that Japan is the country where people can have the clearest idea of what gaikoku (foreign countries) mean. This is because once one goes outside the island, then one is in gaikoku. This is because other than Ainu34 and Koreans35 in Japan, we are an almost homogeneous ethnic group and use one language. So, once we go outside, then we face other ethnic groups who used other language. (...) In this sense, the Japanese are an ethnic group that could have a strong awareness of being in gaikoku, the moment they are outside the nation.

Tatsuo: Japan has a clear linguistic and physical boundary. English did not enter Japan till just recently. There have been very few influxes of people from other cultures in Japan. Other cultures have hardly entered Japan. In this sense, Japan has a clear boundary. Japan is homogeneous.

Like Ryō and Tatsuo, the majority of the Japanese students strongly believed in the cultural and “racial” homogeneity of Japan. Their explanations are reminiscent of the assertion of Japanese cultural and “racial” purity often discussed in nihonjinron discourse.

Many other students talked about Japanese cultural items such as samurai, tatami mats, and geisha, etc in explaining Japan's cultural “uniqueness.” Talking about the cultural difference between Japan and Canada, Ryō provided the following:

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34 Ainu are the Japanese indigenous people who originated in the Northern part of Japan. In 1986, the population of the Ainu in Hokkaido (the northern island of Japan) was 24381 (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999).
35 Koreans form the largest ethnic minority group in Japan. In 1994, Korean nationals numbered 688,144. When naturalized ethnic Koreans and Japanese nationals with a Korean parent are included, the number approaches 1.2 million (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999).
Ryō: Nothing is really Canadian. Things here are shared by all English speaking nations. But when we think of Japanese culture such as kawara roof, tatami mat, Japanese culture does not really apply to any other nations. It is also different from Chinese and Korean cultures.

These cultural items were viewed as representing the "uniqueness" of Japanese culture since there is nothing similar to them in the West. As discussed in Chapter IV, the assertion of Japanese uniqueness is possible only when Japan is contrasted to the West. These students seemed unaware of the similarity of Japanese culture to other Asian cultures.

In *nihonjinron* discourse, Japanese cultural “uniqueness” is often used to explain Japan’s economic miracle. Yōhei attributed Japan’s economic success to a cultural aspect unique to Japan, persistence (*shitsuyōsa*). He argues that this particular characteristic is unique to the Japanese. His explanation revealed the essentialist and dichotomistic understanding of cultural difference between the West and Japan:

*Yohei: For instance, a long time ago, Korean mission came to Japan. (...) They recorded things they found out in Japan. In the record, they said that in Japan, people plow a rice field up to the heaven. What they meant by that is tanada. The Japanese grow rice even on deep slopes deep in mountains. I forgot who said this but the person was saying that this example shows the Japanese persistence. I agree with this person. This persistence, or skillfulness is essential in adapting and developing high technology. Also, the Japanese have achieved their success by eliminating mistakes (*gentenhō*). In Western thinking, or a continental thinking, they try to develop what one can do and try to foster one’s individuality. But in Japan, people try not to make mistakes. This leads to the Japanese persistence (*shitsuyōsa*).*

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36 For example, in the late 1980s, in the peak of Japan’s economic prosperity, then prime minister Nakasone compared racial homogeneity of Japan to the heterogeneity of the United States and attributed Japan’s success to the racial homogeneity.
Gon also expressed a strong awareness of Japanese "uniqueness." He often emphasized the "uniqueness" of Japan, the Japanese and Japanese culture in explaining the cultural difference between Japan and Canada and also intercultural problems he faced in Vancouver. I asked him to articulate what he meant by Japanese "uniqueness."

Gon: As we know, since Japan is an island nation, there has not been much influx of other people and culture. In this sense, the Japanese are ethnically homogeneous. In this isolated island, over the past 1000 and 2000 years, we created a unique culture, something peculiar to the Japanese. For example, sometimes Japanese common-sense cannot be understood in the world, right? If you go overseas and apply the Japanese common-sense, we will be in a trouble.

KT: Have you experienced any trouble because of that?

Gon: So far, I have not. I have read many books on this issue and try not to think according to Japanese common-sense.

Gon’s comment epitomizes the Japanese students’ tendency to internalize nihonjinron. The Japanese are so "unique" that non-Japanese do not share their common-sense. In other words, this can lead to the assumption that we are so different from “Canadians” that communication with “Canadians” will be difficult. This remark clearly confirms Yoshino’s (1999) argument discussed in Chapter IV.

Similarly, Kazuo talked about his difficulty in socializing with hakujin, Whites. Asked the reason for this difficulty, He discussed the “uniqueness” of the Japanese and their culture.

Kazuo: I think that Japan is different from other nations in the world.

KT: How?

Kazuo: Though China and Korea are sort of similar to Japan, they do not have anything particular to themselves.

KT: What do you mean?

Kazuo: Japan has its own unique colour (dokutoku no iroga aru).
KT: What do you mean by colour (iro)?

Kazuo: For instance, TV programs in Japan. They are so uniquely Japanese and people are making fuss about them. You don’t see anything like this anywhere else. We have something uniquely Japanese, our culture and fashion as well. Though I have not been to China or Korea, I don’t think they have anything like this. I don’t think they have anything unique to them. Or they might... I am not too sure but they are not as unique as Japanese.

Furthermore, he referred to his friends from South Africa, Canada, Eastern Europe as saying that Japan is unique. These friends’ comments further reinforced his preconceived belief in Japanese “uniqueness.”

Kazuo: The fact is that there are many people who say this (Japan is unique.). It is not just one or two people saying this. That’s why, as I thought, the Japanese are unique (dokutoku) as a group.

The manifestation of nihonjinron discourse must be understood in combination with the Japanese students’ tendency to “otherize” “Canadians.” As discussed in Chapter IV, Yoshino (1999) argues that the sensitivity to their own uniqueness leads to the assumption that intercultural communications with non-Japanese are difficult due to "our" difference from "them." The awareness of the Japanese “uniqueness” serves to intensify the sense of discontinuity from "Canadians," the Otherness of "Canadians." The operation of nihonjinron discourse must be taken into consideration in understanding the Otherness of “Canadians” discussed in the following pages.
Authenticity of "Canadians"

Many Japanese students used adjectives such as "real," "pure," and "authentic" to refer to "Canadians." This seems to be because of the presence of non-White Canadians that must be distinguished from "Canadians." The "authenticity" and "purity" of "Canadians" are largely determined by the degree of difference and distance from the Japanese and Asians. For Toshi, his "Canadian" host family represents the image of what he called "100% Canadians." He describes what made this family "authentic Canadians."

KT: What do you mean by 100% Canadian? What are the conditions to become 100% Canadians in your image?

Toshi: I have my host-family in my mind.

KT: Tell me about them.

Toshi: They use their throat in a different way when they speak English.

KT: You mean the way they speak?

Toshi: Yes, it is different.

KT: Anything else?

Toshi: They are not considerate to others.

KT: Anything else? Are they White people?

Toshi: Yes, they are. (...) They are different in the way they behave and express themselves from the Japanese.

Furthermore, in explaining his different feeling with "real Canadians" from with other non-White Canadians, Toshi mentioned many aspects of "truly" Canadian lifestyles in his "Canadian" host-family: the family sleeping on a couch with their shoes on, a dirty floor in the living room, no curtains on windows. He maintained that these were something rarely seen in Japanese, Asian and
Asian Canadian families, thus the images of "real Canadians." Therefore, the “authenticity” and "purity" of "Canadians" are based on the assumed Otherness from the images of Asians and Japanese. Only those who enable them to experience Otherness, are entitled to the “authenticity” of "Canadians."

This sense of discontinuity from "Canadians," the "Other," excludes any images of familiarity. "Canadians" who speak the Japanese language or who know Japanese culture are not considered to be "real" Canadian. The "real" Canadians must not have any knowledge about "us." For example, Gon came to know a "Canadian" man who was interested in Japanese culture and who spoke some Japanese language. Even though Gon was desperate to make a "Canadian" friend, Gon found it difficult to call him a "real Canadian." According to Gon, when "Canadians" are interested in things Japanese, it becomes too easy for him to become friends with them. These are rare "Canadians" and the majority of them do not show any interest in things Japanese. Thus "real Canadians" are not supposed to have any connections with Japanese: they must be distanced and even cold to these students. A true sense of accomplishment comes only when he can finally get along with these "real Canadians." Things and people that are a part of "us" are viewed as non-Canadian and as an obstacle for their exploration of the Otherness of the West.

By constructing the essentialized image of the West, "Canadians" as the "Other," these students developed an exaggerated and false sense of difference with regard to things and people in the West. "Canadians" were discursively constructed as the complete "Other" that would possess opposing natures in all senses. They have to be at the opposite end from the Japanese in all possible ways: "race," culture, language, lifestyle, and ways of thinking, etc. "Real" Canadians are exclusively those who make the Japanese students feel the symbolic distance from them. Borrowing Lindstrom's (1995) words, any signs of similarity in "Canadians" must be avoided and explained away in terms that maintain the clear division between Japanese "Self" and Canadian "Others."
Hierarchical Sense of Otherness

The sense of Otherness that the Japanese students attached to "Canadians" must also be understood by putting it in the hierarchical power structure in which the difference of "Canadians" becomes constructed. Any human differences are not merely differences in a relativistic sense but exist on the basis of unequal power structures that add sociological significance to human differences in "race," culture, gender, class, and sexual orientation. These differences constructed on the basis of the power disequilibrium, could create an oppressive force to those who are situated in a subjugated position in the power structure.

The Japanese students acutely experienced this oppressive force in their relationship with "Canadians," in particular, in the area of physical appearance. Many students cited the difference of appearance as one of the most significant factors that contributed to their sense of difference from "Canadians." The majority of the Japanese students viewed "Canadians" as beautiful, good-looking and physically superior, basing their judgement entirely on a Eurocentric aesthetic norm. They tended to uncritically apply this seemingly neutral norm as an absolute fact in understanding their own difference from "Canadians."

Most of the students assumed that Western physical characteristics such as blond hair, blue eyes, fair skin to be aesthetically superior to those of Japanese. However, as I asked them for the rationales for the Western aesthetic superiority, some students started questioning the neutrality of the aesthetic norm. Jun and Toshi revealed their understanding of the hegemonic impact on the Japanese students' perceptions towards "Canadians."

*Jun: A friend of mine asked me to introduce a White woman to him.*

*KT: Did the person specifically ask you for a White person?*
Jun: Yes.

KT: Why do you think people ask you things like that?

Jun: In my opinion, it is because of the media influence. Those actresses in Hollywood movies are specially selected beautiful people but Japanese people have admiration towards those people.

KT: Are you talking about Japanese men or women?

Jun: I mean both. If you look at models in magazines, they are most likely to be gaijin, White people. That's why they have admiration for these people.

Toshi: Through TV, a good image of White people is implanted in our minds. The reason why we have a good image of gaijin is because of the movies.

KT: Sure.

Toshi: They are depicted as cool, we cannot help but admit that they have good talent to make good movies. They do good acting that would move us. Actors and actresses are mostly White people in American Hollywood movies. In this way, we create certain images of White people.

Eigo also revealed his awareness of the neo-colonial discourse between Japan and the West. He used a relationship between a fan and a singer to explain the sense of distance that he experienced with "Canadians."

Eigo: To me, Westerners have been those in movies and magazines up until I came here, since I did not have any gaijin friends in Japan. And then I came over here and saw many actual White people. Let me give you an example. Here is a Japanese singer that you like. But there is naturally a sense of distance between the singer and you as one of his fans. There is also a sense of admiration on your side, right? Then you happen to have a chance to meet this singer. In this case, do you think you could feel comfortable and become a close friend with the singer instantly? I don't think so. The relationship remains to be the one between a singer and a fan. In the same way, suddenly you have chances to meet those you have seen only in movies, those in different culture. Could you get along immediately? I cannot help but feel some sense of distance from them.
Eigo's juxtaposition between a singer-fan relationship and himself-"Canadians" relationship brilliantly shows his clear awareness of the hierarchical Otherness of "Canadians." Many other students also made a similar point. Kazuo, Yasu and Takeshi expressed their image of "Canadians" as those who looked like famous actors in movies. For these students, much in the same way as singers and movie stars seemed distanced and living in a different world, so did "Canadians." They became subconsciously aware of this hierarchical distance in their sense of difference with "Canadians." Thus, it is not merely in a culturally relativistic sense but also in a vertical, hierarchical sense that "Canadians" were experienced to be distant from the Japanese students.

The sense of admiration towards "Canadians" naturally led them to feel a sense of cultural and physical inferiority. The inferiority complex also affected the way these students perceived and socialized with "Canadians." Particularly, Kengo had an acute sense of inferiority specifically in his Asian appearance in comparison to "Canadians." This sense of inferiority further encouraged him to experience a strong sense of discontinuity from "Canadians."

_Kengo: When I am with Asians, at least there is one less concern than with White people. (When I am with White people) there is awareness that we do not look cool compared with them. Don't you have the concern that some day they might say you are not cool or something?_

_KT: You are not cool?_

_Kengo: Yes, because if I were a White person, I would say so to a Japanese guy, things like, "you little Japanese boys." On the other hand, when I am with Asians, there is no concern like that. We are about the same height and we have the same flat faces._

Tatsuo also shared a sense of inferiority complex towards "Canadians."
Tatsuo: At the beginning, I could not really get myself understood in English and I found it difficult to understand White people. In such a case, I had to depend more on visual information. Then, I felt a strong sense of inferiority.

As seen in these comments, in the existing hierarchical relations of human differences, the mere presence of "Canadians" could create an oppressing force to these students. "Canadians" are not simply one kind of foreigners but they must be understood as an essential part of the discursive image of the West. These students tended to internalize the neocolonial discourse, in particular, on human beauty and consequently view "Canadians" as the highest standard against which they measured themselves. This confirms the existing literature on hierarchical cultural and racial difference between Japan and the West reviewed in Chapter IV.

This assumed hierarchical difference led these students to feel a sense of tension and challenge in associating with "Canadians." For instance, Shinji found "Canadians" unapproachable, especially on his first meeting with them.

Shinji: Before I talk to them, at a party or something, I wonder what I should do. The person looks cool, so I get worried that he or she might be stuck up. But once I actually talk to them, they could be very casual and unexpectedly be willing to listen to my story and to share their own stories as well. In that case, I don't feel inferior to them. But before talking to them, I cannot help feeling the inferiority since I don't know how they would respond to me and they look apparently different from the Japanese.

The image of "Canadians" as aesthetically and culturally superior and as incomprehensible "Others" had a significant impact on the way Shinji perceived and socialized with "Canadians." The mere presence of "Canadians" becomes an intimidating and oppressive force that Shinji and other Japanese students acutely experienced. This also means that mere socialization with "Canadians" requires a great deal of courage and determination. As discussed later, for some students, this sense of
challenge paradoxically becomes a source of motivation to seek and desire "Canadians" for self-transformation.

Instead of being passively engulfed by the oppressive neocolonial discourse, many students showed their understandings of the operation of the hegemonic forces that contributed to their sense of difference with regards to "Canadians." Jun presented an explanation as to his sense of aloofness from "Canadians," referring to the impact of Western dominance that has been established since the era of Western imperial expansion.

*Jun: It must have something to do with the fact that Europe used to colonize Asia.*

*KT: Can you elaborate on that more?*

*Jun: Because of the past history, Europeans are still arrogant. For example, even if I greet them, sometimes they don’t treat me well like as if they were saying "these guys are Asians." Of course not all of them are like this though. But I have experienced cases like that several times. That’s why I think it has something to do with the past history.*

Jun applied this explanation to the sense of distance that he felt from "Canadians" and European students he met at the language school. This comment reveals his understanding of the continuous legacy of Western domination and its impact onto his present feeling of gap from "Canadians."

Shōji was also acutely aware of the hierarchical distance between the West and Japan. He explained why many Japanese students, including himself, desire to live with a "Canadian" family.

*Shōji: This could apply to myself but we subconsciously feel that White people are above us, they have higher status. Subconsciously I tend to feel that White people are placed higher than the Japanese are.*

Shōji further explained his sense of vertical distance from "Canadians" by connecting it to the past history, specifically to Japan’s defeat in World War II.
Shōji: I think it has a lot to do with the past history. For instance, when I was little, adults around me mostly had war experience, like my parents and teachers. Through their wartime experience, they were aware that while Japan was poor, the opponent, White countries were leading a very wealthy life. On many occasions, parents and teachers inadvertently revealed this mentality of inferiority and children were subconsciously exposed to it. I think that this is something we all have at the bottom of our consciousness.

Tatsuo talked about his different impressions about "Canadians" and Asian Canadians. He explained this from a broader historical perspective. He attributed his preferential treatment of "Canadians" to Japan's hierarchical relationship with the West.

Tatsuo: Japan has accepted European cultures and philosophy and modified them in our own way. Probably, in the same way, we might be thinking that being associated with Europeans, White people would benefit us.

KT: What kind of benefit?

Tatsuo: There is an image that they could have new ideas and they are culturally and technologically advanced. This kind of image is certainly operating. On the other hand, there is another image that Asians come to Japan to study, in other words, they one-sidedly learn from us and thus we cannot expect any benefits, anything to learn from them.

Tatsuo revealed his awareness of the vertical gap between Japan and the West that made him experience a sense of distance from them. Yōhei, having taken some sociology courses, used a sociological concept of "Whiteness" to explain why he could not develop intimate friendships with the Whites.

Yōhei: It is because Whites tend to be depicted as superior. The image of Whiteness gets implanted into our minds. In other words, this means that Asians and Africans are viewed as inferior. We subconsciously accept this kind of message. My experience (that I did not have any close White friends) might prove this point.
With the help of the sociological concept, Yōhei realized the significance of the hegemonic oppressive force behind "Whiteness" that made it difficult for him to feel close and comfortable with "Canadians."

What has been commonly seen in the above comments is these students' awareness of the manifestation of neocolonial discourse in their sense of difference from "Canadians." While they were unaware of this oppressive discourse in their daily study abroad experiences, when asked to explain their particular feeling and attitude towards "Canadians," many gradually became cognizant of the oppressive force that affected their experiences. The discursive construct of "Canadians," which is based on its assumed difference from "us," must also be understood in this vertical sense of difference.

Otherness of "Canadian" Women

_Yōhei:_ Since I have not got really close with White women, I cannot feel them (White women) as people.

_Shinji:_ I often find White women are attractive but never thought of dating with them.

_Ryō:_ I do have admiration towards White women because they look different. They are physically large. This is a big difference. Also, they are more friendly. Skin colour is also different. Basically everything is different. Other than the fact that they are women, they don't have anything common with Japanese women. They are different in language, appearance, and facial structure. I think it is natural that we get attracted to these women. They are special and something different from Japanese women. That's why no doubt I find them attractive.
The Japanese students expressed a strong sense of distance from "Canadian" women. Few students had any associations with "Canadian" women throughout their study abroad experiences. The Otherness of "Canadian" women was discursively constructed in the intricate combinations of gendered and racialized discourses surrounding Japanese men and "Canadian" women in the cross-cultural context.

With the Eurocentric aesthetic standard that the Japanese students internalized, "Canadian" women became the highest standard of beauty, being overtly glorified and sexualized. Studying in the West was expected to provide the Japanese students with abundant opportunities to meet "Canadian" women. The majority of the students entertained an idea of being associated or being romantically involved with "Canadian" women. Even prior to their departure, "White women" was one of the topics that these students often discussed with their peers in Japan. Shinji, Ryō and Kazuo provided typical examples of this kind.

Shinji: My friends said to me "let's have a gaijin party." They also asked me what kind of girls I will be bringing back. (...) They must have imagined White, blond, and nice body women.

Ryō: In the same way I imagined before, many of my friends did not know that Canada was racially diverse. So they often said to me that I could date with White girls, something like that.

Prior to his departure to Vancouver, Kazuo remembered talking with his peers about a possible romantic encounter with a White woman in Canada.

Kazuo: They would say something like, there could be a chance to see White girls, and you are lucky. Didn't anybody tell you that? Probably somebody must have told you.
These Japanese men tended to render White women as objects for romantic and sexual desire. They viewed Canada as a White country where these study abroad students could enjoy the possible romantic encounter with glorified "Canadian" women.

The attraction to "Canadian" women was continuously manifested throughout their study abroad experiences. Some actively sought associations with "Canadian" women. For instance, Kengo constantly attempted to talk to "Canadian" women. Upon arriving in Vancouver, his goal was to talk to at least one "Canadian" woman a day. He found it thrilling and exciting to make a contact with "Canadian" women. In a similar manner, Kazuo, after spending two years in Vancouver, expressed his strong fascination with "Canadian" women.

Kazuo: I just feel like talking to White women, regardless of their age, don't you agree with me?

Jun also recognized his attraction to "Canadian" women. Asked why he was attracted to "Canadian" women, he explained the general tendency of Japanese men to desire White women.

Jun: Having seen many beautiful White women in movies and other forms of media, many Japanese men admire White women.

White women were glorified as a ultimate symbol of human beauty to the extent that they were rendered "objects" to see, rather than living human beings with individuality and personality. Many students expressed their irresistible desire to watch and appreciate White women. Kengo enjoyed going to a nearby student dormitory where there were many "Canadian" students. He enjoyed seeing "Canadian" female students while eating at the cafeteria.
Kengo: When I go to the cafeteria, I cannot even look at foods. Many beautiful girls are there.

He further explained the particular attractiveness that “Canadian” women possessed for him.

Kengo: When I see White women, there is this sense of enchantment emerging from inside my body. It just makes me wonder why these people are so beautiful.

Saburō and Shinji also talked about their attraction to “Canadian” women.

Saburō: Since I grew up in the countryside, I did not have any chance to see them. Then now, I have many chances and I could not help looking at them.

Shinji: The sexual attractiveness of White women is different. White women are more curved and sexier than Japanese women are. Also, just seeing them walking, they emit some kind of alluring aura.

The glorified image of White women takes away any sense of humanity from them, turning them into overtly beautified and sexualized objects that these students only enjoy observing from a distance. The extreme glorification of “Canadian” women objectifies them and strips them of any trace of humanity, thus rendering them the complete “Others.” Kazuo and Yōhei, among others, exemplified this point.

Kazuo: They do not seem to be humans, more like rare things, dolls, and ornaments.

Yōhei: Since I have not got really close with Canadian women, I cannot feel them as people.
The glorification of "Canadian" women drove these students to view them not as same humans but as objects to appreciate. This point confirms Ma (1996), Tsuruta (1989), and Wagatsuma's (1968) arguments discussed in Chapter IV, that the admiration and glorification of White women could lead to the objectification and dehumanization of these women. As Tsuruta (1989) explains, Japanese men's admiration towards White women results from their belief that Whites are the physical embodiment of superior Western culture to Japanese.

Furthermore, the sense of symbolic Otherness of "Canadian" women becomes clearer in examining the way these students compared Asian women with White women. In describing the difference between Asian, Japanese women and "Canadian" women, many employed two different adjectives, cute (kawaii) and beautiful (kirei, utsukushii). In the following quote, Yasu explained why he could not imagine any relationships with "Canadian" women.

_Yasu: Japanese women are more like cute, rather than beautiful. But White women are more like beautiful instead of being cute._

The adjective "cute," (kawaii) is generally used to describe the attractiveness of living creatures such as humans and animals. In a clear contrast, "beautiful," (utsukushii or kirei) connotes the aesthetic superiority of objects and humans. The use of "beautiful," in contrast to "cute," to refer to "Canadian" women, clearly shows the sense of psychological distance that these students experienced from "Canadian" women. Many other students agreed with Yasu's comment on the difference between Asian and White women. For Kengo and Eigo, Western women are too beautiful to make them feel at home. Thus, while these students admired the beauty of White women, they could not view them as a close friend or a partner in a romantic relationship. Many students affirmed this point as seen in the following remarks:
Yasu: I find White women are beautiful but I am not interested in dating with them.

Ryō: I don't understand their nature. This is because of the language. I don't know what they are thinking in their heart. I sometimes thought they were good looking but never thought of dating them.

Shinji: I often find White women are attractive but never thought of dating with them.

Kengo: I would rather have an Asian women as a girlfriend. Japanese are also good. White women are the best in appearance. But I am not interested in dating them.

Kengo later commented that though he actively sought friendships with "Canadian" women, he only enjoyed making "contacts" with them but never expected to have intimate or close relationships with them. The assumed sense of difference with "Canadian" women makes it unthinkable for them to be in an intimate friendship or relationship with them.

While a few students expressed their desire for developing an intimate friendship or relationship with "Canadian" woman, the majority of them questioned its possibility. All of these students expressed their lack of confidence in developing a friendship or a romantic relationship with "Canadian" women. For example, Yōhei became acquainted with one "Canadian" woman. He remembered a sense of surprise and joy when the woman approached him, because he assumed that "Canadian" women would not be interested in Asian men. Though the friendship lasted for a while, according to him, it ended up being superficial. In the end, this experience did not help him to erase a sense of Otherness of "Canadian" woman. Yōhei explained his reluctance toward approaching "Canadian" women.

Yōhei: I guess it is because I assume that they are not interested in me. So I don’t approach them. Yes, they are not interested in us.
QT: Why are they not interested in you?

Yōhei: I don't know.

QT: They might be interested?

Yōhei: I just assume from the beginning that they are not.

Many other students also shared Yōhei's assumption that "Canadian" women would not be interested in Asian men. According to Kengo and Toshi among others, only when Japanese men have something special to offer such as wealth, high status, academic achievement, extremely good appearance, would they attract "Canadian" women. To sum up, "Canadian" women are desired but do not seem approachable to the Japanese students. The metaphor that Yasu and Saburō used to describe "Canadian" women epitomizes their understandings of how they were situated in relation to "Canadian" women.

Yasu: It seems to me that White women are unreachable flowers. (takane no hana)

This quote clearly captures the sense of inferiority and of vertical distance that the Japanese students experienced with "Canadian" women. This confirms Wagatsuma's (1968) explanation on Japanese men's sense of "remoteness and inaccessibility" with regard to White women (see Chapter IV).

The sense of inferiority towards "Canadians" in particular in terms of physical appearance, explains their lack of confidence with regard to "Canadian" women. Many of these students cited as a reason for the lack of their own attractiveness, their physical and cultural inferiority to "Canadians."

Jirō: I assume that there are many White men who like Japanese women but there are few White women who like Japanese men.
KT: Why do you think so?

Jirō: This is the image that I have. I might have heard that Japanese men are not cool.

KT: From where?

Jirō: The image might have been created in Japanese TV.

Gon: I wonder if White women are interested in Asian men. I don't think they like us much.

KT: Why?

Gon: We are short and I don't think we are that attractive.

KT: Why?

Gon: Because we are not attractive and also there is a language problem. I cannot think that they would like Japanese students like me, unless they are really eccentric.

Takeshi: I feel that White women are looking down on Japanese men. For we Japanese tend to try to conform to others as seen in our educational emphasis. Compared with Canadians in this respect, we must look inferior, according to the way people think here.

Yōhei: I feel overwhelmed by their physical size. I am about the average height in Japan, a little skinny but people here are really huge. So I might be feeling this physical gap. This could be one of the factors.

Toshi: White men are more reliable.

KT: What do you mean?

Toshi: For example, their physique is different. They are taller and the image of Asians is that they are short. So that people think that Asian men are not reliable. This is my personal opinion though.

KT: That's fine.

Toshi: Also, women here are big. Asian men tend to be skinny. They are unbalanced with White women.
Most of these Japanese students even wondered why I asked for an explanation as to their assumption about their lack of attractiveness. For they uncritically accepted the physical superiority of "Canadians" as a "fact." Fair skin, Western physical figure, blue eyes and blond hair were all uncritically assumed to be aesthetically superior to those Asian.

The surrounding environment seems to have reinforced their symbolic distance between Japanese men and "Canadian" women. While the Japanese students were aware of many Japanese women associated with "Canadian" men, they were also aware that the same close association was rarely seen between Japanese men and "Canadian" women. Saburō provided a typical comment on this phenomenon.

Saburō: Have you ever seen Asian men dating with White women?
KT: Not much.
Saburō: But there are many reverse cases, right?
KT: Sure. Why do you think this is happening?
Saburō: Our body size is too different.
KT: So, is that the reason why you cannot approach White women?
Saburō: It is more like that they are simply not interested in us.
KT: Do you feel so?
Saburō: Yes, I do.
KT: When?

37 The intimate relationship between Japanese women and "Canadian" men was featured in a Japanese language monthly paper in Vancouver, Oops! Japanese Magazine (Feb. 1, 2000). Vancouver Sun, a local paper also deals with this phenomenon (Baylis, 1996, MacLellan, L 1999).
Many other students shared Saburō's observation on the close association between Japanese women and "Canadian" men and the lack of association between Japanese men and "Canadian" women. This gender-specific intercultural relationship in Vancouver reinforced these students' assumption that Asian men were not attractive to “Canadian” women. This is where gender becomes significant in the neocolonial discourse that surrounds the Japanese male students in North America. As Kelsky (1994) and Wong (1993) explain, the racist discourse that surrounds Asian male in North America feminizes and desexualizes them. Though none of the students could make a clear link between their experience and the operation of the gendered neocolonial discourse, as I asked for their explanation on this gender-specific intercultural relationship pattern, they were encouraged to think further on the cause of the phenomenon.

In explaining their lack of association with White women, these students tended to resort to the essentialist bi-polar understandings of cultural difference between the West and Japan. Most of them attributed their lack of association with “Canadian” women to different gender roles in Western and Japanese cultures. In the following comments, these students explained the different gender roles in two cultures and how the difference adversely affected their relationship with “Canadian” women.

Shinji: In Japan, men lead women, and men have more say than women. But White women think men and women are equal and they are more assertive and express their opinions. Japanese women don't do that, right? So, that's the difference.
Shōji also viewed a Japanese male-female relationship as being based on female dependency upon men. Compared with Japanese women, "Canadian" women are too strong and individualistic to conform to the gender role that the Japanese men are accustomed to.

Shōji: Japanese men feel timid with White women. This is because they don't need our help when we are willing to help them out. In other words, we are not needed. There is no need to be together.

Takeshi: Japanese traditional thinking is that men are above women, right. Though there are gender equity laws but this thinking does still exist. Given this, White women are too strong.

These comments revealed the students' fear toward "Canadian" women as threatening to their manhood. The image of "Canadian" women as individualistic, assertive, and independent does not coincide with their image of women in Japan as modest, submissive, and dependent. Being with strong, assertive, and individualistic "Canadian" women would make them uncomfortable because of its threat to their assumed male authority over women. Even the physical size of Western women could undermine the sense of dominance that these men could supposedly enjoy over Japanese women. The image of "Canadian" women as being outside the conventional gender role, serves to intensify their Otherness from "us."

Of significance in the way the Japanese students described the Otherness of "Canadian" women is their bi-polar and essentialist understanding of cultural difference between the West and Japan. According to their understanding of the cultural difference, gender relationships in the West are based on equality so that Western women are more assertive, individualistic, strong-willed, and independent. In contrast, Japanese gender relationships are based on male-centrality, male authority, and female submissiveness, thus women are less assertive, independent and individualistic. Based
on this essentialist approach to cultural difference, these students furthered the symbolic sense of
difference that they felt towards "Canadian" women, rendering them the complete "Other."

Consequence of Symbolic Otherness

The sense of Otherness that the Japanese students assumed with "Canadians" had significant
consequences to the way these students perceived and interacted with "Canadians" throughout their
study abroad experiences. Most notably, the Otherness of "Canadians" led the Japanese students to a
sense of nervousness, tension, and fear in socializing with them.

Jun: In the past, I had never had a close relationship with White people in Japan, so I
felt a bit timid when talking to them.

KT: What do you mean?

Jun: I'd say that I did not have enough courage to talk to White people.

For some, the preconceived Otherness led to the difficulty of understanding "Canadians." Shōji lived
with a Canadian family for six months. He explained his nervousness when he started living with the
family.

Shōji: Living with a White family, spending time and eating together, I did not know
what to talk and what kind of life they were leading. It was like, I could not do things
here, things that I have been used to doing. The host family won’t be leading the same
life as mine. I had no clue as to what would be the similarity and difference, so at first
I was very nervous. Things that I have taken for granted would not be the same with
the host family, and I did not know the difference, so I was nervous.
Eigo also lived with a "Canadian" family for five months. His only association with "Canadians" is through his host family. While he desired to make more "Canadian" friends, he expressed his sense of fear in socializing with "Canadians."

KT: So, the lack of friendship with Canadians, is that your biggest concern for now?

Eigo: Yes, but at the same time, I am afraid of them.

KT: What are you afraid of?

Eigo: I wonder if I could really get along with them. I don't know if I could end up in a true friendship with Canadians, which has nothing to do with race and nationality.

For Tatsu, the sense of Otherness made him assume that it was impossible to understand "Canadians." The fear that he felt in his association with them explained the significance of the Otherness.

Tatsu: I am living with three White guys, one Canadian, two Germans. Until I talked to them and understood what they would think, somehow, there was a sense of fear.

KT: A sense of fear?

Tatsu: In short, it was a feeling that I would not be able to understand them. As I started understanding them, I became to realize that I could at least carry on a conversation with them.

These comments make clear the assumption that "Canadians" are discontinuous from "us." The way they think, behave, and live is assumed to be completely different from "ours" to the extent that they do not even share "our" common-sense. As Kengo commented, communicating with "Canadians" is similar to negotiating with "aliens." Furthermore, a neocolonial understanding of human difference also explains the sense of fear and nervousness that these students experienced in their interactions.
with "Canadians." As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the mere presence of "Canadians" could create oppressive force that drives them to feel nervous and intimidated.

On the other hand, the assumed sense of Otherness of "Canadians" became the source of interest and attraction to the Japanese students. The majority of the students sought friendships with "Canadians" for experiencing this assumed difference. Jun exemplifies this tendency in explaining why he wanted to live with a "Canadian" host family.

*Jun*: I had never lived with a White family. So I wanted to be exposed to something different.

*KT*: What do you mean by different?

*Jun*: You know, the difference in eating habits, table manners, and also different ways of thinking and sensing.

Assuming that the "Canadian" family would be completely different from the Japanese, he was surprised to find much Asian cultural influence in the family's life. The family often ate rice and used chopsticks, which were supposed to be the exclusive symbols of Japanese culture for him. To his surprise, the host mother could even read the Japanese language.

*Jun*: I never imagined that people would be speaking Japanese here. It was surprising to know that there were people like her. Of course there are people who read and write Japanese but I never imagined White people would do so. I don't think there are many people who speak Japanese here, probably only Japanese Canadians would do so.

As Befu (1993), Miller (1982), Sharma (1995), and Yoshino (1999) argue, given the assumed cultural and "racial" discontinuity of Whites, it is unthinkable for Whites to speak fluent Japanese and understand the culture (See Chapter IV). The mastery of the Japanese language by the "Other,"
Whites overturns “the natural order of things” (Miller, 1982, p. 159). The assumed discontinuity of Whites prevents the Japanese from imaging that they could acquire a part of "us," the Japanese language and culture.

Though Jun found many similarities in this "Canadian" family, he still managed to satisfy himself by experiencing difference that he had initially expected.

*Jun:* I never thought that Westerners would accept Asian culture to this degree. I guess this is because of the immigrants' influence. But they still meet my desire to experience difference though.

*KT:* In what sense?

*Jun:* For example, at the dinner table, they used candles. I found the way they used lights very thoughtful and artistic. This is something you rarely see in Asian culture. Also, while in Japan, I did not eat dessert but here they tell me to eat.

The West and East must be clearly demarcated as the opposite ends of a cultural continuum. The blending of these two seemed to Jun unthinkable, even though Japanese accepted Western cultures to a greater degree.

Despite their desire to be immersed among "Canadians," all the seventeen participants found it difficult to make friends with "Canadians." While all the students were making a conscious effort to develop friendships particularly with "Canadians," they had very few or did not have any "Canadian" friends. In clear contrast, many found it easy and comfortable to socialize with other Asian students, including Asian Canadians. In explaining the reasons for their difficulties in making a friend with "Canadians," the majority of the students resorted to the conventional cultural theories popularized in *nihonjinron*, which emphasizes the unbridgeable cultural gap between Japan and the West. The difficulties of befriending "Canadians" were contrasted to the ease of developing...
friendships with Asian and Asian Canadians. Gon explained why he did not have any "Canadian" friends after two years of his experience in Vancouver.

Gon: I found that we have more commonality than differences with Asians. So I get really along with them. On the other hand, we have more dissimilarity than commonalities with White people and also we are culturally different. It is easy to get along when we have more commonalities than difference.

Kengo studied at a local university for ten months as an exchange student and reflected on his friendships with Asian Canadians and "Canadians":

Kengo: I can get really close with Asians. There is a sense that we are all the same, though we happen to speak different languages but originally we are the same. Speaking of White people, they seem quite distanced. I can barely communicate with them.

Reflecting on his study abroad experiences, Jirō explained why he could not make a friend with "Canadians." In the end, he also attributed it to the assumed cultural discontinuity.

Jirō: First I thought that I could become a friend with them, but while I could get along with Asians, I could never get to know White people well enough to discuss my personal issues.

KT: So, you felt like there was a wall between you and them?

Jirō: Something like that. Then I started thinking why. In the end, I concluded that it was because of cultural difference.

KT: Cultural difference?

Jirō: We are totally different in our ways of thinking and nature. I think Asians and Westerners are opposite. Well, I am not too sure if we are really opposite but anyway we are very different and the gap is quite huge.
Later in the interview, I asked Jirō how exactly the Japanese and the Westerners were culturally
different. His explanation presented an essentialist and dichotomistic understanding of cultural
difference with the West and Japan at the opposite ends of the cultural continuum.

\[
\text{Jirō: Japanese are group-oriented. They are typically poor at articulating their opinion and are somehow considerate to others. This is something particular of Japanese. (\ldots) In contrast, although Asian Canadians are similar, White people are all individualistic and express their opinions well. They are also, to some extent, selfish, as expected.}
\]

Jirō's positioning of "Canadians" at the opposite end of cultural continuum from the Japanese is a
typical discourse of nihonjinron as discussed in Chapter IV.

Similarly, through six months of his home stay experience at a "Canadian" family, Toshi
became reassured about his sense of difference from "Canadians." He also explained this sense of
difference as a consequence of the fundamental cultural gap between "Canadians" and the Japanese.
He talked about one particular incident in his home stay experience with a "Canadian" family, which
convinced him of the impossibilities of understanding "Canadians."

\[
\text{Toshi: There was a little milk left in the refrigerator and nobody tried to finish it. Later, when I tried to drink it up, they told me that in Canadian custom, we must ask the mother first if we can finish it or not.}
\]

Since these students assumed the "unbridgeable" gap between Japan and the West, any incident such
as Toshi's example, served to reinforce the pre-existing assumption. Certainly, Toshi's home-stay
experience seems to have further reinforced his preconceived sense of difference from the West,
"Canadians."
Yohei had studied at a Canadian university as an exchange student for two years. Thus, he seemed to have the least problem with his English, compared to other participants. Nonetheless, he also found socializing with "Canadians" quite challenging. After two years of study abroad, he realized that his friendship with "Canadians" never fully developed. He attributed his failure of becoming intimate with "Canadians" to the preconceived cultural and physiological discontinuity between the West and Japan.

Yohei: In terms of appearance, we are definitely closer to Asians. Having socialized with many different people, I realized that White people are different from Asians in terms of ways of talking, foods, and behaviour. On the other hand, I also realized that Asians are very similar to us in the way they respond in a conversation, foods, and behaviour. That's why I found out that I am closer to them.

After spending two years in Vancouver, Yohei still recognized his lack of full understanding of "Canadians." Having realized his superficial relationships with "Canadian" friends, he stopped clinging to his initial desire to be among "Canadians" and started to actively make more friends with Asian Canadians and Asian international students with whom he could feel confident forming more intimate friendships. Thus, the assumed sense of discontinuity from the West was further reinforced by the difficulties that he faced in forming a friendship with "Canadians."

Jun's study abroad experience also reinforced his awareness of cultural gap between the West and Japan. In order to understand the cultural gap, he applied a cultural theory that he learned at his university in Japan. According to him, Westerners have a digital style thinking process, whereas Asians have an analogue style thinking process. Westerners think things in terms of practical value and usage and thus they require many concrete examples for understanding. Asians, in contrast, are good at abstract thinking and do not require much concrete examples for understanding.
Jun: I learned what I should be careful about when dealing with people from different cultures. Westerners won't understand abstract concepts unless provided with concrete examples. Asians would understand abstract concepts easily. This is why, for instance, in my English writing assignment, teachers won't understand my writing if it has only abstract concepts. They always tell me to provide a few examples. So I thought that Westerners would think in a practical sense.

He reasoned that his lack of Western digital thinking made it difficult for him to develop friendships with "Canadians." Jun also resorted to nihonjinron discourse that propelled him to view "Canadians" as the opposite end of cultural continuum from Japan.

All the examples presented above, demonstrate that the kind of cultural theories that these students appropriated, provided convenient and seemingly appropriate explanations for the difficulties that they faced in socializing with "Canadians." The Otherness of "Canadians" was so ingrained in their mind that any encounters of problems with "Canadians" were explained away by the essentialist theory of cultural difference. Ironically, their study abroad experiences, which are believed to help them deconstruct the essentialist and dichotomistic notion of cultural difference, brought them home to the same theory of cultural difference that they had been exposed to in nihonjinron. In this sense, this finding confirms Yoshino's (1999) argument that the essentialist theory of cultural differences in nihonjinron becomes manifested in a highly cross-cultural context such as stud abroad and the Japanese view it as a useful tool for cross-cultural interactions with Western "Others" (See Chapter IV). Nihonjinron discourse provided the Japanese students with convenient answers to their difficulties in making a friend with "Canadians." Thus study abroad experience created an ironic consequence, the excessive awareness of Japanese “uniqueness” and “difference” from "Canadians."
Summary

In this chapter, I demonstrated how the Japanese students constructed the discursive images of "Canadians" as the embodiment of the West. In doing so, I showed the clear manifestation of the discourses of neocolonialism, "internationalization" and nihonjinron in the way these students constructed these images. The Japanese students came to Vancouver to make themselves more marketable in the forthcoming job competition, that is, to "internationalize" themselves. To move head of others in the fierce job competition cause by the recent economic recession in Japan, they must acquire English fluency and "international" experience in the West. Based on the conventional hegemonic image of Canada as a White nation, they discursively constructed the image of Vancouver as a place where Whites were speaking English in Western culture. In order to realize their objective, Canada had to be the "pure" West, the distinctive imaginary space that allured the Japanese students. Similar to the Western explorers who travelled to the Orient to experience the "authentic" "Other" for self-transformation, the Japanese students, through study abroad experiences, desired to explore the Western "Other" in an attempt to "internationalize" themselves.

Furthermore, I demonstrated how neocolonialism and nihonjinron discourses became manifested in the way the Japanese students created this artificial sense of Otherness of "Canadians." The internalization of nihonjinron discourse drove the Japanese students to interpret their intercultural experiences with "Canadians" in an essentialist and dichotomistic manner. The neocolonial relationship of "race" and culture between Japan and the West caused these students to have an inferiority complex towards "Canadians." Coupled with nihonjinron discourse, the inferiority complex reinforced their sense of discontinuity between the Japanese and "Canadian," rendering the latter into the "Other." I also presented the role of gender in Japanese students' "othering" tendency towards "Canadians" women. Racist discourse surrounding Asian male in North America, which desexualizes Japanese male operated in tandem with the other three
discourses and turned “Canadian” women into the complete “Other.” They were commodified as an overly glorified and sexualized object without any trace of humanity.

I also demonstrated how this imaginary construct of "Canadians" as the “Other” shaped these students' interpersonal relationships with "Canadians." The symbolic sense of Otherness created the fear and anxiety that many of the Japanese students expressed in their interactions with "Canadians." Both in hierarchical and cultural relativistic senses, "Canadians" were perceived so discontinuous from "us" that the interactions with them would be naturally difficult. Thus, as Yoshino (1999) explains, this assumed sense of difference obstructed their intercultural interactions with "Canadians." As discussed in the next chapter, this sense of Otherness also becomes a source of excitement and challenge necessary for the Japanese students to "internationalize" themselves.
CHAPTER VII

DESIRE FOR THE "OTHER," "CANADIANS"

Introduction

This chapter analyzes Japanese students' narrative of desire for "Canadians." First, I demonstrate the close interconnections of language, "race," and culture in the way the Japanese students constructed the discursive image of "Canadians" as the "Other." Second, I examine how these students objectified and commodified "Canadians" in their desire to become exposed to the essential embodiment of the West, "Canadians," for "internationalizing" themselves. I argue that the Japanese students desired and appropriated the sense of "Otherness" of "Canadians" for transforming themselves into kokusai-jin, an "international" person.

Interconnections of Language, "Race," and Culture

The discursive images of "Canadians" are constructed on the basis of the close interconnections of language (English), "race" (the Whites), and culture (Western culture). When presented together, these key components of "Canadians" create a real sense of Otherness that the Japanese students desired to explore. When this rule of interconnections is disrupted, the Otherness also becomes diluted, thus becoming less valuable and less attractive for these students. This section demonstrates how the intricate interconnections of language, "race," and culture become manifested in these students' narratives of desire for "Canadians."

Given these students' objective of studying abroad, the English language became significant in their narratives of desire for "Canadians." Upon his arrival in Vancouver, Kazuo was assigned to a Filipino-Canadian family. He was shocked not to be able to stay with a "Canadian" family that he
had taken for granted and became jealous of his friends who were staying with a "Canadian" family. In the following quote, he explained his disappointment and fascination with "Canadian" family.

KT: Why do you think you were disappointed (to find out that you were not staying with a White family)?

Kazuo: That is because I didn’t know Asians were living in Vancouver. I just assumed that I would be staying with a White family. So, once I found out that I was staying with non-White family, I was already suspicious, like "What kind of family am I going to live with?" It was not like White people are better or anything like that. I just thought that I must stay with a White family to study English.

"Canadians" are assumed to be the only people who speak the "pure" English. With an idea of "pure" English as an exclusive property of the West, Asian Canadians are believed to speak English affected by their "mother tongue," thus not “pure” English.

Kazuo: Even if they (Asian Canadians) were born in Canada, I assumed that their English would not be too good. Since they speak both (English and Chinese), they must have mixed them up and might have some accent. So, I thought they would not speak real English and only White people speak real English.

Similarly, Yōhei explains why he was initially disappointed at the large presence of non-White populations in Vancouver.

Yōhei: I might have thought that they were not real.

KT: What do you mean?

Yōhei: English spoken by White people are the real English and not by others. And then since there were a lot of non-White people here, I was disappointed.
The association of the English language with "Canadians" was so strong that the breach of this connection led these students to a sense of awkwardness towards those who broke this fundamental assumption of "race," culture, and language. Asian Canadians, despite their lack of Otherness, possess the mastery of the language of the "Other." Many students faced the hybridity of Asian Canadians who blurred the preconceived dichotomy between the "Other" and the "Self."

Ryō: To simply put, when thinking about foreigners who speak English, we are likely to think of White people. Even if we see a Japanese person who fluently speaks English, I might think he or she is cool, but I would find it strange.

KT: What do you mean by strange?

Ryō: Originally they are not supposed to speak English, this is the image that I have, since they look like me. (...) We understand mentally that White people are not the only people who speak English, but the image that instantly comes to our mind is something that has been long accumulated. This image is stronger than the image that I learned later.

Saburō met a Japanese Canadian woman. He also found it strange that this woman who, according to him, looked exactly like a Japanese person, spoke English fluently.

Saburō: She is Japanese but she only speaks English. Her English pronunciation was just so perfect. It was really surprising to me. I felt jealous of her.

KT: But she might not be able to speak Japanese though.

Saburō: But English is more important than Japanese to function internationally. So, she is lucky.

Eigo was also aware of his sense of confusion with the combination of Asian figure with English fluency.
Eigo: To be very blunt, when those with black hair, and black eyes, these typical Asian people speak English, I feel strange. It is almost like they have somebody else translating their voices behind them. This is because I still associate English with White people. This is the kind of image that has been implanted in me since I was little. No matter how fluent they would speak English, I still feel a sense of strangeness (iwakan). For instance, speaking of Japanese Canadians, or Japanese who speak extremely fluent English, I would not feel it natural and feel that they are good at speaking English. They grew up speaking English so I guess it is natural for them. But I would still feel that they are good at it. But I would not say to White people that they are good at English. I would never say to my Canadian host-family that they are good at English. Somewhere in me, I just assume that White people are supposed to speak English.

English is not just a language. It is a language of the "Other," the dominant West and Whites. The alluring image of the West can be created only when English is spoken by the “authentic” inhabitants of the West, Whites, "Canadians." The existence of Asian Canadians who were born in Canada and thus speak English fluently, breaks the interconnections of "race," culture, and language that underlies the fixed boundary between the "Other" and "Self."

"Race" is certainly an important part of the discursive image of the West, which makes these students experience the preconceived sense of Otherness from "us." The following experience of Yasu's demonstrates the significance of "race" and its close interconnections with language and culture in his desire for "Canadian" host family. Yasu vividly remembered his disappointment when finding out that his host-mother was Chinese Canadian. He initially assumed that "Canadians" were Whites living in a large Western house where he would be fully exposed to English. Contrary to this discursive image of the "Canadian" family, his first host family was a couple who were Peruvian and Chinese Canadians. Yasu recalled his first meeting with the host family.

Yasu: She was Chinese Canadian. I said to myself, "Shoot, she is Chinese." I was disappointed.

KT: But doesn't she speak English?
Yasu: After having known that, I felt a little relieved.

KT: Sounds like you wanted to live with a White family?

Yasu: I don’t mean to discriminate or anything but living with a White family enables me to enjoy that particular feeling, you know.

In this house, the family members communicated in Spanish, Chinese, and English. Dreaming of situating himself in the whole atmosphere of a "Canadian" family and their lifestyle, he was disappointed at the gap between his idealized image and the reality. He requested a transfer to another family with the hope that he would be assigned to a "truly Canadian" family.

His dream was finally realized in his second home stay with a "Canadian" family. Reflecting on his happy days with the new family, he joyfully talked about his experience of helping the host father with home renovations and interacting with neighbours. This family, according to Yasu, matched the images of "Canadian" family that he had embraced. The dialogue below presents how he understood the significance of staying with this "Canadian" family.

KT: What is so good about a White family?

Yasu: They are native, as you know.

KT: What do you mean by native?

Yasu: I tend to associate Whites with the English language.

KT: So it is a matter of the language?

Yasu: The language, well, I think it is also a matter of their appearance as well.

KT: Why?

Yasu: That is because we can identify them just by their appearance.

KT: What is good about it?

Yasu: Besides, White people don't have any accent and speak pure English.
KT: But wasn't that Chinese Canadian host-mother born in Canada?

Yoshi: Yes, but ...

KT: What's your problem with that?

Yasu: But her blood is Chinese-related (chūgoku-kei). Something is different, you know.

KT: What do you mean by blood?

Yasu: Rather than blood, I'd say family lineage. Even if she was born here, I would think that she is still Chinese, though she is Canadian.

KT: What is the matter with that?

Yasu: Nothing wrong, but I feel differently.

KT: So, it is not only the issue of language then?

Yasu: It is also an issue of culture, as well, I think.

Yasu's comments reveal the intricate connections of "race," culture, and language in the discursive construction of "Canadians" that he desired. What Yasu meant by "that particular feeling" in the previous quote is the delight of being immersed in the imaginary space of the West, the dream world of Otherness.

Takeshi also shared this desire for "Canadians." While Takeshi was at a language school, several local university students came to his class as volunteers. This is when he met John, his only "Canadian" friend. He recollected his special feeling when meeting this "Canadian" friend.

Takeshi: There were other university students who were volunteering in the class but most of them were Asians. John was the only White person. So I felt I particularly wanted to become a friend with him.

KT: What about the other volunteers, aren't they also Canadians?

Takeshi: Yes, they were.
KT: So, they must have been fluent in English right?

Takeshi: Yes, they were but...

KT: Something different?

Takeshi: Yes, something was different.

KT: What was the difference?

Takeshi: Let me think, those Asian Canadian students were also born in Canada and led the same lifestyle as White people.

KT: The language is also the same, isn't it?

Takeshi: Yes, but I tend to think that they might still think in an Asian way, I don't know. This is a prejudice, isn't it?

Asian Canadians, no matter how long they have been in Canada, were never included in the imaginary space of the West. This fact also points to the significance of the interconnections of "race," culture, and language in their desire for "Canadians."

A further examination elucidates the intricate nature of the interconnection of "race," culture, and language. For example, the "race" and culture of an individual determine the "purity" and "authenticity" of English that the individual speaks. Most of the students believed that English sounded different depending on if the speaker was "Canadian" or "other" Canadian. Many found that English spoken by "other" Canadians was easier to understand than the one by "true native English speakers." Through a language exchange program, Kazuo became acquainted with a "Canadian" female student, Joanne. She was the first "Canadian" friend that he had ever become a friend with in the previous two years of his study abroad experience. He explained that he experienced a greater sense of satisfaction in socializing with this "Canadian" student than with his "other" Asian Canadian friends. He believed that Joanne spoke English in a different way than his other Asian Canadian friends.
Kazuo: Joanne speaks English differently than other Asian Canadians. She spoke faster and the kind of expressions she used are different. I don't know exactly how, but something was different.

KT: The Asian Canadians that you have been talking about, are they born here and do they speak English as their first language?

Kazuo: Yes.

KT: Then what's the difference?

Kazuo: Well, I cannot really explain that but there is certainly a difference.

Later, Kazuo attempted to explain this difference.

Kazuo: This is really difficult, you know. I have been facing this riddle. Even now, I am not really sure. But I feel like I can understand English better when spoken by Asian Canadians than by White people. Sometimes, a White person says something and I don't get it at all. But this does not really happen with Asian Canadians. I am pretty clear on this. Even now I feel this.

KT: But aren't they speaking the same English?

Kazuo: Yes, that's right but that is the wonder. Probably a person like you who speak English won't understand this though.

KT: Do you think the visual effect is also involved?

Kazuo: Yes, I do. Don't you have this experience?

Many others also agreed with Kazuo that English by Asian Canadians was different from "pure" English and easier to understand than the latter. This different impression resulted from the symbolic sense of cultural and "racial" continuities with Asian Canadians and the sense of Otherness associated with "Canadians." Eigo agreed with Kazuo in many respects. Eigo also assumed that Asian Canadians' English sounded different from "Canadians'" English. At his English language
school, there was a Korean Canadian teacher who was born in Canada and spoke only English. Eigo found it easier to understand his English than other "Canadian" teachers.

Eigo: When I talk to him, I always think that his English is different from other teachers' English.

KT: How is it different?

Eigo: I don't know, just his pronunciation, maybe. His voice might be different too, so is the tone of his voice and pace. My English skill is not good enough to discern the difference perfectly but my feeling is definitely different.

KT: Which is better?

Eigo: To be honest, White people's English is better.

KT: In what sense is it better?

Eigo: It makes me feel like "Oh, this is the English that I have been hearing in movies." For me, my first encounter with English world is through movies, TV, and also music. People that I saw in these media were White people. Through this experience, there has been an image of English speaker as White people. As I continued to live here, I came to know the existence of those hyphenated Canadians, but the image that I have embraced over the past 20 some years, is solidly established and thus it is difficult to change. I don't mean to discriminate against anybody though.

"Race" is certainly one of the most important factors that determine the level of Otherness of an individual: the authenticity of his or her language, culture, and nationality. As seen in the above comments, "race" determines the significance of the English language to these students; English spoken only by "Canadians" is "pure," "authentic" and thus more desirable. Eigo's comment, "Oh, this is the English that I have been familiar with in movies" reveals his sense of delight and excitement in his exposure to "pure" English spoken by the complete "Other."

The interconnectedness of "race," language, and culture forms the core part of the discursive construction of "Canadians." Only when these three components are presented together, do they create the "real" sense of "Otherness" that many Japanese dreamed of experiencing. The lack of any
one of these components undermines the attractiveness of the "Other." The rigid interconnection in
the discursive image of “Canadians” leads to the assumption that Whites are the only living cultural
medium through which the students can experience and consume "true Canadian" culture: the
Otherness of the West. Thus, full immersion among "Canadians" becomes a primary value for the
Japanese students.

The Japanese students tended to deny the hybrid existence of Asian Canadians as an agent
who could bury the "unbridgeable" gap between the "Self" and the "Other." Many Asian Canadians
in Vancouver have lived in Canada for many generations and thus speak "perfect Canadian" English.
Thus, their presence could provide an alternative understanding of the East and the West to the
essentialist binarism between "Self" and Western "Others." Nonetheless, Asian Canadians were
considered as Asians who supposedly maintained the strong cultural essence from their "origin," thus
being a part of "us." This fixed and ahistorical understanding of culture and difference expelled
Asian Canadians out of the imaginary entity of the West.

"Canadians" as Prize

The desire for the Otherness of the West, “Canadians,” shaped the Japanese students’
socialization and friendship patterns. As discussed in the previous chapter, these students expected
that their study abroad experience would improve their future career opportunities. Given the limited
amount of time that they had in Vancouver, they needed to "internationalize" themselves, by being
fully exposed to "Canadians" through which they would learn "authentic" Western culture and "pure"
English and, most importantly, experience the Otherness.
Despite this expectation, all the Japanese students faced the difficulties of accessing "Canadians." In fact, few students had friendships with "Canadians." Most of their friends were Asian and South American international students, mainly from China, Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mexico, and Columbia as well as Asian Canadians. This could be partly because most of the students were studying at the English language institutes where the majority of students were either East Asian or South American. In addition, including those who were studying at universities and colleges, all of these students were finding their English insufficient for fully socializing with "Canadians." Whatever the reasons were, one thing was clear: they were not as immersed in "Canadians" as they had initially expected. Their lack of associations with "Canadians" placed them in a frustrating situation.

Yasu: The racial groups tend to get together. All Japanese stick together. I experience this difficulty here. Though I have been here for several months, I have not made any friends with White people. Many of my Japanese friends are also frustrated by that.

Jun: Since I came all the way to Canada, I want to talk more with Canadians, and want to know more about Canada.(...) I want to be exposed to the living English (nama no eigo) that Canadians speak. My friends at the language school do not speak the living English, you know.

Yōhei: I did not expect this many Asians. In the first one month, I was at the English language institute, and there most of the students were either Japanese, Koreans, or Chinese. Having realized this, I thought this is totally different from what I had expected.

KT: So, it was different from your expectation?

Yōhei: Yes, I might have initially expected that there would be only Whites here, so that I felt there were very few Whites here.

According to my internet search, Asians such as Japanese, Korean, Chinese from Hong Kong and Taiwan, and South American are the major source of students in English language institutes in Greater Vancouver area (Seikōsuru ryūgaku, Study Abroad Success Book, GIO Club, 1998).
Gon lived in Vancouver for two years attending two language schools and one college but he had never become a friend with any "Canadians." First, he talked about his feeling when he was at an English language institute.

*Gon: I thought I needed to leave this ESL as soon as possible. I felt I needed to enter English-only environment among White people, Canadians.*

Gon entered a local college after one year of studying at an English language institute. Even after entering a local college, Gon still faced the same problem.

*Gon: I feel I need to do something. I wonder why I do not have any White friends, despite that I came all the way to Canada. When I was in Japan, I knew that it would not be too easy to make friends with Canadians but I thought I could manage to do so eventually. It is really difficult to make friends with Canadians.*

Similarly, Kazuo also faced the same problem at a language school where he had difficulties accessing "Canadians." When he was at the language school, he was fully aware of his lack of associations with "Canadians" among whom he initially expected himself to be. In rare occasions when he met "Canadians," they were rendered the mere mediums through which he could learn the language and culture of Canada.

*Kazuo: While I was at the English school, I was thinking how I could become a friend with Canadians, that is, White people. At the time, since I was very serious about studying English, I, by any means, wanted to speak to them as much as possible for practicing my English. Also I tried to approach them to know more about Canada.*
Kazuo thought that finishing the language school and enrolling in a college would provide him with an access to the "true Canadian world." After spending nine months in the language school, he obtained a sufficient score in TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) to be accepted in a local college. He expected that in the college he would finally be among "Canadians," being fully exposed to "pure" English.

KT: What was your expectation when you entered the college?

Kazuo: Finally I felt I was entering the true English world. I expected that there would be White people around. This is a world of "only English." Chinese Canadians know Chinese characters a little bit. But this was going to be a place where people would only know English, English in a true sense.

Soon after entering the college, Kazuo faced the same problem as he had had in the English language school, the absence of "Canadians." He expressed his disappointment at the large presence of Taiwanese and Hong Kong Canadians students at the college.

Kazuo: In one of my classes, all the students were Chinese. I think that was an English class. I was really surprised.

KT: How did you feel about it?

Kazuo: I wondered if there were any White people here. "Don't they come to school?" I wondered why there were not many White people on campus.

Out of frustration, many of the Japanese students attempted to go outside their respective school environments into "the real Canadian world." Gon joined a local kick-boxing club. In explaining the reason for joining the club, he revealed his impatience and frustration as to the lack of his "Canadian" exposure.
Gon: I must not wait for them to approach me. White people are not interested in us. So, I was aware that I must try to make as many opportunities as possible. One example of this attempt is going to a local kick-boxing club.

Similarly, Masa, Toshi, Yūya, Yasu, and Shōji were actively involved in volunteer organizations in their local communities. Eigo, Kazuo, Shōji, Yasu, Saburō, Toshi, Masa, and Takeshi attempted to make friends with "Canadian" university students studying Japanese through a language exchange program. All of these students cited becoming friends with and speaking English with "Canadians" as the main motivations behind their attempts. Masa, Saburō, Shōji, Toshi, and Yasu came to my Japanese class at the University of British Columbia as language volunteers. Expecting to see "Canadian" students in the class, they were disappointed to find very few "Canadian" students. For them, it was supposed to be a way of meeting "Canadian" friends.

Since their exposure to "Canadians" was less than they had initially expected, any opportunities that could lead to their association with "Canadians" became the primary priority in their study abroad experiences. Many appreciated and embraced their associations with "Canadians" more than with "other" Canadians and international students. For example, after nine months of studying experience in Vancouver, Takeshi had only one "Canadian" friend, John. He explained his different attitude towards John and his other friends.

Takeshi: Before I came here, I assumed that all my friends would be Canadians. But I realized that this would not happen here. That's why he is so special.

39 These students volunteered in my Japanese language classes in the spring session of 1998 and the summer session of 1999 at the University of British Columbia. At the time, there were two “Canadian” students out of 25-30 students in my classes in each term. The rest of the students were either Asian Canadian students or Asian international students.
Kengo exemplifies the tendency of prioritizing "Canadians." Reflecting on his ten months of study abroad experience as an exchange student at a local university, he explained his different feelings with "Canadians" from with "other" Canadians.

Kengo: There has been awareness in me that the opportunities of becoming a friend with White people are more important.

KT: You mean more so than with Asian Canadians?

Kengo: Probably... Yes, I think so.

KT: How do you explain this feeling?

Kengo: To put it simply, the reason why I came here, to gaikoku is to make contacts with White people. To achieve this goal, I need to make the full use of rare opportunities with White people.

KT: Is that something rare?

Kengo: Yes, it rarely happens.

Yasu, among others, viewed his close associations with Asians as a stumbling block that would prevent him from realizing his primary objective: developing friendships with "Canadians." At the time of the interview, he did not have any "Canadian" friends and was aware that he should not spend too much time with Asian and Asian Canadian students.

KT: Sounds like you appreciate more your friendship with White people?

Yasu: At this point, I would like to get to know as many White people as possible. That's why I would like to avoid them.

KT: Who are "they"?

Yasu: Asians.

KT: Are you including Asian Canadians as well?
Spending time with Asians, regardless of their birthplace and English fluency, is less worthwhile than with "Canadians." The crucial difference between these two groups lies in the Otherness of the latter, which would enable the Japanese students to enjoy the sense of being in gaikoku and thus to become kokusai-jin, an "international" person.

Commodifying "Canadians".

The unexpectedly limited exposure to "Canadians," the embodiment of the West, accelerated the Japanese students' desire for "Canadians." This strong desire for the Otherness of "Canadians" led to their tendency of commodifying and objectifying "Canadians," rendering them into a discursive medium through which these Japanese students attempted to "internationalize" themselves. For some, "Canadians" became a tool for practising their English and experiencing "true Canadian" culture. Kazuo viewed "Canadians" as a final test for his English. According to him, it is when he can communicate with "Canadians" without feeling any sense of fear, nervousness, and linguistic difficulties, that he will finally become satisfied and thus stop being too preoccupied with his English. According to him, this sense of accomplishment is not possible with "other" Canadians, who do not possess the Otherness essential for making a communication thrilling and challenging.

For Takeshi, socializing with "Canadians" is more valuable than with Asian Canadians because he can feel that he is learning something, being exposed to "Canadian" culture and "pure" English. Thus, Takeshi was aware of his preferential treatment of "Canadians." Similarly, Jirō also explained why he wanted to make friends more with "Canadians" than with other Asians and Asian Canadians.
Jirō: When making a friend, in contrast to becoming friends with Asian, it is rare and there are very few opportunities to become a friend with those who look different from me, like White and Black people. So, my feeling is that I need to give priority to becoming a friend with these people.

The high use value associated with "Canadians" makes their personality and individuality less significant in their friendships. Toshi and Keigo shared the experience of trying to become friends with "Canadians" even when they found serious personality conflicts with them. Toshi's only "Canadian" exposure was through his host family. He found a personality conflict with a son of the host family but attempted to spend as much time as possible with him, since the son was his only "Canadian" acquaintance at his age. Being frustrated at not being able to make any "Canadian" friends, the use value of "Canadian" overrides the discomfort that results from the personality conflict. The Japanese students' concern is not so much with the individual personalities of "Canadians" as with the associated value of "Canadians." Only through "Canadians," could these students obtain more exposure to "authentic" Canada and "pure" English and experience the Otherness.

The higher value associated with "Canadians" leads to a clear equation of "Canadians" with other value-laden commodities such as Western brand name goods. Much in the same way these brand name goods would do, the association with "Canadians" brings the Japanese students a heightened sense of pride and privilege over their peers. For example, Kengo was one of a few among his peers, who started a friendship with "Canadians" in the first two weeks of his student exchange program.

Kengo: While I was playing catch on the beach (with my Canadian friends), I saw other Japanese students from the same program hanging out on the beach. At the time, my feeling was, "Look at me, guys. I have already made friends with these people. Good luck, you guys!" There was a sense of pride and privilege in me.
The sense of pride and privilege that Kengo experienced would not be possible unless there was a consensus among the Japanese on the higher value of the association with "Canadians." Takeshi also shared this sense of pride and privilege over other Japanese in his associations with "Canadians." He explained his sense of pride when with his only "Canadian" friend, John in the following manner.

Takeshi: If we were in Japan, and if I were John's friend in Japan and speaking English in Japan, I would feel "Look, how great I am, I am a friend of White people, Americans and Canadians." For there would be only Japanese around me, you know.

Furthermore, many of the Japanese students were preoccupied with presenting themselves with "Canadians" to his friends and parents in Japan. They were worried if they would not be able to show off their presence with "Canadians" in their pictures. Jirō, Kazuo, Kengo, and Tatsuo were disappointed to know that there were very few pictures in which they were with “Canadians.” This concern reveals the highly commodified value of "Canadians," not to mention, the extent to which Canada is generally viewed as a White nation in Japan. Asked why he was so shocked to find that most of his friends were Asians and Asian immigrants, Kazuo revealed his desire to appropriate the higher social value associated with "Canadians;"

Kazuo: I am not yet sure about this but I probably don't think this way any longer. Anyway before, I thought "What am I gonna do if I go back home without making any Canadian friends!" I would show my pictures to my friends in Japan. And then people in these pictures are not Canadians. They are all Asians.

KT: What do you mean?

Kazuo: I worried what my friends would say.

KT: What did you expect they would say?
Kazuo: They would say, "What happened to White girls?"

KT: White girls?

Kazuo: Yes, White girls that I was talking about before I left Japan.

KT: Did you actually say thing like that?

Kazuo: Yes, people say thing like that you know. They would say something like, "there could be a chance to see White girls, you are lucky." Didn't anybody tell you that? Probably somebody must have told you.

Kengo also shared this same concern:

Kengo: I looked at all the pictures that I took here. Most of them show me with other Asian friends. Though some of them are Asian Canadians, my friends in Japan won't be able to tell any difference. Besides, I have to explain it to them every time I show the pictures to them. I even looked for pictures that would show me with White friends (laugh).

"Canadians" became objects by which the Japanese students could experience the elevation of their own value. In Kazuo's case, "Canadian" women were rendered to a rare commodity, a prized possession, and sexual objects for him to show off. The presentation of themselves with "Canadians" in pictures would have shown to their friends and family about their exploration of and immersion in the world Western "Others." It would have also proven their capability to function well in the Western world of Otherness, in other words, their mastery of "internationality."

The tendency to commodify "Canadians" was further witnessed in these students' desire to monopolize "Canadians." Once these students possessed highly prized "Canadians," they attempted to monopolize the associated social and practical value. This is exemplified in the participants' reluctance about introducing their "Canadian" friends to other Japanese friends. Kengo shows his dehumanizing tendency towards "Canadians" in explaining his reluctance to introduce his only
"Canadian" friend to other Japanese. In the quote below, he metaphorically referred to his "Canadian" friend, Jeff and the friendship with him respectively as "my crop" and "the rice field."

Kengo: I felt like "Why do I have to give others my crop"? It is I myself who have long cultivated the rice field where the crop has grown. They should make their own effort to get one for themselves.

According to Kengo's reasoning, he made much effort to maintain and develop the relationship with Jeff. Thus, he should have an exclusive right to enjoy the benefits of the "crop." In fact, although I interviewed Kengo at the end of his ten-month student exchange program, he had not introduced Jeff whom he met at the beginning of the program to his other Japanese friends. Takeshi and Yasu shared Kengo's unwillingness to share the "crop" with other Japanese friends.

Takeshi: I became a friend with John (a White male) to brush up my English. So, if I am the only friend of him, then we will get to know each other really well and get closer and closer. But if there was another Japanese guy who also needed to practice his English, then I wouldn't get much of his attention.

KT: Do you have any problem introducing your White friends to other Japanese friends?

Yasu: I feel reluctant. I have a desire to monopolize them (dokusen yoku). I don't feel like introducing them to others. I have finally become friends with them so I don't feel like introducing them to others. (...) I don't mind being introduced but don't like introducing them.

The value of "Canadians" can be maintained and increased only if they are exclusively owned. In this sense, they must remain private possessions, which enable the owner to feel the sense of exclusive privilege and pride over other Japanese. In this regard, "Canadians" could be any "Canadian" individuals. Their individual personalities are erased and only the associated higher
value remains significance to the Japanese students. The objectification of "Canadians" dehumanizes
them, erasing their individualities and rendering them into a mere commodity to be privately owned.
These Japanese students tended to render "Canadians" into a mere medium through which they
attempted to practice English and explore the West, thus to "internationalize" themselves.

This commodifying view towards "Canadians" became more prominent in the way the
Japanese students described Japanese women's close associations with "Canadian" men. As
mentioned in the previous section, many of these students were envious of the close association of
Japanese women with "Canadian" men. Also, they were aware of the clear lack of the same tie
between "Canadian" women and Asian men. The majority of the Japanese students expressed not
only a sense of envy but also of anger, animosity, and strong repugnance about Japanese women's
close tie with "Canadians." For instance, Yōhei noticed the large number of Japanese women dating
with "Canadian" men in Vancouver. In commenting on this phenomenon, he provided a typical view
that many other students also shared.

Yōhei: I am not happy about that at all.

KT: What do you mean?

Yōhei: I guess that is because there is not the opposite pattern. I somehow think it is
unfair.

KT: Unfair?

Yōhei: But I guess this large number (of couples between Japanese women and
"Canadian" men) proves that this is not just a result of individual attempts, but there
must be other factors that have created this situation.

KT: Can you elaborate on your unhappy feeling more?

Yōhei: I feel like "what are they (Japanese women) doing here?"

KT: What do you mean?
Yohei: This is a very good thing because they become acquainted with people from different culture, whoever they are. I understand this in my head but there is a sense of frustration emerging inside me.

KT: Frustration?

Yohei: It is difficult to explain. (Pause) How should I put it. It is like we are having them taken away.

In their narratives on Japanese women associated with "Canadian" men, the Japanese male students tended to view Japanese women as taking advantage of "Canadian" men as a tool for the women's selfish satisfaction. Most of the students perceived that these "Canadian" men became objects that the Japanese women would temporarily flirt with, show off to other Japanese friends, and practice their English with.

Shōji: It seems like that they (Japanese women) are trying to show off the fact that they are dating with a White man, to other Japanese friends. A White man serves to heighten their sense of pride and self-worth and I even wonder if they are in love with him. It seems to me that they just want others to see them walking together with a White man.

Kazuo: If they (Japanese women) have hidden agenda in dating with Canadian men, then they should not be dating with them.

KT: What kind of agendas are you talking about here?

Kazuo: They might be thinking about immigrating into Canada through marriage or they might want to enjoy other Japanese friends' attention.

Yoshi: I have many Japanese female friends who want to date with White men.

KT: What are they saying?

Yoshi: This is something that I heard from my friend but they want to date with good-looking men. Probably appearance is the biggest reason, I think.

KT: Don't you think that White men are not necessarily good-looking?
Yoshi: But they say White men are good. Probably, there is a fixed image that White men are cool, I suppose.

KT: What do you think of that?

Yoshi: What a shame. They are easy. (...) They are only looking at the appearance. They don't care what is inside.

Thus, the Japanese male students in a rather deterministic way, concluded that the practical value of "Canadians," their good appearance, and the subsequent sense of pride were the main motivations of Japanese women for dating with "Canadian" men.

The way these Japanese students viewed the close intercultural relationship between Japanese women and "Canadian" men also shows their dehumanizing tendency towards "Canadians." These Japanese male students had a strong sense of envy towards these women who were successful in gaining access to the rare commodity, "Canadianness." These students all agreed that dating with a "Canadian" was the best way to improve their English. In talking about the close tie between Japanese women and "Canadian" men, Toshi exemplified this point in the following comment.

Toshi: Without a doubt, it is the best way to learn English.

KT: Are you envious of them (Japanese women)?

Toshi: Yes, I am, given that I have limited time to spend here.

KT: In order to make full use of your time in Vancouver...

Toshi: That is right. I know I am very practical.

Given the limited time that they had in Vancouver, dating with "Canadians" provided the maximum exposure to the Otherness, thus the best opportunity for "internationalizing" themselves.
Their frustration of not being able to gain the same access as Japanese women enjoyed, propelled these Japanese males to view these women as frivolous and as taking advantage of "Canadians" men. While the Japanese male students accused Japanese women of commodifying and dehumanizing "Canadian" men, the narratives in which they expressed this view, clearly demonstrated the very same commodifying and dehumanizing tendency towards "Canadian" men. From their perspective, no sincere relationships would exist between Japanese women and "Canadian" men.

**Appropriation of Otherness for "Internationalizing" Self**

*Kengo: When I am with White people, as I said before, they seem totally different in ways of thinking and appearance. So, communicating with them makes me feel a sense of self-satisfaction of being able to communicate with those who are far away from us. It is almost like being involved in a challenging negotiation. I will give you an example. It seems more difficult to communicate with aliens than with Koreans, right? It just makes me feel really great. I think there has been this kind of awareness in me.***

This section provides the further analysis of the narrative of desire for "Canadians." I demonstrate the significance of the Otherness of "Canadians" in the Japanese students' commodifying desire towards "Canadians." I argue that for the Japanese students, the Otherness of "Canadians" creates a transforming possibility for their "internationalization."

The previous chapter has shown that the preconceived differences between "Canadians" and Japanese "Self" were so significant that the interactions with "Canadians" became a source of fear, tension and thrill. To put it differently, the full immersion among "Canadians" was perceived to require a great deal of courage, endurance, and determination, posing psychological challenges.
While all of these students kept their desire to immerse themselves in the Otherness of "Canadians," it also led some to a pessimistic view about the chances of developing friendships with them.

For others, this assumed "Otherness" of "Canadians" made the association and communication with them more exciting, challenging, and thus more rewarding. Since they viewed "Canadians" as being the most culturally and physically discontinuous from the Japanese, they found communicating with and understanding "Canadians" as the most difficult and challenging, thus the most satisfying task. Though some students became rather pessimistic about the possibility of forming a friendship with "Canadians," the majority of the students continued to actively seek this sense of being highly challenged among "Others."

The Japanese students experienced more of a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment in their associations with "Canadians" than with others. For example, Yasu explained the difference he felt being with Asian Canadians than with "Canadians."

KT: Does you feel different, when you are with Asian Canadians or with White Canadians?

Yasu: Yes, I do. I have to speak English with Whites.

KT: But you speak English with both, right?

Yasu: But I feel Whites are more significant.

KT: Can you explain that further?

Yasu: They make me feel I have really spoken English. It gives me a great sense of satisfaction.

KT: So it is for the sense of satisfaction that you spoke English with White people.

Yasu: Yes, it really makes me feel I am communicating in English.
Yasu's assertion that the same level of satisfaction does not result from his associations with Asian Canadians, points to the significance of the assumed Otherness of "Canadians" that determines the level of his satisfaction and achievement.

Similarly, Gon, Kengo, and Toshi explained their desire to be among "Canadians" and presented a contrasting image of "Canadians" and Asian Canadians respectively as "Others" and the familiar. The assumed similarity of Asian Canadians did not lead to the sense of being challenged that they desired to overcome in their study abroad experiences. In the following comments, Gon and Toshi expressed their sense of nervousness when with "Canadians."

Gon: I find Asian Canadians are closer.

KT: Are they easier to approach?

Gon: Sure, but I don't know how they are finding about me though. But I really feel it easier.

KT: How about White people?

Gon: It is difficult, as you would expect. I get nervous a little, especially at the beginning.

KT: Why do you think you get nervous?

Gon: First, my English is not good enough. If they are White, they speak English immediately. I still find it threatening. If they use a little bit nuanced expressions, then I will get lost.

KT: Isn't that the same with Asian Canadians?

Gon: But I don't feel nervous with them.

Toshi: For me, English is a huge problem. I always get nervous when talking with Whites. I get nervous like "What if I make mistakes?"

KT: But didn't you say that you would seek White people for improving your English?
Toshi: Yes, I will not be able to improve my English unless I make mistakes. Then the point is who will correct my English. That is something even my friends can do but it is better to have Canadians to do it.

KT: Sure.

Toshi: Don't you agree with me? I want to put myself in this kind of circumstances. When talking (with the Whites), I feel nervous and overwhelmed, but unless I get over this, I will not accomplish anything in this short period of time.

English spoken by "Canadians" was assumed to be "authentic" and thus these students experienced it more difficult to understand than English by other Canadians. Only when spoken by “Canadians,” English became the English, the exclusive property of the West, which the Japanese students desired to acquire. The following remark of Kengo's also epitomizes the significance of the Otherness in these students’ desire for “Canadians.”

Kengo: When I am with White people, as I said before, they seem totally different in ways of thinking and appearance. So, communicating with them makes me feel a sense of self-satisfaction of being able to communicate with those who are far away from us (jibun kara totemohanareta hito). It is almost like being involved in a challenging negotiation. I will give you an example. It seems more difficult to communicate with aliens (uchūjin) than with Koreans, right? It just makes me feel really great. I think there has been this kind of awareness in me.

Kengo's use of the metaphor, "aliens" for "Canadians" reveals his sense of discontinuity towards them. The preconceived sense of the Otherness of “Canadians” resulted in his sense of being challenged in his “negotiating” with "Canadians." It makes the socialization with them more exciting and rewarding.

The contrasting reactions that the Japanese students had in relation to "Canadians" and Asian Canadians explain the significance of Otherness in these students' socialization patterns. Interactions with "Canadians" enable the Japanese students to experience a greater sense of satisfaction and
accomplishment, due primarily to the assumed Otherness. In other words, these students attempted to appropriate the Otherness of "Canadians" for self-satisfaction and transformation. The Otherness of "Canadians" led these students to view them as the final test against which their achievement was measured. Only when they overcome the nervousness they experienced with "Canadians," would they finally enjoy a full sense of achievement and satisfaction.

The Japanese students viewed their direct exposure to the assumed "Otherness" of the West as opportunities to further develop their potential. The discursive Otherness of "Canadians" becomes an empowering agent for the Japanese students' self-transformation: "internationalisation." As shown above, many Japanese students attempted to overcome the physical and psychological challenges posed by "Canadians" by immersing themselves among them. I argue that the driving force behind their willingness to encounter and overcome these challenges results from their desire to "internationalize" themselves. Only after overcoming the Otherness can the Japanese students finally achieve the self-transformation into kokusai-jin, an "international" person.

Study abroad experiences were expected to help these students move ahead of others in Japan. Given the boom of "internationalization" in Japan, the mere exposure to the West possesses a significant importance to these students (Becker, 1990). After nine months of study abroad experiences in Vancouver, Kengo was looking forward to returning home. Kengo expressed his acquired confidence as a result of his study abroad experiences in Vancouver.

*Kengo: After going through shugyō, in foreign countries like Canada, when returning Japan, I can say to my friends that "I am different from you guys. (...) In this sense, I guess I should not stay here for good. I need to return home and show off my experience. In this sense, I came to gaikoku with the awareness that eventually I would be back home.*
Similarly, Gon also expected the challenge that he had experienced throughout his study abroad experience, would benefit him upon returning home.

*Gon:* Being exposed to a different culture and different perspective should be highly evaluated. I should be more valued than those who just stay in Japan. There is something that mere studying in Japan cannot achieve.

Ryō also thought that the difficult time he spent in Vancouver would put him ahead of others in Japan. He believed that living in the West, the different culture, had caused him many difficulties. Thus, he hoped this experience would be highly valued and put him ahead of other Japanese who stayed home. The cultural gap between Japan and the West was assumed to be so significant that merely living in the West was believed to be challenging, thus empowering these students once they overcome it.

For the purpose of transforming themselves into *kokusai-jin,* an “international” person, the Japanese students actively sought and faced the challenge of being among “Canadians.” Kengo exemplifies this point.

*KT:* You have been telling me that you feel comfortable with Asian friends, right?

*Kengo:* Yes, Yes.

*KT:* But you are still finding your relationship with White people more important. It sounds to me that you are a bit contradicted. Can you elaborate on that more?

*Kengo:* I want to develop my potentiality even with those I cannot feel comfortable with, even with those I cannot feel to be friends in a fundamental biological sense (konpontekina seibutsugakutekina imide). I want to develop my potentiality of getting along with these people. While I have a good sense that I can become friends with Asians, I don’t feel that way with White people. Nonetheless, I feel like trying to develop my potentiality through interacting with these people.

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40 *Shugyō* means a demanding mental and physical training.
"Canadian" became a transforming agent for Japanese to capitalize on. Their Otherness, the cause of fear, tension, and challenge, turned "Canadians" into an empowering agent for the Japanese students' "internationalization."

This desire to appropriate the Otherness of the West explains the Japanese students’ disappointment at the presence of "us" in gaikoku. They were dissatisfied with the lack of Otherness, the source of challenge necessary for "internationalizing" themselves. The presence of the perceived familiarity became a stumbling block for these students to accomplish the primary objective of their trip. Out of frustration, many of the students criticized themselves for not making sufficient effort to gain access to "Canadians." For the Japanese students, study abroad was supposed to be a sort of shugyō, a rigorous training for mental and physical strength. However, instead of spending time with those who would challenge them, they found themselves among Asian Canadians, other Japanese, and Asian students from China, Korean and Taiwan. While they enjoyed the friendship with these friends, they were frustrated at not being able to move into the challenging "Canadian" world.

For Gon, the main objective of his studying abroad was to highly challenge himself in the world of "Otherness" in order to foster his mental and physical strength. He expressed his disappointment about the lack of "Canadian" friends after two years of his study abroad experience in Vancouver. He blamed himself for not making the necessary effort to seek the challenge that had drawn him to Canada.

Gon: The problem is the fact that though I am in a White society, I don't have any White friends. Since I have not entered the White society, I don't speak English and don't learn the culture. I really need to challenge myself. Among Asians, I don't get challenged much since we are similar in our languages and cultures. With them, I don't get challenged at all. I think that challenging myself means entering the White society. I need to challenge myself by overcoming the barriers of language, culture,
and race. That's why I think I am not challenging myself enough. I get frustrated by the fact that I am not challenging myself and even getting indulged. I am timid.

Gon viewed it as an indulgence to socialize with Asians since they were comfortable "us." Clearly, his friendship patterns centred not on a sense of comfort and relief that people would normally seek in a friendship but rather on a sense of challenge.

Facing the same problem, many other students also criticized themselves for not making sufficient effort to become immersed in "Canadianness." Eigo provided another typical example of this kind.

Eigo: Having spent half a year so far, I am not satisfied with what I have done at all.

KT: Why?

Eigo: I could have done more. I regret.

KT: What could you have done more, for example?

Eigo: I should have been more active.

KT: In what sense? What do you mean by active, in what way could you have been more active?

Eigo: For instance, I should have looked for more opportunities to meet Canadians. This is the biggest problem that I have.

KT: So, that is something you did not do enough.

Eigo: I said before in this interview that there were very few chances for meeting Canadians. But it is not that there were few chances, but it is simply because I was not making enough effort to meet them. I could have done more. There were opportunities to meet Canadians but I was not actively trying to get to know them. Even when I met Tom, (his only "Canadian" acquaintance) it was because he talked to me, not because I talked to him. I was very happy though. I should have talked to more people. (...) I really need to make more Canadian friends. This is something that I have not done enough in the past half year.
Summary

In the narratives of desire for "Canadians," the discursive image of "Canadians" was constructed in the intricate mix of the three key discourses, neocolonialism, "internationalization," and nihonjinron. As seen in the discourse of Japanese "internationalization," the West ("Canadians") is the dominant and superior that defines the "internationality" that the Japanese students desired to gain. In order to "internationalize" themselves, these students desired to become immersed among the embodiment of the West, "Canadians." By tracing neocolonial and nihonjinron discourses throughout the Japanese students' experiences, I demonstrated that "Canadians" represented the complete "Other" to the Japanese students, both in hierarchical and cultural relativistic senses.

As discussed in Chapter IV, the internalization of nihonjinron drove the Japanese students to neglect the human commonality between Japanese "Self" and Western "Others" (Yoshino, 1999). The symbolic sense of Otherness of "Canadians" became a source of psychological challenges for the Japanese students and simultaneously rendered "Canadians" into the empowering medium with which these students attempted to realize self-transformation, "internationalizing" themselves. Not until the Japanese students gained a sense of confidence with the "Other" could they expect this self-transformation. Again, "Canadians" were objectified as the monolithic "Other" without individual personalities. The Japanese students appropriated "Canadians" as a rare and valuable medium for the Otherness essential for their self-transformation into kokusai-jin, an "international" person.
CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Introduction

In this concluding chapter, first I summarize the analyses of the findings presented in the previous two chapters. In doing so, I point out how the three key discourses: noecolonialism, "internationalization," and *nihonjinron* were manifested throughout the Japanese students' study abroad experiences in Vancouver. Second, based on the summary, I go on to present the implications of the study and suggestions for future studies in the area of study abroad.

Summary of Findings

I started my research with a general objective: to examine Japanese students' study abroad experiences in Vancouver. I conceptually framed study abroad as contested space where global and local ideological discourses become contested, intertwined, and manifested throughout foreign students' experiences. Based on this perspective, I reviewed the local and global discourses surrounding Japanese students' study abroad: noecolonialism, "internationalization," and *nihonjinron*. As I analyzed the interview data, these three discourses emerged as prominent themes that shaped the Japanese students' experiences. In addition, as a larger research question for the study, I examined Japanese students' experiences in terms of Said's (1995) hope for the creation of a non-coercive, non-dominative, and non-essentialist knowledge. I incorporated his call in my study and formulated a general research question; "Can study abroad provide a transformative learning experience that helps students to move beyond hegemonic imperial discourses of 'race' and nation"?
The findings of the study confirmed that the Japanese students were deeply situated in the contested space where these global and local ideological forces converged and to a large extent shaped their social experiences. The following is the summary of how these three discourses became closely interconnected and manifested throughout the Japanese students' study abroad experiences in Vancouver. The Japanese discourse of "internationalization" formed the larger discourse that encompassed the Japanese students' study abroad experiences in Vancouver. All the Japanese students viewed studying abroad as an opportunity for "internationalizing" themselves. Study abroad became an important future investment, a means for them to acquire the "internationality" necessary for advancing their future careers in Japan. Given that most of the students planned to stay in Vancouver for less than one year, they needed to achieve the "internationality" within this limited time span so that their investment in study abroad would pay off. For this purpose, they desired to become as immersed as possible among "Canadians," the embodiment of the West.

To realize their objective of study abroad, Vancouver had to be gaikoku, the imaginary space of the West where Whites, Western culture, and the English language were present. Contrary to their initial expectation, the unexpected presence of non-Western "us," Asian and Asian Canadians prevented them from experiencing the sense of being in gaikoku, the world of Otherness. Even after realizing the multiculturality of the city, the majority of the students continued to cling to their initial objective, the exploration of the Western "Others."

In the narratives of the desire for "Canadians," the discourse of "internationalization" became closely interconnected with the other two discourses: nihonjinron and neocolonialism. First, the discourse of nihonjinron became significant in the way the Japanese students discursively constructed "Canadians" as the "Other." They demonstrated their uncritical acceptance of nihonjinron discourse and thus strongly believed in Japan's "uniqueness" and its "discontinuity" from the West. They viewed "Canadians" as the complete "Others" who were culturally,
psychologically, and biologically “discontinuous” from the Japanese “Self.” This Otherness of “Canadians” was also examined from the perspective of the neocolonial discourse. The Japanese students experienced the symbolic sense of Otherness in terms of the hierarchical status distance from “Canadians.” The hierarchical “racial” and cultural relations existed between the Japanese students and “Canadians,” making the former define themselves as culturally and “racially” inferior to the latter. Therefore, the Otherness of “Canadians” consisted of the symbolic differences both in a cultural relativistic and a hierarchical sense. This Otherness in the double senses is what these students desired to explore in their associations with “Canadians.” Furthermore, this sense of Otherness was more acutely expressed in their perceptions towards “Canadian” women. I demonstrated how gender was involved in the way the Japanese male students “otherized” “Canadian” women.

More detailed analysis of this desire for “Canadians” revealed that the Otherness of "Canadians" was conceptualized on the basis of the close interconnections among "race," language, and culture. Whites, "pure" English language, and "pure" Western culture became the essential symbols of the Otherness of "Canadians" that attracted the Japanese students. These three key components were closely intertwined and defined the “authenticity,” in other words, the desirability of "Canadians." Based on this rule of the interconnections, the Japanese students employed the essentialist and dichotomistic understanding of "Self" and "Others" and defined "Canadians" by the sense of distance and discontinuity from themselves. Asian Canadians, as a hybrid existence between the West and East, were treated differently due to their insufficient Otherness. Asian Canadians could present an alternative perspective to the essentialist binarism of the West and East. Nonetheless, the essentialist and ahistorical understandings of cultural difference excluded them from the discursive image of the West, rendering them "non-pure" and "non-authentic" Canadians.

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The symbolic sense of Otherness formed the core of the Japanese students' desire for "Canadians" and thus had a significant impact on their daily interpersonal relationships. For some, the preconceived Otherness of "Canadians" became a source of tension, nervousness, and anxiety. It made some students pessimistic about developing friendships with "Canadians." For other students, the Otherness became a source of excitement and exotica, thus a site for exploration. The Otherness of "Canadians" posed for some students a much-anticipated psychological challenge. Full immersion among "Canadians" became a challenging task that would require a great deal of effort, courage, and determination. This sense of challenge associated with the Otherness of "Canadians" led the students to believe in the possibility of self-transformation as a result of overcoming this challenge, that is, the possibility of "internationalizing" themselves.

Despite the strong desire for the immersion among "Canadians," all the students were far less exposed to this embodiment of the West. With a clear objective of "internationalizing" themselves through the interactions with "Canadians," their lack of "Canadian" exposure placed them in a frustrating situation. This unexpected lack of exposure to "Canadians" intensified their desire and commodifying tendency towards "Canadians." The Japanese students tended to seek "Canadians" primarily for the Otherness as a source of excitement and challenge, for the sense of privilege that the Japanese students enjoyed over their peers, and for the practical value as a medium for absorbing language and culture, thus for "internationalizing" themselves. "Canadians" became the discursive and monolithic "Others" who had many associated values that the Japanese students wished to capitalize upon. "Canadians" were commodified as a prize without any trace of humanity and individuality. This finding confirms that combined with nihonjinron discourse of cultural difference, the discourses of neocolonialism and "internationalization" play a significant role in the Japanese students' objectification and dehumanization of Whites.
Implications of the Study

In this section, I discuss the implication of the present study by drawing on arguments by postcolonial theorists, particularly, Edward Said. First, I turn to the general question of the study that I discussed in the introduction of this thesis: "Can study abroad experience become an educational opportunity to realize Said's educational hope for the creation of non-dominative, non-essentialist, and non-coercive form of knowledge"? My findings did not provide much sense of optimism for this goal. The symbolic gap between the West and Japan remained significant throughout the Japanese students' study abroad experiences, or rather the gap seems to have been widened further. The exaggerated sense of Otherness, coupled with the strong desire for "internationalizing" themselves, led to the commodification and dehumanization of "Canadians" as a tool for self-satisfaction and self-development. In the midst of the global and local ideological discourses, the Japanese students tended to remain deeply entrapped in the hegemonic imperial discourses "Self" and "Others."

Conventionally, study abroad has been considered as the best way to promote international understandings and co-operation among different cultures and nations (Ogawa, 1998, Segawa, 1998). The underlying assumption is that complete immersion in a foreign culture would enable foreign students to gain direct exposure to different culture and people, which would in turn help transform and expand their worldview. As many research findings have shown (Drews, Meyer, & Peregrine,
Given my own study abroad experience, I also believe in the transformative possibility of study abroad experience. It could provide an opportunity for students to challenge the hegemonic nature of the dominant form of knowledge. However, as the study has shown, this should not be uncritically assumed as given. The present study brought to the fore the need for critically re-examining the conventional assumptions regarding study abroad.

Postcolonial scholars such as Willinsky (1998) and Said (1995, 1993) provide us with a useful perspective for this critical re-examination of foreign students' experiences. As Willinsky (1998) argues, the legacy of Western imperialism/colonialism still remains significant in the way the knowledge of non-western "Others" is formed and taught in Western education. The Western Orientalist discourse that divided the world into a clear dichotomy of the West and East still continues to shape our epistemological world. Taking his point further, I demonstrated that the subordinate non-western nations such as Japan turned the Western Orientalist gaze on themselves into neo-nationalistic "affirmative Orientalism" and contributed to the same false division of the world. The dividing line between the West and the East was actively utilized by the non-West for nationalistic causes and for undermining the encroaching Western cultural domination. Thus, the sense of Otherness, gap, and cultural discontinuity between the West and non-West must be understood as a consequence of the multiple manifestations of many hegemonic and ideological forces such as Western Orientalism, neocolonialism and non-western nationalistic discourse such as nihonjinron. Therefore, foreign students' study abroad experiences must be critically examined with particular attention to how they negotiate to construct their experiences in this contested transnational space where the global and local (national) discourses converge.

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41 For example, Drews, Meyer and Peregrine (1996) compare the way students with study abroad experience conceptualize other national groups with those without the experience and conclude that study abroad enables students to have a more personalized view of other national groups.
This sense of false division of the world needs to be eradicated to realize mutual understandings among diverse cultural and national groups. Borrowing Said's (1995) words, we must go beyond "coercive limitations on thought toward a non-dominative and non-essentialist type of learning" (p.4) and challenge "a frozen reified sense of opposed 'Others'" (p.6) to be able to perceive "Others" as humans with the common humanity. The binarism of "Self" and the "Other" shared by Orientalism and nihonjinron creates the "epistemological reality" of "Self" and the "Other" that denies possibilities of any other alternative perspectives. It precludes a more nuanced and multidimensional understanding of each other, leading to distortion, exaggeration, and caricature. Thus, the essentialist and ahistorical understandings of "racial," cultural and national differences simply end up turning human-beings against each other.

In order for students to transcend this simplistic understandings of cultural, "racial," and national essence, they must be assisted to discover a world not constructed out of warring cultural and national essences (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 1999). Said (1993) argues that this transcendence can be realized if we recognize our own multiple identities that allow us to think beyond our local identities. This culminates in the move towards what Said (1993) calls "human liberation:" clear consciousness of a universal "Self," which is a unification of "Self" and the "Other." This attempt to move beyond simple binary opposition leads us to the larger human realities of community among diverse cultures, peoples, and societies (Said, 1993). I argue that this global sense of community among human-beings form the ultimate goal for what I call critical international education. Study abroad must and could foster this sense of community among different "races," cultures, and nations.

To turn study abroad into an effective means to realize this human liberation, education needs to help students deconstruct the involvement of power, nation, nationalism, and the legacy of Western imperialism and colonialism in the way they understand and perceive the present world.
(Willinsky, 1998). Only with this educational initiative, will study abroad become an opportunity for foreign students to experience a sense of common humanity with “Others” beyond cultural, “racial,” and national difference. If study abroad, as has been conventionally believed, continues to be viewed as an effective way to “internationalize” students, it must be reoriented in a way to help students deconstruct the involvement of global and regional ideological discourses in the way they understand "Self" and "Others." The transformative possibility of study abroad lies in the direct exposure to "Others" whom students have known only through media representations. It has a potential to encourage students to view "Others" from a non-hegemonic and non-ideological perspective. It will be beyond the focus of the study to provide any concrete blueprint for a study abroad program that would promote this transformative learning process. I hope that the present study has pointed out the pressing necessity for this initiative.

Suggestions for Future Research

In this section, I present some new areas of interest for a future study, which sprang out of the present study. I believe that the following five suggestions are essential for expanding our comprehensive understandings of foreign students' experiences. First, the present study clearly demonstrated the importance of a post-colonial perspective in understanding study abroad experiences of the Japanese students. Nonetheless, to my knowledge, there have been few initiatives to examine foreign students' experiences from this postcolonial perspective. Given the postcolonial nature of study abroad itself as I demonstrated in Chapter III, it is essential to employ this particular perspective to better understand foreign students' experiences. Further studies must be pursued from this perspective to add more knowledge to our understanding of foreign students' experience. Furthermore, I proposed a new conceptual approach to study abroad, the view of study abroad as contested space where global and local ideological discourses converge to shape foreign students'
experiences. This study’s particular attention to the local and global ideological discourses in foreign students’ experience is unprecedented to the best of my knowledge and thus its validity remains to be seen. It needs to be critically examined and employed more in the examination of foreign students’ experiences.

Second, the present study examined the study abroad experiences of a relatively small number of Japanese students. To establish more comprehensive knowledge, further studies should include international students in the West from other marginalized nations. Third, the present study paid particular attention to the specificity of neocolonial power relations between Japan and the West. The discourses of “internationalization” and *nihonjinron* emerged as a result of this focus and enabled me to examine the specific experiences of Japanese students that were housed in these discourses. Thus, postcolonial studies on foreign students’ experience must take into consideration the specific neocolonial power dynamics between the West and non-Western sending nations.

Fourth, the present study did not focus on the academic aspect of study abroad experiences. Given the significance of the neocolonial discourse on the Japanese students’ socialization and friendship patterns, it is not difficult to assume that the same extent of influence could be demonstrated in the students’ academic experience. Therefore, it is of great interest to examine the impact of the same discourse on students’ learning experiences. Lastly, the role of gender and sexuality should also be further examined in postcolonial studies on foreign students’ study abroad experiences. Though the present study partially demonstrated the role of gender in the way the Japanese male students "otherized" "Canadian" women, gender was not employed as the major analytical concept for the whole data analysis. I recognize the lack of gender analysis in my study as the major limitation, especially given that all participants were male. In addition, I did not examine sexuality of the participants because the inclusion of sexuality seemed beyond the scope of my study. However, many postcolonial studies have demonstrated the interconnections of “race,” gender and
sexuality in colonial discourse. For example, the present study could have taken into consideration the impact of the genderizing colonial discourse that de-masculinizes Asian males in North America (Kelsky, 1994 & Wong, 1993). Also, it would have been interesting to examine how the contradicting discourses of masculinity in Japan and the West affect the Japanese male students' experience. Thus, I suggest that further studies place more focus on the role of gender and sexuality in connection with the roles of "race" and nation in foreign students' experiences.

\[42\) See, for example, Young's (1995) Colonial Desire.
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Internet Web Sites


APPENDIX A

INFORMATION ON PARTICIPANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Time spent in Vancouver</th>
<th>Institution they were studying at/ Educational background in Japan</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Kazuo:</td>
<td>23 yrs old</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Studying at English Language School in the first year. Presently a first year student at a Community College University graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gon:</td>
<td>20 yrs old</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Studying at English Language School in the first year. Presently a first year student Community College High school graduate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shōji</td>
<td>30 yrs old</td>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>Studying at an English Language School. Came to Vancouver after quitting a job. University graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasu</td>
<td>23 yrs old</td>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>Studying at an English language School. On Working Holiday Visa University Graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saburō</td>
<td>21 yrs old</td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>Studying at English language school. On Working Holiday Visa High school graduate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yōhei</td>
<td>23 yrs old</td>
<td>1 yr and 6 months</td>
<td>Student exchange program 4th year university student. Spend one year in student exchange in the previous year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tatsuo</td>
<td>20 yrs old</td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>Student exchange program 2nd year university student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jirō</td>
<td>20 yrs old</td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>Student exchange program 2nd year university student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kengo</td>
<td>23 yrs old</td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>Student exchange program 3rd year university student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shinji</td>
<td>22 yrs old</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Studying at an English language school. Took one-year absence from his university in the end of his third year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun</td>
<td>22 yrs old</td>
<td>7 months</td>
<td>Studying at an English language school. Took one-year absence from his university in the end of his third year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toshi</td>
<td>22 yrs old</td>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>Studying at an English language school. Took one-year absence from his university in the end of third year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Status</td>
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<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Masa</td>
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<td>Studying at an English language school. Took one-year absence from his university in the end of third year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ryō</td>
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<tr>
<td>Takeshi</td>
<td>27 yrs</td>
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<td>Studying at an English language school. Preparing to get into a graduate school in Vancouver. University graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yūya</td>
<td>28 yrs</td>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>Studying at an English language school. Preparing to get into a graduate school in Canada. University graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eigo</td>
<td>24 yrs</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Studying at an English language school. University graduate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW GUIDE

On Pre-departure Expectation and Motivation

1) Why did you want to study abroad? What was your motivation?
2) When and why did you start thinking about studying abroad?
3) Did you have any image of your life in Vancouver before your departure?
4) Why did you choose Vancouver and Canada?
5) What was your initial image of Vancouver and Canada?
6) What was your initial image of Canadians?
7) What did you talk about with your friends before you came to Vancouver? What did your friends say to you?
8) What did you plan to accomplish while you were in Vancouver?

On Study Abroad Experience in Vancouver

9) What were your initial impressions of the city and the people in Vancouver when you arrived in the city? Was there any positive or negative feeling?
10) Where did you stay?
11) With whom did you stay?
12) What is the ethnic background of people you were living with?
13) How do you find living with non-Japanese people?
14) Where did you study?
15) What was the ethnic background of the students at your school?
16) How did you find studying in your school? Are you satisfied?
17) What is the ethnic background of your friends?
18) How are you finding your friendship? Do you face any problems in your friendships?
19) What did you usually do after school? Are you involved in any off-school activities?
20) Whom did you hang out with the most? What is their ethnic background?
21) Do you have any Canadian friends? If so, how are you finding your friendship with “Canadians”? If not, what do you think of the fact that you don’t have Canadian friends?
22) Is there anything you are satisfied or dissatisfied with during your stay in Vancouver?
23) What do you think of the ethnic diversity in Vancouver?
24) Is there anything you think you could have done so far during your stay in Vancouver?
25) As a result of your study abroad experience in Vancouver, what do you reflect on Japan?

Post-Study Abroad Expectation

26) What do you think you learned the most out of this study abroad experience?
27) What are you going to do once you return to Japan?
28) What kind of benefit do you expect out of your study abroad experience?
29) How do you think others will perceive you once you return home?