Blurring the boundaries: Japanese students negotiating their experiences in a New Zealand tertiary institution with international characteristics

A thesis presented in fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Second Language Teaching
At Massey University, Manawatu,
New Zealand.

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2017

Abstract

This research uses a sociocultural perspective to explore the experiences of a group of Japanese study abroad students living and studying in a private, Japanese-owned tertiary institution in New Zealand. The data collection included a questionnaire investigating pre-arrival expectations and a longitudinal phase of semi-structured interviews.

The Japanese characteristics of the college, in spite of its location in New Zealand, constructed the students' experience in a way that blurred the boundaries between study in Japan and study abroad. For example, the number of Japanese students present and numerous physical aspects reminiscent of Japan combined with factors, such as the college's Japanese focused support and continued support from home via the internet, to limit the students' ability to have a truly international experience. In examining this, the thesis draws an analogy with the Dejima situation, referring to a famous artificial island in Nagasaki, which accommodated Dutch merchants during Japan's isolationist period and was linked to the mainland by a narrow bridge. In this environment, the Dutch were not permitted entry into Japan proper, thus never gained a real sense of Japanese life nor membership to its society.

While the students often resented elements of college policy, which kept them embedded in Japanese ways of doing things and seeing the world, they also often came to value some of these for the affordances they gave for personal growth and unique experiences while remaining in a 'safe' environment. The experience also allowed the students to form close relationships with co-national peers, which became highly valued. Ultimately, the experience seemed to lead them to an appreciative re-examination of their own identities, as Japanese young people, and forge new identities to fit their situation in New Zealand. The other major affordance provided by the college was access to a tertiary qualification, something that appeared beyond their reach in Japan.

Although the participants' study abroad experience could generally be considered an affordance overall, it is suggested that the restricted opportunities for access to the community beyond the campus reduced some of the possibilities for the development of an international identity.

Acknowledgements

This thesis examines the life-changing journey of a group of Japanese students on a study abroad experience in New Zealand. They undertook this journey for adventure, but also to improve their position in the world. This is similar to my reasons to take this research journey, and like the participants in this study, I could not have completed my journey without the assistance and selflessness of others.

Firstly, I would like to sincerely thank my supervisors: Dr. Peter Petrucci, whose insights, particularly regarding the Japanese aspects of the study, were invaluable: Dr. Gillian Skyrme, whose ability with wording was a thing of wonder and her eye for detail defied belief. I was truly blessed to be guided on my enlightening journey by these inspiring scholars, who were, at the same time, very down-to-earth. Words of gratitude cannot adequately express my feelings here and I will honestly miss our midnight Skype meetings that became a feature of this study after I left New Zealand.

I must also acknowledge those who were important behind the scenes. Arigato gozaimasu Professor Hino and Dr. Eguchi for being role models. To my parents and my wife's parents, for their assistance in my family's move to New Zealand to undertake my research and their support thereafter. Thanks also to Kojima-sensei whose help at the research site was indispensable. Thank you, Q-sorters: Dr. Ross Cassells, Peter Davies, Cindy Tan, Brendon Chapple, Dr. Skyrme and Dr. Petrucci. Many thanks to the people who helped with translation work in this study: Rie Watanabe, Taku Saito and Chris Duggan.

It goes without saying that without the research participants trusting me with their information and experiences this study would never have been possible. Thank you and may the future be all you dreamed it to be. Special thanks to those who answered questions even after the data collection had concluded, in particular Shihoko.

Lastly, my deepest thanks to my wife and children. Bless you for your support and the massive sacrifices that each of you personally made along my journey. I hope that my quest for knowledge and the spirit I have shown have in some way echoed the words of my favorite troubadour, Steve Earle: "You can either get through life or live it. And if you wanna live it, there's only two things you need: an inquisitive mind and a fearless heart".

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. The genesis

The genesis of this research dates back to 1st August 1997 when I set foot in Japan as an English teacher, ignorant of both the country and its culture. Although I had taken a course in Japanese before departing New Zealand, the extent of my language proficiency was limited to simple greetings and the ability to count from one to ten. After arriving in Japan, I received a brief orientation before beginning as an English teacher in a suburban junior high school; the culture shock was immense. The support provided by my employers to cope with this was negligible, but the support from my native speaking English teacher colleagues was invaluable: If not for them, my stay in Japan would have been short. With effort and perseverance, my friendships with these colleagues strengthened and I also made some Japanese friends – at that point, my world began to open. I still feel a great deal of gratitude toward my native speaking work colleagues and Japanese friends for the support that they gave me that set me on the trajectory that I am still travelling along. It was this trajectory that led me back to New Zealand, where I came upon the participants in this study and the unique, fascinating setting that they studied in.

These feelings and my personal experiences provided me with the initial motivation to undertake the research in this thesis and gain an insight into the experiences of Japanese students who studied in one particularly interesting tertiary institution in provincial New Zealand. In some ways, their experience is similar to my situation and I knew from my experience how disorientated they may have been in trying to settle into a new country far from home with a radically different culture. One of the most appealing aspects of my study was that it allowed me to investigate beyond the focal students' academic experiences and gain a deep understanding of their everyday life. The environment that my research participants experienced is unquestionably different to the one I knew when I arrived in Japan, not just because of role reversals. For instance, the Internet in the contemporary world allows people to remain closely connected to home, whereas in 1997, barring expensive phone calls, the extent of my connectivity with New Zealand was through letters from my mother that contained two-week-old news. This meant that when I arrived in Japan I experienced a true sense of being totally immersed in a different country and culture. However, with the new technologies available today, I felt that living abroad must have shifted markedly from my early days in Japan. I also believed that the changes that these new technologies brought to contemporary study abroad experiences needed to be investigated. That stated, I entered the research under the belief that there may also have been some crossover between my experience and that of my participants, and relished the opportunity to find out how they navigated through challenges to live and study in a foreign country in the hope of gaining a tertiary qualification.

1.2. What is study abroad?

This research focuses on the first 18 months of experiences of a group of Japanese students who came to a New Zealand tertiary institute to study English, and other subjects in English in the pursuit of a tertiary qualification. One issue facing this research was how to refer to my cohort; were they international students or study abroad students? According to Freed (1995), the term *study abroad* is particularly an American or European reference. Much of the literature, such as Franklin (2010), Dwyer (2004) and Engle and Engle (2003), tends to limit the term *study abroad* to students who only stay a short period of time overseas and receive academic credits from the host institution that count towards their degree back home. In contrast, it appears that students earning credits at an overseas institution in hope of obtaining a degree from that institution are generally referred to as *international students*. Under this strict definition, the participants in this research would be considered international students; however, some scholars disagree with this interpretation. Both Asaoka and Yano (2009), and Andrade (2006) posit that the term *study abroad* encompasses both short-term and long-term experiences and includes moving to another country to complete a qualification. Coleman (2013, p. 22) also defines study abroad as "simply undertaking all or part of university education abroad". Adding support to these broad interpretations, Giedt, Gokcek and Ghosh (2015) refer to the definition of study abroad put forward by the U.S.-based association, the Forum on Education Abroad:

> Education that occurs outside the participant's home country. Besides study abroad, examples include such international experiences as work, volunteering, non-credit internships, and directed travel, as long as these programs are driven to a significant degree by learning goals. (p. 168)

I side with the broad interpretations of study abroad above and therefore will refer to my participants as study abroad students throughout this thesis.

Block (2007b) points out that study abroad students are generally from middle-class backgrounds, aged between 18 and 22 and engaged in tertiary study. In this way, they differ markedly from migrant or refugee learners. Other ways in which they differ to migrants or refuges is that they generally do not look to reside permanently in the host country after studying nor seek paid employment while abroad.

1.3. International education in the New Zealand context

English appears to have become 'the' premier international language of the modern world. It is now the international language of science, medicine, travel and tourism. English is also the key language in business. The desire to gain English skills has appeared to evolve in tandem with the global economy: Almost every country wants to trade with the U.S., the U.K. or any current or former member of the British Commonwealth (Mufwene, 2010, p. 47). A combination of the factors listed above form the foundation to the growth of study abroad in English-speaking countries.

New Zealand's history of hosting international tertiary students on a large scale commenced in the early 1950's with the advent of the Commonwealth Colombo Plan, but it has only been in recent times that New Zealand has considered international education as a lucrative endeavor (Butcher, 2007; Butcher, 2009; Butcher, 2010; Smith & Rae, 2006). During the 1980s, there was an expansion of private English language centers established to serve students on short term visits, such as Japanese high school students during their

school holidays (G. Skyrme, personal communication, July 23, 2017). In the early 2000s, there was a rapid growth in the number of students studying in New Zealand for longer periods and to obtain university qualifications (Ministry of Education New Zealand (MOE), 2012b). Tertiary education in contemporary New Zealand is viewed as a commercial product that can be bought and sold like any other commodity (Altbach, 2001; Martens & Starke, 2008) and the amount of revenue generated is considerable (Codd, 2004); so much so that Chris Carter (New Zealand's Education Minister at the time of the pronouncement) called international education "a significant national asset" (Choi, 2008, para. 5).

The currency that international students bring into New Zealand is not just spent on education; approximately two-thirds of the money goes to things such as accommodation, food, and leisure activities (Gamble & Reid, 2002; Martens & Starke, 2008). The amount of money that has flowed into New Zealand from hosting international students rose from approximately NZ[1]$545 million in 2000 to NZ$3.1 billion in 2015 (McPherson, 2016) and in 2016 export education was New Zealand's fourth largest export industry (Education New Zealand, n.d.). Further growth is expected by the New Zealand government, with a target of NZ$5 billion by 2025.

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[1] New Zealand

1.4. Global Family College[2] へようこそ (Welcome to Global Family College)

In the late 80s, a Japanese non-profit organization proposed the establishment of a private college in New Zealand overseen by New Zealand's Ministry of Education where students would study English as a second language (L2) and learn other subjects, such as business, through the medium of English. Although the college was not afforded full university status by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority gave approval for the institution to teach diplomas and three-year bachelor's degree courses; both rulings remain in place today.

Global Family College (GFC)[3] officially opened for business as a private foreign-owned college in the early 90s with a roll of just under 70 students. The organization that founded GFC has numerous high schools in Japan that act, in a sense, as feeder schools and many of the Japanese students that attend GFC come from these schools via an almost default pathway. These feeder high schools cater specifically to *hikikomori* (socially withdrawn) and truant students, who are often on a second chance at high school study. The owners of GFC originally proposed that the college provide education only for students from Japan; however, after pressure from the New Zealand Ministry of Education, the first non-Japanese international students arrived soon after the college's opening. With the

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[2] Pseudonym: all references to institutions, businesses and people in this thesis are pseudonyms
[3] Acronyms are explained at first occurrence. They are further listed in Appendix 1, 3.

commencement of the three-year bachelor's degree program, management began a stronger recruitment push for non-Japanese international students from Singapore, Hong Kong and China. This has continued, and the college has a wide range of international students, many of whom live on campus in halls of residence which can accommodate over 500 students.

The college faced criticism, particularly in its initial years, from New Zealand, where media reports questioned the motives of students and the rigor of study at GFC. There was also a protest from the Japanese Ministry of Education regarding the worthiness of GFC qualifications in the Japan context; GFC management countered that it was fully registered and located in New Zealand, so it was none of the Japanese Ministry of Education's business. Furthermore, GFC is not listed in the highly-ranked Japanese university system. Significantly, having stated this, GFC appears to be an extremely Japanese environment.

One key element of this research which is distinctive, and equally confusing, is that in attending GFC, students enter an institution that appears to be heavily influenced by concepts commonly linked to Japanese culture (see Chapter Three). In most study abroad programs, students go into an institution that is predicated on the local community - meaning their education experience should or will be different to that they would experience at home. So, consideration needs to be given to what extent the education experience at GFC would differ from what the participants could expect in Japan, leading naturally to an understanding of why Japanese students choose to study at GFC. There is no research literature that looks at institutions like GFC but given changes in such things as media technology, the increased mobility of people across borders and borderless investment opportunities the timing of this research is perfect. There is now a need for

research in very peculiar and very specific situations such as these that have only become possible with the type of technologies and the kind of student populations we now have in the post-modern world. As this thesis will show, study abroad and international education can take many forms and offer many different values and it is important that we consider all of them.

1.4.1. The structure of GFC

GFC is located in the outer suburbs of a provincial New Zealand city. Physically, GFC appears to be very reminiscent of Japan in numerous aspects, such as with the *sakura* (cherry) trees that line the access road to the main administration building and its well-manicured, park-like campus in which the administration, accommodation and residential buildings are located. The staff at GFC are predominantly made up of Japanese and New Zealanders (who often have experience in Japan), which adds to the Japaneseness of the college. These points contribute to my resolution to refer to the participants as study abroad students as opposed to international students. The students were aiming to complete their qualification, in the international education sense, at GFC from start to finish. However, because of GFC's specific concentration on Japanese students, they were also provided with special attention in a way reminiscent of a study abroad program. The fact that the college may be considered somewhat hybrid with overlapping notions of study abroad and international education intrigued me because it was something I had never encountered before. It is because of this sense of overlap that the literature review chapters draw on both study abroad literature and that dealing with international education.

During the time of this research, the structure of education at GFC was based on three programs:

- The Foundation program

- The Diploma program

- The Degree program

The Foundation program had no attached qualification per se and was considered a preparatory program for the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) which served as a gate-keeper to further studies in either the Diploma or Degree program. However, it dealt strictly with language skills and was not an English for academic purposes (EAP) course. In Foundation, students studied the four language skills, along with grammar and vocabulary, Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm. The program consisted of seven streamed classes, the initial placement in which was based on a test administrated when the students arrived at GFC. Students could move up class levels later as their TOEIC score increased – providing places were available in higher classes. The maximum period a student could study in the Foundation program was one academic year. In their second year, they had to enter the Diploma program if they had not qualified for the Degree program full-time.

Diploma was a content-based course, but set at a much lower level than Degree. Degree was what almost all students aimed for, however, some students chose to study in Diploma because they could study tourism as an academic subject, which was not offered in Degree. Diploma was generally held in low regard by staff and students alike and viewed simply as the destination for those students who had stayed at the college beyond Foundation, but were not ready to cope with the linguistic demands of Degree. One of the main reasons for

the negative perception of the Diploma program was linked to how little it was thought to

raise the employability of students back home.

Figure 1.1 Qualifying for Degree
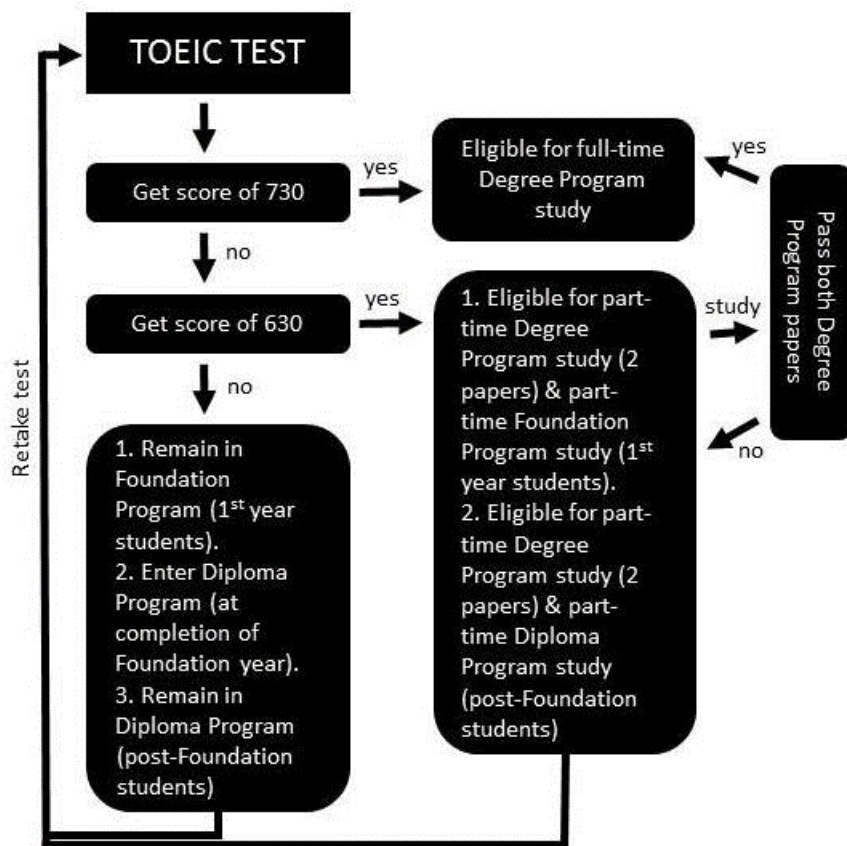
To enter Degree, students needed a TOEIC qualifying score of at least 630 for part-time

study and 730 to qualify for full-time. Part-time study allowed students to take a maximum

of two courses in the Degree program, while their other two courses were in either

Foundation (if in their first year at GFC) or the Diploma program (if they had attended

GFC for over one academic year). It was very rare for any Japanese student to arrive at

GFC with even a part-time qualifying score and, in the case of this research, all

participants spent at least one semester in the Foundation program studying language skills

and undergoing numerous TOEIC tests to qualify for Degree. Once students had entered

the Degree program full-time (i.e. all their courses were based in the Degree program), their future TOEIC scores had no bearing on their place in the program – even though it was compulsory for all second language students at GFC to take TOEIC once a year. This was linked to a unique feature of GFC's academic programs: they all featured an English skills component. Although Degree was thought of as a completely content-based course in general, the Japanese students were still required to take English skills classes from which they received credits toward their Degree. Figure 1.1 shows the routes which GFC students could take to enter the Degree program.

1.5. Conclusion

Despite high numbers of Japanese studying at the tertiary level in New Zealand, there is sparse research regarding Japanese students studying in the New Zealand context at any level. There is a lack of information on why Japanese students come to New Zealand to study or any specific needs that they have. There is equally a dearth of information on the experiences that Japanese international tertiary students have in New Zealand, how these experiences are perceived and why they are viewed in particular ways. Although the context of this study has unique characteristics, as any institution has, it is hoped that this research will contribute further understanding to this issue. The research questions that follow were developed to gain an insight and understand the points above, and also address gaps in the literature – particularly those that pertain to GFC and its student body.

Research Questions

1. What are the expectations, aspirations and interests of the Japanese international students undertaking study abroad in a private Japanese-owned and influenced New Zealand tertiary institution?

2. How do the students negotiate their experiences, and how does their sense of identity and belonging evolve over time?

3. How do they evaluate their experience?

To answer these questions, this thesis is comprised of 10 chapters (including the introductory chapter). Chapters Two and Three review the relevant literature. The former focuses on study abroad and international education in a broad sense – exploring facets such as identity, settling in, and the general academic and social aspects. The latter looks specifically at study abroad in relation to Japanese students and presents some salient concepts of Japanese culture, before concluding with a brief commentary on GFC. The chapter that follows details the methodologies employed in gaining and analyzing the data in this research. The research findings are presented in Chapters Five to Eight. Chapter Five focuses on academic aspects of the participants' experience, while both Chapter Six and Seven present experiences outside the classroom. Chapter Six concentrates on social aspects, such as friendship, support and accommodation, and Chapter Seven provides accounts of the challenges and new experiences that the participants took on. Chapter Eight documents the transformations and changes to identity that the participants made during their GFC experience. This chapter also looks at how the students conceptualized Japan and New Zealand, their changeable satisfaction levels during the research period and employment dreams of some participants' – and the reality that they found post-

graduation. The key findings are discussed in Chapter Nine before the thesis is concluded in Chapter Ten.

Chapter Two: The world of study abroad

2.1. Introduction

This research is based on learning, connectedness and belonging, and looks at the experiences of Japanese tertiary students studying abroad in a particular tertiary context. The study looks at the students' experiences both inside and outside the classroom, and focuses on their negotiations of those settings, as well as their interactions, relationships and possible identity transformations. To develop research questions that would seek a deep understanding of the experiences of my cohort I considered it prudent to gain a thorough knowledge in the intricacies of second language learners studying abroad, such as the nature of issues involving identity and a sense of belonging.

This chapter begins with a focus on study abroad (2.2), presenting commonly held beliefs about study abroad, the need for social connectedness while studying overseas, and the formation of co-national groups of students, and wraps up with a short piece on the commercial aspect of study abroad in New Zealand. After this, in section 2.3, the typical struggles in experiencing study abroad as outlined in the literature are given focus, with attention paid to culture shock and adaptation, homesickness and nostalgia, the cultural

link to food, and the emergence of international students from culture shock. The next section of this chapter (2.4) examines the role and effects of being connected to the outside world via the Internet and using social media to stay in touch with home while overseas. Section 2.5 deals with institutional support for international students and the debate over appropriate levels of support – including accommodation arrangements for international students. The academic side of study abroad (2.6) is then examined, which includes: academic culture issues, challenges facing international students in the classroom, the importance of achievement, the gate-keeping exams and some solutions to these issues as presented in the literature. The final section of the chapter (2.7) briefly discusses satisfaction in study abroad and the future employment possibilities that may stem from it.

2.2. Study abroad

Study abroad dates back centuries and has enjoyed a strong resurgence recently, which has been matched by a sizable commentary written about it in the literature. As can be seen in the sections that follow, the scope of the literature is broad and incorporates many factors.

2.2.1. Beliefs about study abroad and motivation

There are numerous general accounts on why students study overseas and the prominent reason seems to be closely linked to the legacy of past language acquisition theory. Language acquisition has often been demonstrated to be the main motivator for students embarking on study abroad (Martens & Starke, 2008; Watson & Wolfel, 2015). Scholars have argued that there is a widely held, though perhaps inaccurate, belief that living abroad

and meeting and talking to host language native speakers is the best way to learn and become proficient in the target language (Freed, 1998; Sato, 2014; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003). Undoubtedly, study abroad usually offers ample opportunity for this to happen, but that is not to say that language practice is an easy outcome. However, there has been a perception that through the combination of being immersed in the target language speech community, together with formal classroom tuition, students can be saturated in the language and soak it up like a sponge (Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Sanz, 2014; Tanaka, 2007). Language acquisition theories, such as Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Long's Interaction Hypothesis and Swain's Output Hypothesis, have been used to argue that studying abroad is the optimal method for L2 development (Sanz, 2014, p. 2).

The perception of study abroad's guaranteed increases in L2 proficiency appear to have influenced students the world over. However, Campbell's (2016) findings seriously contest "the long-held belief that study abroad automatically guarantees opportunities to meet and interact with native speakers" (p. 747). Freed (1998), Sato (2014), and Allen and Dupuy (2012) also argue that this layman's theory of the connection between study abroad and language acquisition is far too simplistic. It considers neither student ability to become proficient in a second language, nor a range of other variables, such as the degree to which students are immersed in the native speech community. However, despite researchers working over the last two decades to educate people about study abroad being no "magic bullet for language learning" (Surtees, 2016, p. 85), the myth appears to endure. This is not to say that scholars contend that study overseas does not influence a student's second language ability; however, what tends to occur are improvements in fluency and an improved naturalness of speech, rather than substantive gains in complexity or accuracy

(Freed, 1998; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003).

Study abroad seems to be a multiplex business with a wide range of outcomes and objectives, and increases in language proficiency are simply just one aspect of it. Coleman (2013) outlines that study abroad desires do not usually correspond perfectly with outcomes. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, academic reasons are seldom mentioned as a key motivation for students wanting an overseas study experience. Shadowen, Chieffo and Guerra (2015) state that "although course grades and learning are important outcomes, education abroad is intended to be more than just coursework in other countries" (p. 231). They go on to suggest that simply the experience of studying and living in another culture gives students more opportunity for learning and development "above and beyond the acquisition of academic knowledge at the home campus" (p. 231). The 'above and beyond' referred to in the previous sentence most likely pertains to the way in which study abroad provides students with experiences that will broaden their minds and positively influence the way they live, which apparently correlates with why many students also choose to study overseas (Mikal & Grace, 2012; Skyrme, 2009).

Beech (2016) emphasizes that one of the main motivators for overseas study is temporarily escaping "the cultural uniformity of 'home' institutions" (p. 148). The perceived openness and freedom of operating in a multicultural community appears to run counter to the perceived uniformity of home. A further affordance of study abroad is that it pushes young people into a more independent living environment. Some of Poh and Townsend's (2008, p. 252) research participants studying in Australia valued the element of freedom that their rigid home culture did not allow them. Beech (2016) asserts that:

> International students believe that by participating in a multicultural

community and/or spending a period of time living independently from family and friends they will develop a range of social and cultural capital…[As a result] if and when they return home, they anticipate that they will be different from those who chose to remain behind, having experienced a personal transformation as a direct result of their time spent abroad. (p. 143)

This stated, however, students who wish to, in some way, escape what they see as an unsatisfactory life situation at home can perhaps build too much hope on the changes promised by going abroad, which results in a degree of disappointment. In Kinginger's (2004) seminal work, for instance, Alice, an American on a study abroad, built France up as her savior and an almost utopic environment before arriving. Alice was disillusioned with her life and her place in society and appeared to believe that, by learning French and spending time in France, she would receive the culture and refinement that she lacked and had long sought, which may lead to a better life. Kinginger concludes that Alice's stake in this was "a bid to break free of the confining circumstances of a peripatetic, working-class childhood and to become a person she can admire", and that it was a bid to reorient herself in society (p. 240). While Alice did not possess thoughts of permanently relocating, many other students do and the desire to settle permanently and gain employment in the new country post-graduation appears to be common, though in reality it rarely happens (Merwood, 2007; Ministry of Education New Zealand (MOE), 2012a; Wilson & Gunawardena, 2012).

In relation to where students choose to study, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) found that factors such as climate and lifestyle were important. However, McGrath and Butcher

(2009) discovered that in the New Zealand context, scenic beauty counted for little in its attraction as a study destination. Other important factors in country/institution study choice are recommendations from former students and the presence of co-national students (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; McGrath & Butcher, 2009; Wilson & Gunawardena, 2012).

2.2.2. An evolving identity

Norton (2000) defines identity as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 5). In the context of study abroad, as with other forms of mobility, a person's identity and understanding of that identity are put into question, a situation that is at once challenging and rewarding. Kinginger (2013) suggests that identity issues are tied to the length of a study abroad experience. In other words, the longer a student spends studying abroad the greater the possibility that they will experience identity issues.

As Norton's definition suggests, identity is not simply personal, but also relational. It is about a person's sense of themselves and their awareness of what the outside world allows them to be. Any major change of circumstances therefore involves a reworking of identity because the world that they relate to has changed. A change in identity requires negotiation and the way in which others position a particular person and whether they accept and legitimate that person's new identity can create tension. Working from the perspective of multilingual contexts, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) present three types of identities that they believe arise from the processes of negotiating and positioning:

1. Imposed identities – that are not negotiable because those doing the positioning do not allow for negotiation, making these identities impervious to change at that time. An example may be Japanese study abroad students positioned as being less academically able than local students. This identity would remain until the Japanese students were in a situation where disputing this identity was possible and they were comfortable enough to do it. At that point their identity would become negotiable.

2. Assumed identities – accepted and not negotiated, for instance, Japanese study abroad students positioned as L2 learners.

3. Negotiable identities – contested by people and groups, for example, the Japanese study abroad students not having as much right to having a voice in English as L1 speakers. A way in which a Japanese study abroad student could negotiate this identity is by being active in class, answering the teacher's questions and demonstrating their English prowess.

This is particularly interesting when second language learners move into the target language environment. A study abroad student's agency or lack of agency is necessarily tied to their ability to express their ideas and present themselves in the way they want. Consequently, imposed identities can be the most frustrating and difficult for students to accept because, without adequate proficiency, the students have little say to resist the way they are seen. For instance, in research on Chinese students studying English in Canada, Morgan (1997) found that international students often accept their newly disempowered, marginal identities reluctantly. At the same time, however, they felt that they could do little to change their position because it was a product of the society they chose to study in.

Addressing the experience of Korean study abroad participants, Lee (2016) considers identities to be based on an individual's social contexts and relationships, and argues that language "enables, maintains, and shapes relationships" (p. 21). Lee's research draws on Norton (2000) who identified language as the key means by which "a person negotiates a sense of self within and across different sites at different points in time" (Norton, p. 5) and makes the connection between power, language and identity. Language or lack thereof serves to gate-keep a person's access to social networks that allow speaking opportunities through which an identity can be presented or maintained. Language should therefore not only be thought of as a communication tool, but also as a link to power or, in Bourdieuan terms, 'capital'. For Lee's South Korean cohort studying in the U.S., English as key to "power and privilege" was a prevalent belief (p. 43). Proficiency in the language would allow them to secure good employment in the future. It would also serve as a global linguistic access to wherever in the world they desired. Lee's participants perceived the relationship between the Korean and English languages to be hierarchical, which also translated into the notion that America was superior, cool and advanced. From this, one could assume that learning English would also help one become cool.

Language learning motivation is another factor seemingly linked to identity formation. Dornyei (2009) proposes that students engaging in L2 study are responsive to a range of 'selves', such as the 'Ideal L2 Self' and the 'Ought to Self', which are important factors in decisions they make about investing in language learning. Investment in learning is thus seen as a way of enhancing future identities. Of these selves, arguably the most relevant in the study abroad context is the Ideal L2 Self because it is based on what the students would like to become, reducing the gap between an actual identity and the vision they have of

themselves in the future.

2.2.3. Social connectedness and friendship in study abroad

As has been established, identities are partly dependent on how we are perceived by others. This is particularly significant when people enter new social settings, as inevitably occurs in study abroad, and new relationships need to be formed. Social connectedness, as defined by Lee and Robbins (2000), "is an enduring and ubiquitous experience of the self in relation with the world" in which the individual feels a "personal sense of identity as well as a sense of place in society" (p. 484). The foundations for this feeling of social connectedness range from relationships in the wider community to those between family and friends. Friendship is a product of social connectedness and is one of the most desired and perhaps most important outcomes of an overseas study experience. For study abroad students, the initial period may be the most important time to develop friendships because many students may have few support systems to help them in uncertain and stressful situations in their new surroundings.

The study abroad students' sense of self is likely to be shaken because the "important others who have endorsed their sense of self in the past" are no longer there (Yeh & Inose, 2003, p. 24). Friends are vital for the emotional needs of international students because they can take on numerous roles, such as role models, sympathetic listeners, understanding people, critics, advisers, companions, guides and providers of encouragement. Consequently, efforts to interact with others and form new relationships result in new support networks that help the students succeed in the host country (Hendrickson et al., 2011). Although this situation may have changed in recent times due to the proliferation of

the Internet and social media, friends still provide fun and enjoyment, and can distract from study stress.

Making friends in a new country is tough, and differences to the host culture may influence an individual's willingness and ability to interact meaningfully with local people (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). Making co-national friends can also be a struggle, and when coupled with feelings of grief over leaving behind old friends (generally known as 'friendsickness'), a person may be uninterested in, or lose the ability to form new relationships (Paul & Brier, 2001).

Ward et al. (2001) suggest a tendency for international students to belong to three social network groups, each of which serves different psychological functions. The primary network consists of bonds with co-national peers – its role being "to rehearse, express, and affirm culture-of-origin values" (p. 148). The next network consists of links with local people, which is generally formal rather than personal and is mainly instrumental – working "to facilitate the academic and professional aims of the students" (p. 148). In this group are found local students and teachers. Despite the benefits of contact with local people, according to Ward et al., this network is the least salient. The third network consists of the non-co-national international student friendships, which serve a predominantly recreational role and one of "mutual social support based on a shared foreignness" (p. 148).

The sections that follow examine co-national friendships, home-country friendships, local friendships and the role of extra-curricular activities in making friends while studying abroad.

2.2.3.1. Co-national friendships and groupism[4]

Friendships while on study abroad can be complicated and difficult to establish,
particularly between people from different cultures, and can often result in the formation of
nationality-based groups. Block (2007a) postulates that in study abroad research the "one
constant is the way that students always have the default option of spending time with their
compatriots if their contacts with local people are not satisfactory" (p. 871). In studies
based in the New Zealand context, international students were found to struggle in
establishing local friendships and often sought each other out and formed co-national
friendships (Campbell & Li, 2008; Ward & Masgoret, 2004). In her research on
international tertiary students studying in the U.K., Beech (2016) found that because of her
participants' low English proficiency, it was easier for them to establish friendships with
people with the same first language and there was an over-riding sense that self-expression
was "only truly possible in the native language" (p. 189). Furthermore, students with
similar cultural backgrounds were attractive because they were more in tune emotionally
and could better understand the trials of leaving home. Beech suggests that these factors
promote the formation of co-national groups, which once formed, become difficult to break
because the more people communicate, the more similar they become and the stronger
their ties generally become.

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[4] *"The tendency to think and act as members of a group: The tendency to conform to the cultural
pattern of a group at the expense of individualism and cultural diversity".* https://www.merriam-
webster.com/dictionary/groupism

Cultural cliques can make it more difficult for international students to form relations with people from different backgrounds. An excessive association with co-national peers appears to negate other potential positives that can be gained from undertaking study overseas. For instance, it increases the amount of native language used and decreases the amount of target language opportunities outside the classroom (Tanaka, 2007; Ward & Masgoret, 2004). Wilson and Gunawardena (2012, p. 129) also remark in relation to their findings that international students who do not mix with host students affectively reduce their "Australian experience", and some may not experience Australia at all. One of Beech's participants was disappointed to find so many co-nationals in her new surroundings and felt drawn into her home community against her will. This is a good example of the power that co-national groups and cultural cliques can possess, which discourages interaction with non-co-national people (Brown, 2009a). The fear of negative judgement and retribution from co-national peers appeared to result in most of Brown's international postgraduate cohort, who were studying at a university in England, staying within their cultural group.

Although the loss of opportunities to use the L2 may be a concern in the long term, becoming a member of an identifiable group may be very important in the short term because of the potential support and comfort gained from being with likeminded people. Many students acknowledge the positive values in the groups and welcome the security that membership brings, and do not want to change (Beech, 2016). Another positive that belonging to a co-national group can provide is power. Lee (2016) contends that the language of dominant, powerful groups "usually carries positive connotations", while the language of lesser groups often carries less positivity (p. 9). By gathering together in large

co-national groups, students may gain a perception of strength in the new environment. There have also been suggestions in the literature that as friendships develop, students rely less on official channels of support and seek out help from their co-national peers. This is often a very efficient method of coping for international students. Major's (2005) cohort from Asia, relied on peer support to provide the "medium for the situated self to adjust" (p. 91). Neither Major's (2005) nor Li's (2016) cohorts used official support at the institution because the students were either unaware of it or preferred talking to unofficial supporters, such as co-national mentors. As such, Major (2005, p. 92) outlines that co-national peer support was "the key element in the adjustment" for all her research participants.

According to both Leong and Ward (2000), and Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998) forming co-national relationships can decrease the chance of cultural identity problems. There are those students who show little desire to become socially or emotionally involved in host country life. These individuals see themselves as very temporary residents and choose not to become associated with locals, but satisfy their social needs through co-national friendships. Through limited participation in local life they can maintain aspects of their native culture and have fewer issues when they return home because their identity from the home country remains intact.

To make themselves even more comfortable, some students construct a home-away-from-home. In Brown's (2009a) study, the participants 'reconstructed' home through interaction with co-nationals and used words such as 'home' and 'family' when describing their friendship group. When participants experienced homesickness, they didn't try to forget home, but rather recreated it with their co-national group and visited their friends to feel the comforts of home and speak in their first language. Food can be a very important factor

in the lives of international students in bringing them together and providing a 'taste of home'. One of Brown et al.'s (2010) participants stated that their co-national friends ate as a group almost daily and that food played a special role where they could "share…speak and listen" (p. 206).

2.2.3.2. Home friendship maintenance

Most international students reportedly strive to make friends in their new surroundings, and as they undergo new experiences, their identity and personality can undergo changes. This can lead to relationship distance between them and the friends they left behind in their home country. However, many study abroad students are reluctant to drift away from friends back home and make efforts to stay in touch, usually via the Internet, which Mikal's (2011) participants referred to as a "lifeline" (p. 21) because of the valuable support it provided. The Internet has played a considerable role in the lives of study abroad students, allowing them to remain connected to people back home at a very low monetary cost; indeed, the real cost is perhaps that it can negatively influence acculturation and interaction with the host community (Cemalcilar, Falbo & Stapleton, 2005; Coleman & Chafer, 2010; Kim et al., 2009; Mikal, 2011; Mikal, Rice, Abeyta & DeVilbiss, 2013; Mikal, Yang & Lewis, 2014; Sandel, 2014; Ye, 2005). This issue will be examined in more depth in 2.4.

2.2.3.3. Host friendships

The importance of host relationships should not be under-estimated. Trice (2004) reported

that limited social contact with hosts was related to how the students perceived the extent to which they had been able to fit into their new environment academically and culturally. According to some research, contact with host students positively influences the international students' academic results (Trice, 2004; Ward & Masgoret, 2004). Furthermore, contact with local students has been found to positively influence life satisfaction in international students, i.e. the more the contact, the higher the satisfaction (Hendrickson et al., 2011; Ward & Masgoret, 2004).

It goes without saying that low proficiency in the target language can inhibit international students from forming host friendships (Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Mikal et al., 2014; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Zimitat, 2005). But language is not the only challenge. Based on prior research, another significant factor in the struggle to make local friends lies in the question of incompatible values and cultural differences (Campbell & Li, 2008; Edgeworth & Eiseman, 2007; Jackson, 2013; Mikal et al., 2014; Ogden, 2007; Ward et al., 2005,). One such area of incompatibility identified by the research concerns cultural rules around the consumption of alcohol. In the social sphere of English-speaking universities, alcohol often has a significant importance for local students and socializing is generally done in public, such as bars, whereas local students perceive international students as socializing more in private and being less favorable towards alcohol (Dunne, 2009; Peacock & Harrison, 2009). In one Australian study (Edgeworth & Eiseman, 2007), local students had a reputation for drinking heavily, a behavior that the international cohort found highly offensive. A similar result appears in an American study (Mikal et al., 2014), in which alcohol was something that many of the Chinese students viewed as "unsavory" (p. 15) and its presence caused anxiety, resulting in many of the Chinese students avoiding parties with

host students. In the New Zealand context, one of Li's (2016) international participants made friends with local students at the university, but was put off by their habit of getting drunk every weekend. McGrath and Butcher's (2004) international cohort also perceived New Zealand students to be immoral and sexually liberated, basing this on the local students' tendency to swear, smoke and even experiment with drugs.

Another issue perceived by international students is that host students are simply not interested in their friendship and reject them (Ayano, 2006; Ministry of Education New Zealand (MOE), 2008; Ward et al., 2005). Dunne (2009) suggests that local students also differentiate themselves from international students based on cultural differences, and their approach to study. For instance, international students are perceived to be more focused on their studies, while local students often put a higher priority on their social life, which Dunne believes may create a perception of incompatibility between international and local students. In contrast to most past research, Yeung and Dunlop (2007) assert from a survey completed by domestic students in New Zealand that many local students are more open and have more empathy towards international students than they have been given credit for. However, because this research failed to follow up to see if the attitudes written on the questionnaires equated to an abundance of interaction between local and international students, one might question if what the researchers found in theory is true in practice. While the local students may have possessed empathetic attitudes, they may have been putting up barriers that they were unaware of, such as talking about rugby, talking too fast and using colloquial language (Skyrme, 2008). These things may be important to the identities of New Zealand students and their self-presentation as 'cool', but at the same time they can be very excluding for international students.

The result of the issues listed above are that, while many study abroad students desire local

friends, they are often left disappointed (Bethel et al., 2016; Li, 2016). Freed (1998)

suggests that:

> Student perceptions of their experiences have taught us that their
>
> interactions with native speakers may be far less intense and frequent than
>
> was once assumed and that the so-called "immersion" into the native
>
> speaker linguistic environment may be somewhat less guaranteed than was
>
> once taken for granted. (p. 51)

Ward and Masgoret (2004) found in a New Zealand study that 70% of international

students desired more local friends (p. 52), and 35% of their cohort had no local friends at

all (p. 10). The difficulties in making host friends appears to be universal and reported in

places such as Australia (Taylor, 2008), Britain (Ayano, 2006) and the U.S. (Mikal et al.,

2014; Sherry, Thomas & Chui, 2010).

2.2.4. Clubs and study abroad

The literature suggests that one of the most enjoyable and supportive aspects of

international students' lives are clubs. Joining a club appears to be a very effective way of

making friends because they usually involve people working together for a common goal

in a fun, social environment outside the classroom. In the New Zealand context, joining a

sports club or church group have been found as the most effective way for international

students to become part of the community and develop host friendships (McGrath &

Butcher, 2004; Skyrme, 2016). Toyokawa and Toyokawa (2002) suggest that through

extracurricular activities international students may have opportunities to learn how to interact with host nationals and form friendships. Moores and Popadiuk (2011) found that taking part in activities outside the classroom reached beyond linking with hosts. Their research participants spoke of how the activities allowed them to relax, meet new people, learn new skills and, perhaps most importantly, escape loneliness by keeping busy. McGarvey, Murphy and Byrne (2016) point out that through being involved in societies and sports clubs, students' academic performance can be enhanced.

2.3. Struggles in the study abroad experience

Undertaking study overseas in a different culture can be extremely stressful. While the effects of living overseas and the subsequent emotional reactions naturally differ from individual to individual, general patterns do seem evident. The following section focuses on the 'lived experience' of study abroad and touches on the struggles that students often have while studying overseas.

2.3.1. Culture shock

When people such as international students find themselves in an environment with a different worldview, their sense of identity is challenged (Kim, 2001). Although identity construction in any transition into a new educational setting can be complex, the period of struggle for identity and balance is never more apparent than when people shift across borders, both geographical and psychological, placing themselves in new sociocultural environments (Block, 2007a). The initial period in a foreign environment is apparently

when culture shock and stress are at a peak as individuals struggle to position themselves (Ayano, 2006; Mikal et al., 2013; Yue, 2009). This is a time of emotional vulnerability, where issues, such as homesickness can be found.

The term often used in describing this difficult period is 'culture shock', which refers to the temporary, though often unpleasant, shock that travelers experience when visiting or moving to a new culture (Furnham, 1997). In her book chapter examining the role of food in the adjustment of international postgraduate students studying in England, Brown (2009b) suggests that culture shock develops from losing familiar signs and symbols, and replacing them with cues that are perceived as strange. She likens it to "a period of mourning for the home world" (p. 38). The level of mourning varies between people; it can be mild or severe, long or short, start immediately or take some time to set in. Both Kim and Okazaki (2014) and Andrade (2006) highlight that international students tend to suffer from anxiety, stress, homesickness, isolation and loneliness. Other symptoms of culture shock provided by Nolan (1999) in his book on adapting across cultures include irritability, fluctuating appetite, disrupted sleep patterns, grouping with co-nationals, negative talk and depression.

2.3.2. Homesickness and Nostalgia

The closer a student's culture is to the host culture, the easier it may be for that student to adjust and settle in (Campbell & Li, 2008). The dissimilarity between the individual's home and their new environment appears to be behind feelings of nostalgia and homesickness – two common factors frequently found in study abroad students. Nostalgia is a term originating from the Greek words *nostos* to return (home) and *algia* meaning pain

or painful condition, and it emerges when individuals face fears, uncertainties and threats to the continuity of their identity (Davis, 1979; Ritivoi, 2002). Homesickness is closely linked to nostalgia and involves strong, negative emotions, such as loneliness, unhappiness/depression, grief and yearning, and produces a desire to return home (Fisher & Hood, 1987; Furnham, 1997; Wilson & Gunawardena, 2012). In their research, Fisher, Murray and Frazer (1985, p. 193) revealed that up to 60% of students will feel some level of homesickness when they relocate to a new environment.

After relocating to a foreign environment, loneliness may be the catalyst for the appearance of the other emotions mentioned above, and as such, may be the greatest initial source of stress for most international students. Both Kline and Liu (2005), and Gu, Schweisfurth and Day (2010), include loneliness in their list of factors that negatively affect adaptation to a new environment. Kline and Liu (2005) specify the main stressors as trying to operate in a new environment with a different language and values (societal and educational), isolation, alienation and perceptions of discrimination. Gu et al. (2010) discovered that even after three months of living in the U.K. their cohort's greatest source of stress was loneliness, along with money and food issues. Neri and Ville (2006) suggest that because loneliness is a major issue for international students and can potentially impact academic performance and general wellbeing negatively, it should be considered an area of concern.

Sometimes study abroad students suffer from overwhelming levels of psychological stress. One of Ayano's (2006, p. 16) research participants studying in the U.K. felt as if he was "living in a small cage" and used the imagery of "being held down by a muddy rice field" to describe his despair. Others in Ayano's research indicated that they threw themselves into their studies so that they did not have time to think about other negative things in their

life.

2.3.3. Culture and food

One cultural artefact particularly central to discussions on living abroad is food. Bochner, McLeod and Anli, (1977) argue that "food is a central feature of most cultures, and cooking and consuming it has connotations reaching far beyond the merely nutritional aspect of eating" (p. 290). The researchers declare that this is particularly true in foreign environments, where cooking food from home "provides the social setting for the rehearsal and affirmation of cultural identity and national loyalties" (p. 290). For those people who live with a mix of nationalities, eating as a group can be a social event, a way of showing national differences and promoting their country (Brown, Edwards & Hartwell, 2010).

Food and eating habits are thought to be a central dimension to culture and ethnic identity (Brown et al., 2010; Fonseca, 2008). Fonseca (2008, p. 28) puts forward the theory that "every act of consumption represents a cultural act" and suggests that food is a language in its own right, which expresses various social and cultural aspects. He also proposes that when we choose what to eat, we are ""communicating" meanings and projecting identities" (Fonseca, 2008, p. 30). Hanna (2016), furthers this idea, stating that food "is not symbolic, it is cultural substance itself" (p. 1202).

According to the literature, food also possesses an important emotional aspect for travelers abroad (Brown, 2009b; Brown et al., 2010; Locher, Yoels, Maurer & Van Ells, 2005). Brown et al. (2010) conclude that food is the aspect that is least open to change for international students and propose that this emotional attachment stems from "the familiar

taste and nostalgic thoughts of home and belonging" (p. 203). Locher et al. (2005) add that food has comforting values "by conjuring up images of a familiar and soothing way of life" (pp. 277-278), which are usually learned from our family environment. Brown's (2009b) cohort talked of food from home offering "physical and emotional sustenance" and offering international students "an opportunity to remember a happy past and forget an unhappy present" (p. 48). In this sense, food may be considered as not just nourishment for the body, but also for the mind and soul (Locher et al., 2005). However, new foods may not do this, which may account for Brown's (2009b) suggestion that food is an important factor in culture shock. As an interesting aside, according to Brown et al. (2010), meal times for some of their cohort were when they felt most homesick.

Host food is often one of the main elements of study abroad that students are least happy with. Brown et al. (2010), and Brown (2009b) noted that their participants considered English food bland and boring, resigning themselves to not eating good food until they returned home, which had a negative effect on life satisfaction. Because all the Asian students in Brown's cohort felt this way, she concluded that the dislike of the English diet was due to culturally influenced taste preferences. However, due to financial reasons and the non-availability of traditional foods in many areas where international students live, finding alternatives to host food can be difficult (Hartwell, Edwards & Brown, 2011). That said, Brown found that despite financial hardship, some students still imported seasonings and ingredients. International students have also been found to utilize networks of friends to bring ingredients from home and also receive food packages sent by home-based family members (Hartwell et al., 2011).

2.4. Dealing with the study abroad experience: Connections to the outside world

This section initially looks at culture shock and settling in, before focusing on how connections to home via the Internet and social media may influence the study abroad experience.

2.4.1. Culture shock and settling in

Unlike travelers in general, international students potentially face more stressors in their new surroundings, such as the pressure of studying in a second language while still building proficiency in that language, language problems leading to misunderstandings and adjusting to new cultures of education (Bethell, Szabo & Ward, 2016; McGrath & Butcher, 2009: Ryan & Twibell, 2000; Shadowen et al., 2015).

The literature generally concludes that the only way to become more settled in a country is to navigate through the shock and make the transition into the new environment. Some students seem to function better under the stress of relocation than others, probably due to what Baker and Hawkins (2006) term 'resilience', which they say is "the ability to cope with the many and varied challenging and difficult life experiences" (p. 22). This may simply mean that the students also adjust faster to their new surroundings. Other scholars have commented on ways in which adjustment and settling in can be promoted. Connections with host students have been suggested as playing a significant role in learning how to operate in the new environment, which can lead to more happiness, wellbeing and a more positive approach to studying (Bethel et al., 2016; Kim, 2001; Trice,

2004; Ward & Masgoret, 2004). Mikal and Grace (2012, p. 290) citing empirical evidence

from Gallois, Giles, Jones, Cargile and Ota's (1995) research, highlight that solo students

or those travelling in small groups are more integrated than those in larger ones, most

probably because they are alone and they feel a stronger need to make connections in the

new environment. Having stated this, it is likely that students with low resilience in this

situation will struggle a great deal with loneliness and may be at risk of never settling in.

Generally speaking, the process of sociocultural adaptation is believed to follow a

predictable learning curve, improving in a linear fashion over the first few months before

gradually leveling off (Berry, 1997; Kim, 2001; Ward & Kennedy, 1999). There is some

debate in the literature about how long the adjustment phase for international students

typically takes. Lin and Yi (1997, p. 478) argue that the adjustment period lasts for

approximately six months, while other scholars, such as Neri and Ville (2006, p. 3), do not

put a time frame on adjustment, explaining that the adjustment period varies in length from

person-to-person. Chow and Healey's (2008) participants indicated that their new

environment became like a second home after a year.

Another variable in the adaptation process may be related to student age. Baker and

Hawkins (2006) warn that international students are potentially at risk because most are

young and moving into adulthood, and it is during this period in life that they develop a

sense of identity and self-worth. This period in life is difficult enough to navigate through

at home, but for international students their changes occur while they are away from their

support networks of family, friends and community.

Culture shock has traditionally been thought to be based on four phases: The honeymoon

phase, the disenchantment phase, the beginning resolution phase, and finally, the effective

functioning phase (Ryan & Twibell, 2000). In support of this theory, Nolan (1999, p.15) writes of an "all too common pattern" to the experiences individuals have when going overseas, which features a period of extreme excitement, followed by an emotional crash. Individuals are said to then experience some sense of recovery before finally adjusting.

Although administrators involved in international education work towards helping international students settle in to their new surroundings quickly, students still suffer from stress (Kim, Yun & Yoon, 2009; Mikal, 2011); some scholars argue that Asian students may be the group that struggles most when studying abroad in Western countries (Thakur & Hourigan, 2007; Ye, 2005; Yue, 2009). Another area of concern for both students and administrators is deculturation. When undertaking, or going through psychological acculturation, Berry (1997) postulates that some culture shedding, or unlearning is necessary. Kim (2001) agrees and comments that:

> As new learning occurs, deculturation (or unlearning) of at least some of the old cultural elements has to occur, in the sense that new responses are adopted in situations that previously would have evoked old ones. (p. 51)

However, Kim appears to contradict herself within the same book, stating later that intercultural identity development is:

> Rooted in, embracing, and not discarding the original identity – just as acquiring knowledge and skill in the host language does not necessarily result in corresponding loss in the original language. (p. 67)

One interesting product of living abroad in a foreign culture is the potential to gain an understanding of oneself and one's own culture. Kim (2001) proclaims that it is "a process

of…personal reinvention, transformation, growth" (p. 9). However, in the contemporary world, with the advent and spread of Internet based communications, these theories on adjustment and transformation may be in question.

2.4.2. Connections to the outside world

In recent years, the Internet and social media have had a significant effect on the study abroad experience (Coleman, 2013; Coleman & Chafer, 2010; Mikal, 2011; Mikal & Grace, 2012; Mikal et al., 2014; Sandel, 2014). Even as recently as the 1990s, going from China to New York was a long journey, with a real feeling of leaving home for a distant land. Nowadays, however, although the physical distance obviously remains, the perceptual distance has decreased and geography no longer prevents us from immediate contact with friends and family back home. Furthermore, for many contemporary study abroad participants, the physical and virtual worlds have become intertwined and inseparable (Mikal et al., 2014; Sandel, 2014). This virtual access to borderless social connections has raised an important debate on the value of the Internet and social media in the context of study abroad.

In the past, study abroad was based on an assumption of separation, where "students separate from friends and family to enter a new culture that is theoretically separate from their home culture" (Mikal & Grace, 2012, p. 288). But today, communication platforms such as Facebook, Skype and Twitter potentially discourage engagement with the target language community, as study abroad participants may simply remain virtually immersed in the language and culture of the home country (Coleman, 2013; Mikal, 2011). As a Chinese international student in New York observed: "I feel that they [social media] make

me feel as though I'm not studying abroad" (Sandel, 2014, p. 17).

This perception notwithstanding, the Internet offers positive aspects that students can utilize to help them settle in while studying overseas. For example, as Cemalcilar et al. (2005) observe, when people are stressed, such as when entering a new culture, they turn to social media to search out and rely on others familiar to them who can minimize self-doubt and act as pillars in reaffirming home values. These people can provide emotional support, validate self-worth and create a sense of belonging, which in turn decreases homesickness and perhaps the disorientation that may accompany adjustment to a new language or culture. The Internet is the central medium in this process, particularly in the initial stages of settling in, because it provides an environment where people can easily "meet, share, and support each other" (Cemalcilar et al., p. 104).

While contact with home through social media may play an important role for international students settling in to their new environment, research suggests that if the support from loved ones back home does not decrease with time, it may hinder students' adaptation to their new surroundings (Cemalcilar et al., 2005; Chen, 2010; Lee, Lee & Jang, 2011; Park, Song & Lee, 2014). According to Mikal and Grace's (2012) research, while being connected online decreased stress and facilitated integration in study abroad students, those students who "retain close ties with their home cultures beyond the initial transition abroad may fail to ever engage fully enough in the target culture to lose their own cultural referents" (p. 302). Thus, students may "never reach a stage of biculturalism, always seeing the target culture as "other" and exaggerating cultural differences" (p. 302). The abandonment of cultural integration goals appears to be a major concern surrounding communication with home via the Internet, and in the long-term an over-reliance on this

can lead to an increased sense of isolation from the host culture (Lee et al., 2011; Mikal et al., 2014).

The use of social media, in fact seems to be a double-edged sword. Negative aspects, such as restricting the study abroad experience, may be balanced with positive aspects. For instance, providing people with the ability to express themselves, in some cases better than they had been able to do in face-to-face situations (Kim et al., 2009; Lee, Kim, Lee & Kim, 2012). However, given that study abroad is designed to provide the opportunity for face-to-face interactions, this could become a negative outcome as students strive less to develop non-digital social relationships. Another element of the Internet that appears positive at first glance are the numerous support options it offers to study abroad students, who can choose when, where and from whom they seek support with relative ease (Mikal, 2011). However, another, less positive, view of this has the Internet charged with functioning "as an electronic umbilical cord" (Allen & Dupuy, 2012, p. 475) and Pyper and Slagter (2015) suggest that the Internet adds yet another barrier to the immersion that study abroad appears to promise:

> Contemporary students may physically be in a second language (L2)
>
> setting, but their hearts and minds are often drawn home through the
>
> wonders of modern technology such as email, Facebook, Skype, and other
>
> social media. (p. 83)

With their hearts and minds focused on life back home, some students may struggle to learn the target language. Pyper and Slagter's (2015) participants from the U.S. undertaking a study abroad in Spain, Peru and Honduras reported that open access to the Internet and contacting with loved ones back home competed with their ability to learn the

target language and interact with locals. One participant even talked of using the Internet as an escape from the target language and host country culture: "I go home and go sit in my room and close the door and…just forget that I'm in Spain for a while." (p. 96).

Spending long periods of time focused on digital interactions must come at a cost. Sandel (2014) discovered that some of his participants spent up to five hours a day on Facebook, and always had their Facebook application running. In Mikal and Grace's (2012) research, the study abroad cohort spent an average of four-and-a-half hours per day online, which ostensibly equated to "a 25% reduction in the number of hours spent engaging with students' physical surroundings" (p. 300).

Contact between parents and children studying overseas on social media via the Internet has been found to be, at times, more regular than when the children were back at home (Kang, 2012; Kim et al., 2009; Sandel, 2014; Yang, Wu, Zhu, Brian & Southwell, 2004). It should be noted, however, that international student-to-family contact is often a mutual engagement; this contact also allays the worries and fears of the students' parents (Kraut et al., 1998; Sandel, 2014). One of Mikal's (2011) participants reported talking to their mother almost every day because it made both of them feel better. Mikal and Grace (2012) note that previous research has found that even with those international students who don't tend to contact home much, just the realization that support is available if needed is beneficial.

It appears that the value of support from home should not be overlooked. Baker and Hawkins (2006) discovered that the international students who maintained strong connections with their family, friends, peers, schools and communities were "far more resilient than those who do not" (p. 22). Other research has discovered that international

students with higher stress generally communicate more with their family, demonstrating how important parental support is in dealing with stress (Kline & Liu, 2005; Mikal & Grace, 2012). Mikal and Grace argue that while past studies have suggested that support online "lacked substance" and ultimately ends in isolation, recent research has found the opposite to be true (p. 290). Sandel (2014) states that contacting home via the Internet can cause increased feelings of homesickness when students see messages and photos from home and realize what they are missing. However, Mikal and Grace (2012) found that those students who perceived support from home were more willing to take risks, initiated more contact with members of the host community and had less stress due to their online interactions. It is hardly surprising that Chen (2010) found that the longer people live abroad, the less frequently they tend to contact their family back home via the Internet. The importance of this kind of transition in order to build new relationships in the new environment has been discussed above.

2.5. Institutional student support

Study abroad institutions must provide support for their international students to successfully transition into their new living environment. Social support can be essential in acculturation following the sojourner's separation from traditional social support networks, such as family and friends (Ye, 2006). Andrade (2006) advises that institutions who want international students must consider the educational and cultural experiences the students go through, and not expect international students to adjust to the host country environment and new educational system alone. Many participants in Moores and Popadiuk's (2011) research noted that faculty and staff provided helpful support both academically and

personally. Research has shown that international tertiary students have been greatly affected by teachers or staff members who showed some empathy to them by offering assistance in education issues, language problems and accommodation concerns (Baker & Hawkins, 2006).

There is a strong argument that support should factor in student wellbeing. A new culture and environment can cause anxiety, confusion and depression; in turn, these issues can lead to nervousness, insomnia and physical health problems (Lin & Yi, 1997). An extreme finding by Yang and Clum (1995) indicates that Asian international students studying in the U.S. felt more hopeless and suicidal than their American hosts. Also problematic is the fact that international students suffering from depression or feelings of helplessness may not seek out help available to them on the host campus. For example, according to Popadiuk (2010), Asian students tend to believe that family and close friends are the best people to help them and often do not have a good understanding of the Western technique of counselling. For these students, seeking outside counselling services is an indication that the person has a serious problem, which is often perceived as shameful in their home cultures. In fact, this support ideally would begin prior to the students' departure. Hunley (2010) suggests that by addressing mental health issues and coping skills with students before they leave their home country, the study abroad provider may improve the quality of the students' experiences and the long-term benefits of overseas study.

A further consideration study abroad providers should acknowledge is reentry into their home country, which can be complex and students may suffer from 'reverse culture shock' as they try to re-settle into their old environment (Brown, 2009a). With this in mind, institutions may need to also consider repatriation support for international students so that

they can settle back into their old surroundings with acceptable ease.

As indicated in the discussion regarding the role of the internet and its potential for watering down potential growth, new experiences, though they may be stressful, provide the potential for students to develop and therefore must be considered a key element to success in study abroad. Although some level of support from study abroad providers for their students is essential and should be expected, there is some debate regarding what is appropriate. Tarling (2004) maintains that international students coming to New Zealand should be provided with as much useful information as possible before they arrive. He adds that they should also be met at the airport, made to feel welcome and provided with an orientation. However, Engle and Engle (2003) seem at odds with elements of this viewpoint and explain that the overly comfortable way in which study abroad students are often treated, such as being picked up at the airport and given access to electronic communication tools, is actually depriving them of chances to grow from their struggle. The researchers suggest that "students who can't always get what they want just might find they get what they need" (p. 6). Singh and Doherty, (2004, p. 17) also suggest that students "seeking the cultural capital of global cultural forms and practices" should not be protected because they are "proactive agents" who have chosen to study abroad for their own benefit.

2.5.1. The impact of accommodation choices

Accommodation choices are often made by study abroad institutions to promote adaptation and decrease student stress. However, accommodation policies made by the providers can also have negative impacts on the study abroad experience. It has been reported that in some cases institutions have purposely promoted the formation of nationality-based

groups, particularly through on-campus living arrangements for international students. For instance, one of the greatest frustrations for some of Green's (2012) cohort from Australia studying abroad was that their institution's accommodation was segregated. A participant in Mikal et al.'s (2014) research also complained about living arrangements in which all of the Chinese undergraduate students were apparently grouped together and isolated from other students. This situation meant that the participant spent most of her time with co-nationals and had few opportunities to interact with host students, which was neither what she hoped for nor expected. Cammish (1997) also warns against housing co-nationals together. While it may be more familiar and supportive, students in such situations have been shown to be slower at improving their English. They are also likely to struggle more to integrate and make local friends under these living conditions.

Beech's (2016) research illustrates that if an institution promotes the mixing of nationalities, non-co-national friendships can eventuate. One of her study participants was placed in a dormitory with students from different backgrounds and she was able to establish an array of friendships, thus demonstrating that student diversity in shared accommodation can result in the formation of intercultural friendships. Bochner et al. (1985) and Campbell (2016) suggest that integrated residences should be encouraged because they help foster understanding between students from different cultural backgrounds and create relationships that go far beyond the study abroad period. However, Yeung and Dunlop (2007) stress that "simply placing students in close proximity does not, by itself, guarantee that bonds of affiliation and connectedness will naturally ensue" (p. 84) so institutional proposals for encouraging contact between local and international students need to be carefully planned prior to implementation.

2.6. The academic side of Study Abroad

While studying abroad is potentially an experience of a lifetime for students, if it does not include some sort of academic achievement its value appears to be greatly diminished. In this section, the challenges of the classroom that international students face is the initial focus before shifting to cultural influences and differences in education. Gate-keeping exams are briefly addressed before concluding with a commentary from the literature about possible solutions to academic problems specific to international students.

2.6.1. The classroom as a site of struggle

Many international students find adapting to their new life in a foreign country difficult and the classroom environment is arguably most challenging. A crucial issue is the students' general lack of L2 proficiency before embarking on their study abroad. Many scholars argue that this inadequate proficiency represents the biggest barrier to scholarly success (Campbell & Li, 2008; Miller, 1999; Poh & Townsend, 2008; Wilson & Gunawardena, 2012; Yue, 2009). Although many international students may arrive full of ambition and enthusiasm, language proficiency issues may prevent them from achieving their goals, dissipate their confidence and increase their acculturative stress (Major, 2005). However, Skyrme (2008) indicates that international students tend to overcome this and enjoy a high incidence of success.

Another issue facing international students is a lack of awareness of the academic culture in the host country (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006; Li, Baker & Marshall, 2002; Taylor, 2008; Yue, 2009), and there may be little that the students can do to get accustomed with this

prior to leaving home (Yang & Clum, 1995). Academic culture refers to the "norms and expectations involved in academic activity", and "cultural beliefs and values about teaching and learning, expectations about cultural behavior and what constitutes 'good' work" (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997, p. 76). It also refers to "systems of beliefs, expectations and cultural practices about how to perform academically" (p. 77).

It has been observed that the way educators in the West approach the classroom appears to shock students from Confucius-heritage cultures (CHC). CHC lecturers are said to teach, while students are meant to listen (Campbell & Li, 2008; Edgeworth & Eiseman, 2007; Rapley, 2010). CHC students tend to view lecturers as authorities who should supply students with answers, whereas in Western countries lecturers are seen as facilitators, organizers and promoters of learner autonomy (Todd, 1997; Yue, 2009). Becoming accustomed to a new academic environment takes time and depends on the individual student. Wong (2004) claims that Asian students usually take two to three months to adjust to the new academic style.

The specific challenges that international students face in their studies are integrally related to the combination of limited L2 proficiency with the requirement to use their language resources in very new ways. For example, studies report that the elevated stress levels international students feel are caused by classroom-based tasks and confusion over expectations (Baker & Hawkins, 2006; Neri & Ville, 2006; MOE, 2008). Writing, in particular, is a big challenge, especially for international students from Asia studying in Western academic cultures (Campbell & Li, 2008; Taylor, 2008; Wong, 2004). Li et al. (2002) report that Asian international tertiary students struggle in New Zealand with assignments and examinations which expect them to be critical and think independently.

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Listening and understanding what has been said, taking notes and reading for assignments, have also been identified as challenging areas for international students (Poh & Townsend, 2008; Taylor, 2008; Wong, 2004). Li's (2016) cohort also struggled with characteristics of the lecturers' spoken language, including rate, amplitude and the use of slang. An unsettling point for Asian students is also the lack of reliance on textbooks in the classroom (Birt, Sherry, Ling, Fisher & Lee, 2004). Li's (2016) participants reported that there were prescribed textbooks for each course, however, lecturers tended not to use them for teaching, which meant that students could not preview and prepare for upcoming lessons as they did back home.

Interestingly, much like other identities, classroom identities are prone to change as international students grow accustomed to the classroom culture. Morita (2004) states "the same students could participate differently and negotiate different identities in different classroom contexts or in similar contexts over time" (p. 584). She found that the memberships and identities constructed by the students in class "simultaneously shaped and were shaped by their class participation" (p. 596). Her data illustrates the reciprocal relationship between students' participation and their sense of competence; when students struggled to participate in discussions they developed an identity as a weaker student, which then made participation even more difficult to do.

After international students become more accustomed to the academic culture, the next struggle is often transitioning from the first to the second year of study – where study and assessment becomes more complex. As with any student, if international students are unable to make the transition effectively they may drop out or complete a lower degree than the one for which they initially enrolled (Wilson & Gunawardena, 2012).

2.6.2. Language proficiency gate-keeping exams

Language proficiency tests, used as gate-keepers to degree program entry, are a significant stress factor that most international tertiary students face. Without achieving a qualifying score in a gate-keeping examination, such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), an international student cannot progress into an undergraduate tertiary study program in an English-speaking country, meaning that their dream may be over before it starts. Addressing a U.S. context, Lin and Yi (1997) assert that because of the fear of being unable to gain success, many international students become anxious and depressed. These tests are in place because they are arguably an efficient and/or consistent way of assessing the English language abilities of large numbers of students simultaneously, and those students who do not reach the required score in one of the gate-keeping tests may be highly likely to fail if they were to enter degree study. That said, achieving a degree program entry score in one of the tests does not guarantee success in tertiary study (Campbell & Li, 2008; Cheng, 2000; De Lisle, 2005; Li, 2016; Read & Hirsch, 2005; Zhang & Brunton, 2007). After gaining access to study at the undergraduate level, many students continue to struggle with their second language proficiency. Related to the gate-keeping examination, one major issue that Li (2016) found in New Zealand universities concerns the double loading of international L2 students: That is, while they are studying subjects in English in the classroom, they are also engaged in raising their English proficiency.

2.6.3. Solutions to classroom issues

Butcher and McGrath (2004, p. 545) stress that the "academic needs of international students are as important as their social needs" because their main reason for studying abroad is to return home with a qualification. There are numerous commentaries in the literature suggesting solutions to the issues that international students face in their classrooms. Both Taylor (2008) and Campbell and Li (2008) advise that upon arrival students should attend a thorough, mandatory orientation or foundation program to develop specific skills as well as model the academic environment the students are likely to encounter in studying their major. Although Todd (1997) also suggests that preparatory courses may assist in orientating students with appropriate study skills, she points out that it is only after the students begin taking degree courses that the demands of their chosen study will truly be clear.

Li et al. (2002) argue that tertiary level lecturers have both an ethical and professional obligation to tailor their lessons and assessments to international students who, as customers, pay exorbitant fees. While Li et al.'s viewpoint may seem to be taking things too far, and is certainly at odds with Singh and Doherty's (2004) belief mentioned earlier against the overprotection of study abroad students, there is undoubtedly a need for international students to have access to some amount of academic support.

2.6.4. A multiplicity of objectives

It must be emphasized that in a study abroad context, students who do not meet initial academic achievement expectations should not be dismissed as failures outright because

many of them achieve a great deal outside the classroom. Coleman (2013) declares "the study abroad experience never has just one single outcome or objective" and that "objectives – what you hope to gain – are unlikely to correspond exactly to outcomes – the changes which actually take place" (p. 24). In a similar vein, De Vita (2005) suggests that comparing international student achievement with that of local students is unreasonable:

> In comparing the learning achievements of home and international students,
> it should also be recognized that the value-added of studying abroad goes
> well beyond what is identifiable through measures of academic performance
> or even progression. (p. 8)

Higher self-confidence and self-esteem, increased maturity and autonomy, higher motivation to continue studying, and a growth in curiosity about different cultures are some of the non-academic outcomes in study abroad noted by researchers (Asaoka & Yano, 2009; Lassegard, 2013; Sato, 2014). Asaoka and Yano (2009) assert that students often also gain a heightened understanding of the importance of existing friendships and family relationships from their study abroad experience.

2.7. Satisfaction with study abroad

Institutions have a vested interest in international student satisfaction levels and outcomes. If students are not satisfied or not achieving what they set out to achieve when they embarked on study abroad, then the institution hosting these international students can experience a substantial decrease in revenue. For smaller economies like New Zealand and Canada, which depend on high numbers of international tertiary students, it is therefore

imperative that their institutions deliver satisfying programs of study and exchange. However, measuring the satisfaction level of international students is not a clear-cut process.

2.7.1. Affective factors

Some characteristics of study abroad are significantly more important than others with regard to student satisfaction and awareness of this could lead to an enhanced experience for the students and continued success for the institutions hosting them. Ward and Masgoret (2004) found that international students highly valued, among others, good language proficiency, cultural inclusiveness in the classroom, contact with local students and minimal contact with co-nationals, a positive perception of local attitudes towards international students, and effective social support. Furthermore, international students who had less voluntary contact with local students, more contact with co-nationals and lower English proficiency often felt excluded and believed that local people had negative attitudes towards them. Somewhat linked to these findings is Campbell and Li's (2008) data which indicated that much of student satisfaction is rooted in the students' degree of cultural adaptation: the higher the adaption, the higher the degree of satisfaction.

One way students can increase their satisfaction levels is by downgrading their expectations to match reality. However, Patterson, Romm and Hill (1998) claim that while downgrading expectations in the economic or social realms will not affect student satisfaction levels, if the initial learning expectations are not met, then satisfaction levels will decrease. Much of study abroad satisfaction is thought to rest with improvements in the target language. Saenger's (2007) cohort, for instance, felt disappointed because while

their English had improved in New Zealand the amount of improvement was less than they hoped for. Some scholars assert that there is a positive correlation between student satisfaction levels and second language proficiency prior to arrival in the study abroad destination. Tanaka (2007) states:

> If students want to immerse themselves in the L2-speaking environment and to enrich their study abroad…they should try to improve their L2 proficiency as much as possible in their home country before going abroad. (p. 49)

Tanaka proposes that even if his participants, who had a mean score of IELTS 4.0, wanted more contact with the target language, it would have been extremely difficult for them to communicate with native speakers because their proficiency was too low unless they had focused on the language prior to departure.

It seems that studying in exciting, vibrant environments is not an important factor in satisfaction. Both Poh and Townsend (2008), and Edgeworth and Eiseman (2007) discovered in their research on international students in rural Australia that the quiet and solitude was often perceived positively because it allowed students to concentrate effectively on their studies. The choice of where international students from Asia study often appears to be made by their parents and a lack of distractions is one of the main reasons why rural areas are selected (McGrath & Butcher, 2009; Saenger, 2007). However, some international students view regional settings negatively because they lack convenient public transportation, ethnic food, and adequate shopping and entertainment (Poh & Townsend, 2008; Ward & Masgoret, 2004).

2.7.2. Future employment possibilities

It has been regularly reported that by studying abroad, students are promoting and enhancing their future. For example, Poh and Townsend (2008) report that their Chinese cohort in Australia felt that their future employment was completely dependent on their academic achievement while overseas. Kronholz and Osborn (2016) believe that students have a better outlook on their employment options and understand their career goals more clearly after a study abroad experience. They outline that study abroad provides gains in self-awareness and gives them a greater understanding of one's place in the world.

2.8. Conclusion

The popularity of study abroad still appears to be influenced by the belief that the only way to truly become proficient in a L2 is through immersion in the environment where the target language is spoken natively. However, the literature shows that when international students embark on a study abroad they are entering a very complex environment. They may face considerable struggles to position themselves in the new environment and in negotiating identities which are influenced by, and which in turn influence all aspects of their study abroad life, and which give them easy access to the target language community.

It is likely that students will sense a degree of isolation and feel a necessity to quickly become connected in their new surroundings. This can create relationship shifts where new friendships replace those from back home. The students may seek familiarity, meaning that their friendship circles are dominated by co-national peers, despite perhaps initially prioritizing relationships with local students. Co-national groups often result in decreased

opportunities for interaction with other students and may therefore hinder increases in L2 proficiency levels. However, a lack of confidence in using English often prevents L2 speakers from connecting with students from other cultures. Cultural incompatibility issues, such as attitudes to alcohol consumption in social situations, represent another type of barrier international students face in the host country.

The connections that international students make can be very helpful in their adaptation to the new environment, a process which in much of the literature is thought to occur in recognizable stages. However, because the Internet and social media are shrinking the perceptual distance between home and abroad, the applicability of theories of adjustment stages in a contemporary setting may be questioned. The Internet must be considered a double-edged sword, however, because it can enable individuals to settle into a new environment more easily by providing ready access to support from loved ones back home, yet it can also create problems, such as a dependence on home connections, abandonment of cultural integration goals and a decrease in face-to-face interaction opportunities with speakers of the target language.

Institutional support is essential for the social, academic and general wellbeing of international students. However, the appropriate level of support provided by the institutions is complex and open to debate. Offering support to reduce the struggles of studying abroad may actually work to inhibit the students' chances to grow and create students that are not interested in venturing outside their cultural bubble (Ogden, 2007). Non-integrated accommodation arrangements are one concern because such accommodation denies international students opportunities to live alongside local students and other non-co-nationals, thus decreasing their chances to develop diverse friendship

circles. One area that seems to be universally accepted as essential for international students is academic support. Many students studying abroad struggle academically due to the combined effects of inadequate L2 proficiency and coping with the demands of a new academic culture. Gate-keeping language exams are a further source of stress because without achieving a satisfactory result, international students may not enter degree-level study.

Study abroad is a complex phenomenon that involves the interplay of many different aspects from areas such as identity, connections and education. The latter half of the next chapter examines these aspects in relation to students from Japan.

Chapter Three: Japanese, study abroad and the influence of state ideologies

3.1. Introduction

This chapter begins with a critical discussion of what the literature has identified as

defining concepts of Japaneseness, which have historically been presented as prevalent in

state institutions such as government, business and education in Japan. The purpose of this

focus is to help the reader understand firstly the particular circumstances of Global Family

College (GFC) as a study abroad provider and the ideologies on which it appears to be

based, and secondly the research participants' responses to living and studying under these

ideologies. The role and position of the English language in Japan, some local attitudes

towards the language and how Japanese students have been typically reported as

identifying with the language will be examined in 3.3. This leads into section 3.4, which

looks specifically at Japanese students and study abroad, their motivations in undertaking

overseas study, reported educational experiences, the need to support them and what

outcomes they may gain from studying overseas. The final focus before concluding the

chapter is on GFC, its unique place in study abroad and in the New Zealand educational landscape, and the way that Japanese students are positioned within the institution.

3.1.1. A caution against essentialism

Scholars have argued that cultural differences exist and influence our upbringing, and the way people think, speak and behave (Kim, 2001; Kubota, 1999). Nolan (1999) ventures that people take on cultural patterns over a long period rather than being born with them, and thus we learn to behave in the way that we do. Having stated this, no culture can truly be considered completely uniform and it can be dangerous to subscribe to a 'large culture' viewpoint, which sees culture as residing in national structures and fails to recognize the many smaller groupings that one may belong to. Holliday (1999) argues that the large culture approach "results in reductionist overgeneralization and otherization" (pp. 237-238). Furthermore, it pushes the idea of pre-defined characteristics along with simplistic, easy to digest, exotic or degrading stereotypes, which is misleading because people do not uniformly manifest all the characteristics that people associate with their place of birth and individuals do possess agency and different personal experiences of it. So, while we may acknowledge that many people from the same area could share traits in common, in understanding people it is imperative to recognize individuality and cultural hybridity. Even within Japan, which has positioned itself as homogeneous to a world amenable to the suggestion of cultural uniformity, there exists a multitude of cultures.

3.2. Discourses of exclusion and uniqueness

Japan has been portrayed at home and abroad by both academics and laypeople, as mono-cultural, monolingual and exclusive. Although there may be some historical, political and anecdotal evidence for these observations, it is important to consider them with caution because they appear to have become mythologized. Nonetheless, it is imperative that we are aware of these discourses because the participants in this study interact with these ideologies.

One episode in Japan's history that has had a major and lasting influence on this theme of Japanese homogeneity is the *shogunate* policy of *sakoku* (closed country) which lasted from the 1630s until 1850s. This policy was established by the *Tokugawa shogunate* to prevent outside ideologies, such as Christianity, influencing the *shogun's* subjects and to tighten the s*hogunate's* control over Japanese people in order to prevent the threat of uprisings, and thus preserve the *shogun's* national hegemony. Under the edicts of *sakoku*, Japanese people were prohibited from leaving Japan and relations with other countries, particularly Western countries, were greatly restricted (Varley, 2000).

Of the Europeans, only the Dutch were permitted limited contact with Japan during the *sakoku* period, and were provided with a small artificial island called Dejima in Nagasaki Harbor to live in and trade with local people. This enclave was linked to the Japanese mainland by a narrow footbridge, which meant that although the Dutch merchants were technically in Japan, their restriction to Dejima meant that they were forever outside (or, to use the Japanese terminology, *soto*) and unable to ever attain membership of Japanese society. However, the residents of Dejima still had some influence on Japanese society.

The Japanese gained knowledge in selected areas, such as in science, medicine and technology, from what was known as *rangaku* 'Dutch studies'. The transfer of knowledge occurred in numerous ways. The official, sanctioned method was through a contingent of Dutch officials making a highly prescribed, yearly visit to Edo (now known as Tokyo) to meet with *shogunate* officials, who interrogated the Dutch at length on a variety of matters (Goodman, 2000; Keene, 2006; Varley, 2000). An example of a less endorsed way was the informal training of Japanese physicians by Dutch doctors on Dejima. Admission to Dejima was restricted for Japanese, so Japanese doctors had to invent plausible pretexts to gain entry to the enclave in order to meet the Dutch surgeons (Keene, 2006).

Dejima created a situation in which two groups came together within a limited contact zone, but the laws of engagement set out by Japan's ruler, the *shogun*, severely limited the areas of possible contact and the impact of the contact in order to protect the Japaneseness of his subjects. It allowed the glimpses of a world beyond, but without allowing integration. The symbolic significance of Dejima as a place where external influences were sanctioned but tightly controlled by the *shogun* resulted in extremely restricted interactions between the enclave's Dutch population and their Nagasaki hosts. This seems to be a foundation for the way that Japan still relates to the outside world at times (Seargeant, 2009).

Academics seeking to explain Japanese society, its discourses of exclusion and uniqueness, and historical events like *sakoku* and Dejima frequently refer to sociocultural concepts, especially *uchi* (inside) versus *soto* (outside). There are further theories of Japaneseness that became more prominent following World War Two that are called *nihonjinron*. These concepts are addressed below.

3.2.1. Uchi/Soto

As stated above, *uchi* and *soto* are Japanese words meaning 'inside' and 'outside' respectively, and their application in Japan "is a major organizational focus for Japanese self, social life, and language" (Bachnik, 1994, p. 3). These words carry significant connotations and weight in collectivist Japan, where being part of the group, thus *uchi*, and maintaining group harmony are seemingly valued above all else. An additional meaning of *uchi* is 'house'. White (1988) writes:

> The central image is that of the home – its private and public spaces.
> Japanese are socialized in early childhood to differences between inside and
> outside, between "our house" and others – to the notion of the *kafu*, a
> family's own way of doing things – the near taboo against entertaining non-
> intimate friends at home. (p. 106)

Hendry (1992) explains that early in a Japanese child's life they will be taught the clear distinction between *uchi* and *soto*, i.e. the inside of the house and the people who belong in there versus the outside world. There is also an emphasis on the inside being associated with security and safety and the outside having a possibility of danger. Generally speaking, nobody could be considered more *uchi* than one's parents. Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake and Weisz, (2000) posit that Japanese young people's close link to their parents comes from an emphasis on and the importance of the *uchi* rather than *soto* world. However, non-family members are often treated as *uchi* depending on a given situation under a system of concentric circles of relationships where the center corresponds to family, the next circle out would be close friends, circles further out may be friends and

then neighbors and so on. According to Makino (2002), *uchi* is "space for interacting freely with others in an informal, friendly, or intimate relationship" (p. 29) and he adds that it is a place "of involvement" (p. 31). It should be noted that the notion of inside/outside is not uniquely Japanese. These distinctions are worldwide, and every society and language uses inside/outside as basic orientations to locate ourselves in relation to the environment around us (Bachnik, 1994). However, it may be that Japanese society places a heavier emphasis on the concepts of *uchi/soto* than many other societies do.

White (1988) states that Japanese group orientation is closely linked to the notion of *uchi*:

> The governing concept, the core, of a Japanese group is the idea of the *uchi* (home, inside)…The *uchi* is where one is taken care of, where one receives support and encouragement, and where one owes one's central commitment and effort. (p. 2)

In Japanese culture, the *uchi/soto* distinction results in a high value on conformity and harmony (Rothbaum et al., 2000), with people living and working together free of drama (Kennedy & Yaginuma, 1991). The Japanese have an expression *'deru kui wa utareru'* (the stake that sticks out gets hammered down). This means one must conform to be *uchi* or harmony will be broken. Brown (2005, p. 5) posits that "Japanese children are taught to be concerned with what other people think about them, rather than what kind of person they are and how they feel about themselves". In the school environment, which is an important influence on the acquisition of societal norms, Beauchamp (1989) writes that in Japan, besides an academic focus, cooperation and harmony are also focused on. An example is elementary and junior high school lunch where selected students from each class pick up the food from the lunch distribution center in the school, the lunch is then

served by students to the whole class and teacher, and the teacher eats with the students to provide an example and to maintain control. In lessons, Lin and Yi (1997) assert harmony and respect for authorities are emphasized, which creates students who rarely share their feelings or openly express themselves – particularly to people of authority. Taylor (2008) proposes that "Japanese students are not known for being outgoing and talkative" (p. 55).

It can be extremely difficult for people living in a society that is as group-orientated as Japan to avoid conforming to the norm (Otsuka, 1996). Kennedy and Yaginuma (1991) emphasize that in Japan the focus is on belonging, not exclusion. Under this approach people do not think of themselves as individuals, but as members of a group who have obligations to other group members. According to both Lee (2007) and Hendry (1992), the process of identifying themselves as members of a group begins very early in Japan – at the kindergarten stage or before. This attachment to the group continues throughout their entire life. Membership in a Japanese group is mandated essentially by presence and participation, and includes interaction and an ongoing set of obligations to remain a member (White, 1988). Hendry (1992) illustrates that Japanese people realize that they must cooperate in the group to gain positive attention and get some benefits. To do this, they must learn to develop an identity that fits the group. An opinion that has been popular in past literature has been that being group-orientated somehow inhibits individual identity. However, this has been shown to be erroneous; Japanese people do have strong views of personal identity and acknowledge their own characteristic traits (Hasegawa & Hirose, 2005).

Another sociocultural phenomenon that results from *uchi/soto* is *honne* versus *tatemae*. Makino (2002) defines *honne* as 'real wishes' and *tatemae* as 'stated reason'; Doi (1991)

considers *tatemae* as a formal front. In Japan, true thoughts and desires are often considered far less important than group harmony, especially if you are not in a position of power. In this environment Japanese people often put on a *sotozura ga ii* (a good public face). *Tatemae* relates to things that one does or says to keep people happy. This could be in the form of flattery, humility or an action, such as pretending to be having a good time working long hours of overtime to help your boss while all you truly want to do is go home and relax in front of a movie. *Honne*, on the other hand, would be telling your boss directly that you will not work late with him because you want to go home, watch a movie and relax. Makino (2002) states that these terms possess close links to *uchi* and *soto*. Given Japan's seemingly group-oriented society, *honne* is reserved for *uchi*, depending on the context, and cannot really be expressed in *soto*, particularly when talking in a formal situation with someone considered to be in a senior or superior position. *Tatemae*, on the other hand, is largely reserved for operating in *soto.* This is what Hendry (1992) meant when writing about the clear distinction between the public and the private face in Japan, and about appropriate behavior in formal environments (*soto*), the "*tatemae* of role playing", and the informal behavior permitted in more intimate circles (*uchi*), "the *honne* of the thoughts behind it" (p. 63).

Amae is a further Japanese concept linked to *uchi* and *soto*. Makino (2002) describes *amae* as "physico-psychological dependence" (p. 32), which would only happen in *uchi*, and asserts it is still significant to Japanese culture. Donahue (1998) provides an easier explanation, stating that *amae* typically means to presume upon or be dependent on another person, usually a parent figure or mentor, but it can conceivably extend all the way up to an entire school. He explains that because Japanese culture is collectivist, dependence on

others is the norm. It is usually Japanese mothers' indulgence and the particular Japanese approach to child raising that makes *amae* such a powerful element in Japan (Rothbaum et al., 2000). The maternal attention given to Japanese youngsters causes children to orient themselves towards their mother, rather than the outside world, reinforcing their relationship and *amae*, while also grounding them in *uchi/soto* ideology.

This aspect also continues into the realms of education. Lee (2007) states:

> The relationship between teacher-student becomes a 'parent-child' relationship under the Confucian ethical system. Teachers become authority figures to be respected and students will look to teachers for direction, authority and control. (p. 10)

In an educational context, Taylor (2008) notes that through *amae*, students receive the assistance desired and the teacher receives the feeling of being needed and of having played a part in the student's education.

Amae helps give rise to the spirit of *ganbaru*, meaning to persist or persevere and also work hard. Samimy, Liu and Matsuta (1994) suggest that "*amae* warms the heart and it also enables one to make efforts in working" (p. 269). In Japan, having perseverance is seen as a great asset and the way to navigate through any problem. Flaitz (2003, p. 61) provides us with a Japanese saying: *"Ishi no ue nimo sannen"*, which literally means 'a cold stone will become warm if you sit on it for three years', somewhat significant in a tertiary undergraduate context. Flaitz suggests that this relates to how individuals in the Japanese culture are urged to never give up, under such concepts as *amae*, until their goals are realized. According to Samimy et al. (1994):

As Japanese mothers establish *amae*…they, at the same time, urge their children to try hard in learning…By listening to their mother's encouragement with "*ganbaru*, *ganbaru*", the *ganbaru* attitude becomes an integral part of their lives from early childhood. (p. 268)

In Japan, the *ganbaru* theme is reinforced both in the academic and nonacademic environment, such as in school club activities. Japanese students learn that "in order to succeed, one must make personal sacrifices either for individual or collective goals" (Samimy et al., 1994, p. 268). Singleton (1991) highlights that this key element of the Japanese cultural theory of learning contrasts with the American emphasis on ability (intelligence and talent) and begins right after birth.

Concepts linked to the *ganbaru* spirit, and therefore, by extension, to the theory of *uchi/soto*, are *giri* and *ninjo*. *Giri* is translated as 'social obligation' or 'indebtedness' (Makino, 2002; Samimy et al., 1994; Yabuuchi, 2004). Makino (2002) defines *ninjo* as a human feeling, while Yabuuchi (2004) writes of it as heart or love and based on true human emotions that have naturally arisen towards someone intimate. Makino (2002) explains that *ninjo* is generally *uchi*-oriented and a showing of true feelings, whereas "*giri* is definitely *soto*-oriented. *Giri* specifies an array of behaviors that one should observe to maintain good relations with *soto* people" (p. 33). Makino outlines that with *giri* "one must honor it even when not accompanied by *ninjo* feeling" (p. 33). *Ninjo* is only with those truly intimate, but *giri* can also be with people you are intimate with if the relationship has been stressed to the point where natural affection is not being shown (Yabuuchi, 2004).

In Japan, teachers play a number of roles in a student's life: they can be a friend, a counsellor, and a disciplinarian. The teacher's job is not only to impart academic

knowledge to his/her students, but also to see that they develop a social consciousness (Flaitz, 2003). In turn, students often feel a deep sense of gratitude to their teachers, which fuels a sense of *giri* in the students. This, along with gratitude that students may feel towards their parents, fuels the *ganbaru* spirit and motivates the students to strive for excellence in order to repay those they feel indebted to. *Giri* is also likely be an important factor in the study abroad setting between the students and the support staff who work hard to make the students' life easier to cope with. Furthermore, considering that family-like relationships can develop during a study abroad, *giri* and perhaps even *ninjo* could also be important factors between Japanese students themselves.

The concept of *uchi/soto* has had, and still does have, a wide-ranging and significant influence on the Japanese culture and its subjects. It informs aspects of everyday Japanese life, such as groupism, dependence and obligation. Another area that appears to be heavily influenced by *uchi/soto* is a theory called *nihonjinron*, which literally means 'theories of the Japanese'.

3.2.2. Nihonjinron

At the core of *nihonjinron* is the notion of Japaneseness and the values that Japanese are supposed to share (Hendry, 2015; Kowner, Befu & Manabe, 1999; Kubota, 1998; Sugimoto, 1999). A key element of *nihonjinron* is the theory that Japanese culture is homogeneous, with its people sharing one language, one religion, one lifestyle and one

ethnicity, all solely 'owned' by the Yamato race[5], and seemingly frozen in time. The proponents of *nihonjinron* are found in everyday groups through to the upper echelons of Japanese society. For instance, in 2005, Taro Aso (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communications at the time, and later the Prime Minister of Japan) declared in a speech opening a national museum that Japan was the only country in the world to have one nation, one civilization, one language, one culture and one race (*The Japan Times*, 18 October 2005, as cited in Gottlieb, 2008, p. 1). Some Western writers, such as Loveday (1996), have also fed into the *nihonjinron* ideology by asserting that Japan "has been societally monolingual for nearly a millennium" (p. 95).

Nihonjinron has been used in a number of ways since the notion of Japan's national uniqueness became an obsession in the late 19th century (Huffman, 2007). It was used to justify the colonization of Korea and China in the first half of last century under the premise of ridding Asia of Western imperialism and cultural domination. In the years following the Second World War, *nihonjinron* was used by right-wing authors in their anti-Western writings. The ideology also gained huge support from a wide range of Japanese under a sense of victimhood and a perceived need to distinguish themselves ethnically from the Allied occupation forces that controlled their country until 1952, following their military defeat in 1945 (Doak, 2007; Sugimoto, 1999).

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[5] The Japanese of mainland Japan – which excludes those on the periphery, such as the Ainu and Ryukyuan and those from other countries, such as Korea

However, arguments have been made against the claims of *nihonjinron* because Japanese society is complex and highly differentiated, and the notion of what is included in *nihonjinron*'s concept of Japan is deficient. For instance, up until the Meiji Restoration in 1867, Japan was not truly a united nation, but rather a territory that comprised approximately 250 semi-autonomous hereditary domains (Doak, 2007, p. 529). Not only does *nihonjinron* ignore regional cultures and dialect differences within 'mainstream Japanese', it also routinely disenfranchises Japan's two indigenous groups (the Ainu and the Ryukyuan Islanders) along with multiple-generation Japanese-Chinese and Japanese-Koreans, South American Japanese and any other individuals who may strongly identify with Japan (Donahue, 2002; Kowner, 2002; Kowner et al.,1999; Liddicoat, 2007; McKenzie, 2008; Seargeant, 2009; Sugimoto, 1999).

Nihonjinron ideology is also questioned because of the way it attempts to define Japan's position as exclusive in the world. Japan has borrowed extensively from other countries, particularly China, so *nihonjinron* theories of uniqueness lack a great deal of legitimacy (Kubota, 1999). Interestingly, *nihonjinron* only appears to compare Japan to the West, while ignoring Asian cultures. This may have been because early proponents of *nihonjinron* saw themselves only in competition with the West and viewed Japan as the superior nation in the Asian continent due to its level of economic, political, infrastructural and societal development vis-à-vis other Asian countries (Huffman, 2007).

Nihonjinron appears to share some connections to *sakoku*, which, as suggested earlier, was based largely on suspicion and fear of Western influences (Loveday, 1996; Reesor, 2002). It seems that the agenda of *nihonjinron* proponents may simply be a doctrine of resistance against global cultural homogenization, particularly from the West, and the protection of

Japan's cultural heritage. Reesor (2002), commenting on language policy in Japan, states that when "examining Japan's past it becomes clear that policy-makers have taken decisions which have attempted to insulate the country from foreign influences, including language" (p. 42). These theories of uniqueness and of Japaneseness appear in institutional discourses as we shall see.

3.3. English and Japan

From the previous section, and Reesor's (2002) quote above, it seems clear that the concepts of *nihonjinron* and *uchi/soto* relate not only to people, but also extend to language in Japan. Proof of the seemingly inseparable ideological tie between culture and language can be seen in the way that the Japanese language is viewed in educational contexts in Japan. Kokugo, literally 'the language of our country', is the name given to the Japanese language in contexts where it is being acquired as a first language by Japanese. This contrasts with Nihongo, literally 'the language of Japan', the name given to the Japanese language when it is being learned as a second or foreign language by non-Japanese. In this way, Kokugo is used as a symbol of nationhood and the distinction tries to emphasize the uniqueness of the people and their language, and the common bond between Japanese people, which, in effect, acts as a barrier between them and non-Japanese (Gottlieb, 2008; Heinrich, 2012). This naming distinction, in other words, embodies *uchi* and *soto*.

Through the spread of the English language, via internationalization, English has been progressively seen as belonging to no particular country, ethnicity or culture. Yet in Japan, English is still seen as *soto* and a cultural artefact carrying all the characteristics developed

within its specific historical and sociocultural contexts (Seargeant, 2009). This way of looking at English helps account for Japan's wary acceptance of the language over the years because English is perceived as a language with cultural baggage that could potentially water-down Japan's culture. Cultural concerns may be behind the slogan *wakon yosai*, which literally means 'Japanese spirit and Western technology'. *Wakon yosai* was coined during the Meiji period and suggests that even if Japan westernizes materially, its culture should remain undisturbed (Seargeant, 2009). This slogan is informed by the *nihonjinron* ideology's associated anxiety that knowing a foreign language too well erodes a person's Japaneseness. Some Japanese people have also expressed alarm at English loanwords taking the place of existing Japanese words in recent times (Hoffer, 2002), which along with the protective elements of *nihonjinron* ideology, may have prompted the negative public response to the suggestion that English becomes Japan's official second language made by the Japanese Prime Minister's advisory panel in 2000 (Gottlieb, 2008; Hashimoto, 2007; Kanno, 2003; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). This suggested language policy was put forward as a way for Japan to keep up with an ever-increasing English-language dominated world and demonstrates that there are many Japanese people in powerful positions who do not agree with the doctrines of *nihonjinron*.

The sentiments and fears mentioned above may have influenced the Japanese returnee students in Aspinall's research (as cited in Gottlieb, 2008), who admitted faking poor English proficiency on their return to Japan so that they could achieve/re-establish group membership. This highlights a paradox: many Japanese obviously see the English language as important, and seem genuinely fascinated by it, but possessing skills in it is something that should be underplayed or even kept secret. There also seems to be a belief in Japan

that Japanese people can neither fully learn English, nor teach it to others. Evidence of this can be seen in a 2007 *Japan Times* article that focused on a poster advertisement for a language school in Yamanashi Prefecture that was looking to recruit blonde, blue or green-eyed teachers of English (Seargeant, 2008). Such public displays appear to point to the *nihonjinron* ideology of the inseparability of the English language from Western culture and Japan's efforts to provide a gap between English and the Japanese, despite the language's popularity in Japan.

English is more visible than ever in contemporary Japan and despite *nihonjinron* resistance to English entering mainstream Japan, it is impossible to walk the streets of any major Japanese city without being bombarded with English on business signs and slogans, or even the often-ambiguous English frequently seen on Japanese T-shirts (Gottlieb, 2008; Hoffer, 2002; Kubota, 1998; McKenzie, 2008; Seargeant, 2009). While there is some acknowledgement that in many international companies in Japan English skills are essential (Hoffer, 2002) and Japanese companies utilize English to promote their business, others question whether English is important to the 'average' Japanese individual. The translation of printed media into Japanese is a huge industry in Japan and the Japanese language has a strong online presence, so most Japanese people have no need for any real English fluency because they are self-sufficient within their own language (Gottlieb, 2008; Loveday, 1996; Seargeant, 2009).

The one environment in which English skills are known to be essential is in pre-tertiary education, where English plays a major role in the senior high school and tertiary level entrance examinations. Japanese students spend a huge amount of time and energy studying English, mainly to gain a high mark in the entrance examinations (Hoffer, 2002).

Loveday (1996) maintains that the main motivation for studying English in Japan is for access to the top universities, rather than for use in a more practical context, and it is felt that Japan's so-called "Examination English" only values reading, listening, and to a far smaller degree, writing, whereas speaking fluency has very little capital at any level of education (Gottlieb, 2008; Rapley, 2010). However, once students are comfortably settled into their university most English learners relax and "are not particularly invested in the language", especially since they believe they can make a good living using just Japanese after they graduate (Mufwene, 2010, p. 49).

Said to total approximately U.S.$20 billion in 2000 (Dolan, 2001), Japan's massive and prolonged government spending on English education, together with a huge commercial English language market, do not appear to have resulted in great success on the world-wide TOEFL exam. In the late 1990s and early 2000s the scores were near the bottom of all test taking nations (Gottlieb, 2005). Critics, unsatisfied with Japan's general English language progress, have contended that the Japanese students' TOEFL scores have not matched the money, time and energy spent on learning English (Hoffer, 2002; Loveday, 1996; Mufwene, 2010; Reesor, 2002). The reasons put forward for this situation vary greatly in credibility, such as the isolation caused by being an island nation, which must be debatable considering that Japan has been open to the outside world for over 150 years (Kowner, 2002), to the downright ridiculous theory that Japanese people possess unique brain functioning compared to people who speak Western tongues (Befu, 2001). Other propositions seem a little more acceptable, such as a general shyness in Japanese culture, and an aversion to making mistakes and facing the subsequent embarrassment (Reesor, 2002). However, Reesor (2002) may provide a much more convincing theory: past

Japanese foreign language policies, which focused on receptive skills, tended to ignore writing and speaking.

3.3.1. Japanese students of English and the ideal self

Yashima (2009) suggests that "efforts to create people with L2 competency inevitably involve the issue of social identity and the development of an L2 self" (p. 144). However, she observes that in the case of Japanese students, ideal selves are typically formed without an L2 component because it is "difficult for Japanese EFL [English as a foreign language] learners to identify a clear target group or culture" (p. 145). Moreover, although English connects people to different countries and peoples, despite Japanese learners seemingly wanting to interact with first language (L1) speakers of English they are not greatly interested in identifying with them. Thus, possessing English skills in Japan may be more about positioning oneself as an international person (Yashima, 2009) than using the language for communicative purposes. Mufwene (2010) believes that Japan seems to have realized that its need for English is "only at the interface with the world-wide globalized economy, in which it is wise to trade in the buyer's language" (p. 48). Ryan (2009) adds from his research that the notion of English freed from nationality or locational links was more motivating to Japanese learners than if it was tied to a particular community requiring integration. This has meant that, for instance, a student in Japan who has the ideal self of becoming a doctor and envisioning treating patients is most likely motivated by her ideal self to study all academic subjects, including English, in order to pass the difficult university entrance exams. In this way, for many Japanese engaged in learning English, becoming competent in the language is not necessarily part of an ideal self, but rather a

means to an end.

3.4. Japanese perspectives on study abroad

In this section, an examination will be made of the literature on study abroad pertaining to Japanese students. Despite reports of Japanese lagging behind other countries in their English language skill uptake and that Japanese students of English are not interested in forming an L2 component to their identity, Japanese international students have a long history of studying abroad. Initial studies were predominantly in China. However, during the *sakoku* period Japan restricted the travel of its citizens to other countries and it was not until the beginning of the Meiji period[6] that the rulers of Japan allowed people the freedom to travel to the West to gain an education. Initially, only advanced students travelled to Europe and the United States to gain a level of education which could not be found in Japan (Schirokauer, Lurie & Gay, 2006). Varley (2000) writes that being sent to the West to study during the Meiji period was so cherished that one boy wrote that he and his companions all truly believed that "one could not become a real human being without going abroad" (p. 238). Studying overseas during the Meiji period was the best way to guarantee success in Japan and when these initial Japanese international students returned home, they "had virtually unlimited career opportunities" (Varley, 2000, p. 239). Eventually, with Japan's increased wealth and a stunning rise in living standards following

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[6] 1868-1912

the Second World War, studying abroad became far more accessible to the masses. Since the 1980s, New Zealand has been a popular destination for Japanese students, although generally the study periods were short and based around school holidays in Japan. The situation has evolved greatly since then and Li (2016, p. 38) states that New Zealand hosted 8,946 Japanese students in 2014.

International students are taking a risk by studying overseas and the expectations of success put on them by the people back home, such as from family members, adds a great deal of pressure (Hellsten, 2002). Credit should be given to Japanese international students and the courage that they display because they are undoubtedly placing themselves in a stressful situation, especially when compared to the option of staying in Japan and studying at university, which has been viewed as four years of fun and relaxation (Taylor, 2008, p. 39).

Ono and Piper (2004) found in their cohort of Japanese undergraduate students studying in the U.S., that the main reason for their participants to study abroad was to improve their English. From this we may deduce that Japanese students share the belief that being 'immersed' in a target language community is the best way to become a proficient language user. Two other reasons for Japanese students to undertake a study abroad mentioned in the literature were a desire for redemption and permanent relocation. Taylor (2008) discovered in her research that some Japanese international students studying in Australian universities came for scholastic reasons and were on a second chance after failing academically in Japan. Asaoka and Yano (2009) found that some of their Japanese cohort actually wanted to escape from Japan and looked forward to obtaining permanent residency in the host country; however, for whatever reason, these thoughts of permanent

relocation vanished in time.

Despite a seemingly high number of Japanese students studying abroad, some scholars such as Asaoka and Yano (2009) consider the percentage of Japanese students engaged in overseas study to be low compared to other countries, such as South Korea. They provide two possible reasons for this: A low awareness of the education background of foreign countries and a lack of encouragement from their teachers in Japan. However, there are other factors that negatively influence the number of Japanese students going abroad for tertiary education. Japan's decreasing population has been instrumental; the number of 18-year-olds has declined steadily since 1991's high point of over two million (McCrostie, 2017), meaning that even average students can gain acceptance to Japan's more prestigious tertiary institutions. This has coincided with an improvement in the international education experience now available within Japan. Nowadays, many Japanese institutions provide internationally influenced curricula, and some feature courses taught in English (Bradford, 2015). The large difference in cost between studying in Japan and abroad is also a major inhibiting factor (Hassett, 2018).

Given the points above and the description of GFC provided in Chapter One, conclusions can be drawn regarding what type of Japanese study abroad students are likely to attend an institution like GFC. Although there is no literature that looks specifically at this point, it appears that these students are not academic high flyers and many of them are looking for an educational opportunity that is not available to them in Japan. Some of them may also struggle to fit into Japanese society for reasons such as being hikikomori.

Although some Japanese students may feel they are escaping from an untenable system, they are often shocked by what they discover after arriving in their new environment, such

as finding that their contact with English was more limited than what they had expected

(Tanaka, 2007). Taylor (2008) found that her Japanese cohort did not comprehend the

challenges they would face studying in an Australian university. Due to their ignorance in

relation to their up-coming experience, most of them undertook little preparation. In fact,

approximately half of them read nothing about their chosen university course in Australia

before arriving (p. 223). Taylor outlines that people with relevant experience are one of the

main sources of information for prospective international students. However, many of her

participants were apathetic and even though some of them spoke to Japanese people who

had study experience in Australia, and heard it would be challenging, they did not act on

the information. Asaoka and Yano (2009) suggest that an effective way to gain a better

understanding of a country's academic environment is through short study abroad

experiences, such as one-month stays, which according to their findings, are popular with

most Japanese students. They believe that after participating in short programs such as

these, students may want to undertake a longer study abroad.

3.4.1. Experiences in the classroom

A commonly reported negative reaction by Japanese study abroad students in the initial

stages of their experience relates to the number of co-nationals in their classes. A

participant in Sato's (2014) research, for instance, was disappointed with her university

study environment in the U.K. because she perceived that there were too many other

students from Japan present. She felt that her study abroad environment differed little from

her English classes in Japan because, although her peers were meant to use English in

class, they often used Japanese. However, once placed in classes mixed with other

international students, the participant received more opportunities to speak English, constructed a friendship with a Thai student and became more content.

The next shock for Japanese students in the classroom is often the unfamiliar academic culture. Education in Japan is often reported as being typically by rote learning, possibly due to Confucian conceptions of teaching and learning (Otsuka, 1996; Tavakol & Dennick, 2010; Taylor, 2008), while the literature regularly describes Western programs as having a greater emphasis on critical thinking and independent study (Li et al., 2002; Poh & Townsend, 2008; Wong, 2004). Taylor proclaims that her research shows that because her cohort was educated in Japan, they struggled with independent study, critical analysis, voicing opinions backed by evidence and reasoning – all elements important in Australian academic culture. However, students tend to be flexible. Wong (2004) found that over time his Asian cohort adapted well to the student-centered style of the West, convincing him that learning styles are contextual, rather than culturally based, and therefore there was no pressing need for tertiary institutions to adapt to the Asian academic style.

A further difference found between tertiary education in Japan and the West was that the workload was said to be much heavier in the West (Taylor, 2008). According to Otsuka (1996), Japanese students work very hard from primary through to high school level; most attend cram schools after school for up to four hours per day. After getting home and eating dinner they often do more studies. Tertiary education in Japan, on the other hand, is usually regarded as four years of relaxation, dressing fashionably and being entertained and "is as much related to social mobility as it is to education" (Taylor, 2008, p. 38). Many Japanese tertiary students put minimal effort into their studies because their grades will not influence their future markedly (Da Silva & McInerney, 2005; Taylor, 2008). Furthermore,

Flaitz (2003) reasons that it is very rare for a student in Japan to be allowed to fail because it is the teacher's responsibility to make sure students succeed.

To help Japanese study abroad students comprehend and prepare for their challenge, Taylor (2008) suggests that information on the requirements of tertiary studies be accessible to students before they enroll, which should ensure that they are more grounded in expectations and the institution itself.

3.4.2. The significance of support

The importance of both official (institutional) and unofficial (family and friends) support for study abroad students is a common thread in the literature. Japanese students naturally face great hardship when studying in Western countries, such as New Zealand or Australia, because of language and cultural differences. Ayano (2006) reports that her Japanese cohort in Britain never experienced a 'honeymoon' period of excitement (which is said to be generally felt when locating to a new environment), but suffered from psychological strain and hardship almost continuously. The most common way in which her participants coped with their difficulties was through withdrawing to their rooms and listening to music. The next most common method was by talking to co-national peers, followed by contacting home, which led Ayano to conclude that Japanese students generally rely on other Japanese, near and far, to cope with life in a foreign environment.

From various commentaries on study abroad, it is clear that group forming is fairly common for all nationalities that have been studied. Flaitz (2003) argues that it is such a Japanese trait to form groups that most Japanese are uncomfortable if they find themselves

singled out. When this is coupled with the realization that establishing friendships with people from other cultures generally requires more work, dedication and conscious effort than Japanese relationships (Beech, 2016), it seems logical that Japanese study abroad students tend to form groups with their compatriots. These friendships become closer and more important because, as Kennedy and Yaginuma (1991) state, "as time goes by, the members of any group become increasingly conscious of their obligations to each other, and their group feelings grow stronger" (p. 30).

As stated above, a common way in which Japanese students in Ayano's (2006) study sought comfort was by contacting home, which in recent times is usually done via the Internet. As we saw in the previous chapter, there are concerns that Internet-based communication with home hinders acculturation and interaction with the local people, however, this may be something that Japanese students accept in the pursuit of happiness and maintaining relationships back home. According to Rothbaum et al. (2000), the harmony so valued in Japan brings a strong focus on the stability and continuity of relationships with parents, and filial piety continues to influence Japanese young people on study abroad.

Another way in which study abroad students can promote their transition to their new environment is by being active. Toyokawa and Toyokawa (2002) outline the importance of Japanese international students taking part in extracurricular activities to provide opportunities to socialize with hosts. Their research on Japanese international students studying in the U.S. reveals that those engaged in extracurricular activities generally had a higher life satisfaction than those not active. However, it can be difficult to make contact with non-Japanese students to get the opportunities to join these activities, particularly if

the student accommodation is not integrated. The Japanese students in Kudo and Simkin's (2003) research tended to build intercultural friendships with people they were physically close to or with those who were introduced to them by friends.

One area seldom mentioned in study abroad literature, though clearly worthy of consideration, is student repatriation and what happens to students after their overseas experience. The concern for Japanese students returning home from abroad is that they will be perceived as 'less Japanese' by others because of their experience (White, 1988). Cammish (1997) goes some way to supporting this idea, by positing that countries such as Japan "want their young people to learn English for instrumental reasons, they do not want them to acquire at the same time the cultural baggage which may come with it" (p. 144). However, as shown previously in section 3.3, some returning Japanese students downplay their English skills in the fear that they will be ostracized by their colleagues. Clearly, this thinking could potentially limit what international students can get out of studying abroad, or even what they might want to get out of it. White (1988) comments specifically on the case of Japanese leaving Japan, and postulates that their membership in society is considered to be on suspension, and adds that the longer they are away from home, the more difficult it is for them to re-establish past relationships. Nearly 30 years ago, White was of the opinion that Japanese can only re-enter Japanese society successfully through "strict conformity and virtual denial of the foreign experience" (p. 106).

However, this attitude may lack grounding in the contemporary world. Block (2010) argues that:

> Global citizens need English as the mediator of communications with the
> peoples of the world and not, as might have been the case until recently in

some contexts, as the mediator of American culture, or British culture, or Australian culture, and so on. (p. 296)

There are indications that repatriation into Japan is easier now than when White's views were published (Yoshida et al., 2002). However, Sugihashi (2009) reports that her research on study abroad returnees from the U.S. showed that Japanese students still struggle to (re)fit into Japanese culture, both in the classroom and society at large.

3.4.3. Employment outcomes

Linked to the issues of repatriation touched upon above, a study abroad experience may not increase a Japanese student's employability back home. It appears, in Japan's case at least, that returning students may experience difficulty in gaining good employment. Burgess (2013) asserts that Japanese companies do not necessarily perceive English abilities and overseas experience positively; indeed, they can in fact be a disadvantage in finding employment in Japan. Asaoka and Yano (2009) argue that neither overseas experience nor qualifications "necessarily work positively in gaining employment" (p. 185). Burgess believes this may be because the Japanese corporate culture can be uncomfortable for young employees who have become more confident and outspoken through their overseas experience. Somewhat alarmingly, Kobayashi (2011) writes that some Japanese with English language skills working in Japan reportedly conceal those skills to avoid suspicious attitudes from co-workers. This marks a huge shift from the attitudes toward international education in the Meiji period mentioned in section 3.4.

Japan appears to be a very education-oriented country and a university education is

essential in gaining 'good' employment; however, because universities in Japan are ranked, one's alma mater is of the utmost importance (Beauchamp, 1989). Unfortunately, for most Japanese study abroad students, their overseas institutions are well outside any Japanese tertiary ranking scheme. Accordingly, both Lassegard (2013), and Asaoka and Yano (2009) posit that most Japanese students do not want to risk their futures by taking leave of Japan to study overseas. However, this may not be a concern for some Japanese students because the concept of secure, lifetime employment has apparently faded (Taylor, 2008) and, as a consequence, Japanese men have tended to become less career orientated (Haworth, 2013).

3.5. Returning to a metaphorical Dejima: The blurred boundaries of GFC

Having examined Japanese students in study abroad situations in general, this section will discuss the particular context for this study, considering its responsiveness to some of the concepts of Japanese culture discussed earlier in the chapter. Despite GFC positioning itself as international, the college is strongly linked to Japan and caters predominantly for Japanese students. An excellent example of this was seen during the college's 2014 powhiri[7] and commencement ceremony. Although GFC's webpage stated that the student body included students from 24 different countries, the ceremonies only highlighted three

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[7] New Zealand Maori welcoming ceremony

cultures: Maori, New Zealand European and Japanese. Japan was represented in the proceedings by means of a Japanese *taiko* drum performance, followed by a Japanese song sung by the *manuhiri* 'visitors', which in this case were the new students and staff. Speeches in Maori, English and Japanese were made by special guests, GFC management and students. Mrs. Suwa, GFC's owner's wife, closed the ceremony with the following lines in English, paying special attention to the theme of the 'GFC family' that she hoped would prevail at the college:

> Let's learn together here at GFC. There are friends who share your
> determination and enthusiasm. And look before you, instead of your mums
> and dads, your teachers are there to embrace you with their sincere care.
> Look behind you, you see senior students just like your big brothers and big
> sisters who you can depend on. I firmly believe that the closeness of the
> GFC family…is solid and unshakeable…Welcome to the GFC family. We
> welcome the new students as new members of our family on this day…One
> more thing I would like to say, please think of Kengo [Mr. Suwa] as your
> dad who supports you with a strong sense of belief in you. And don't forget
> to think of me as your mum, always praying for your health and wellbeing.
> We're here for you, so you don't have to worry about anything, you are safe
> here at GFC.

Mrs. Suwa's speech was interesting in the way that she revealed the importance of the themes of *uchi* 'inside' and *amae* 'dependence' have in the philosophy of Global Family College.

Another interesting aspect of GFC is that it models a Japanese institution in various ways.

For instance, it follows the Japanese university education calendar, not a New Zealand one. As mentioned in the Introduction Chapter and as we will see later, it also has physical elements to suggest to the students that they are in a Japanese environment, such as the *sakura* trees lining the access road, the abundance of Japanese media found in the college library, and in addition to the New Zealand fare offered in the campus dining hall one can also find Japanese staples like miso, rice and noodles. Furthermore, the formation of Japanese groups is encouraged to such an extent by GFC management that the Japanese students are housed in their own dormitory, segregated from other international students. From the way that GFC was designed, both physically and socially, it appears that the founding fathers of this institution have made conscious efforts to recreate Japan and Japanese society for the Japanese students in New Zealand. This calls to mind an image of Dejima, which, as discussed earlier, was a small artificial island in Nagasaki where a handful of Dutch merchants lived during the *sakoku* period.

It appears that some study abroad students may be averse to the stress of being fully immersed in the target culture and in response, institutions try to provide students with familiar surroundings despite being situated overseas. It seems that GFC may not be alone in designing itself in such a way as to physically resemble the home country of its international students. Ogden (2007) identified this in his research on short-term study abroad students from the U.S., along with what he calls 'colonial students', who want to stay well within their comfort zone while overseas. Ogden asserts that such students are drawn to programs that provide them with familiar amenities and the comforts of home in institutions that have constructed 'colonial compounds', placing international students on a figurative veranda, where they can view the host environment but are protected from it.

The colonial students are therefore not so much abandoning their familiar world as taking it with them.

The historical image of Dejima appears to be an excellent metaphor of the Japanese 'compound' that GFC has established and the Japanese students' situation – who were technically in New Zealand, but seemingly removed from its society: GFC appears to be *uchi* and New Zealand appears to be *soto*. In much the same way as Ogden (2007) describes U.S. students studying abroad, due to GFC's Dejima qualities, Japanese students on the GFC campus are, to a large extent, able to stay within their cultural bubble and operate in ways similar to how they may have in Japan: They are, in effect, Japanese colonial students. However, GFC is, in a sense, the Japanese students' own, home institution – they are not short-term visitors. So, rather than the college being a safe veranda, GFC is much more – it is potentially a Japanese island in New Zealand.

3.6. Conclusion

Because Japanese students are important to New Zealand's study abroad economy, it is important to be aware of their background as much as possible. The dangers of stereotyping and essentialism in regard to culture have been mentioned in this literature review, however some of the larger elements of culture can be enlightening. Undoubtedly, *nihonjinron* theories are essentialist in dealing with the Japanese culture and have been criticized for disenfranchising many groups that don't fall within the mainstream Japanese group. However, there are elements of this ideology that appear to be widely accepted as being fact, such as group-mindedness and how group harmony seems to be valued above

self-expression.

Appreciating the concept of *uchi*/*soto* could provide an insight into the emotions and actions of Japanese students studying abroad and also into the workings of GFC. Japan's prevailing attitude towards the English language and the way it informs Japanese student motivation and desires could also prove to be helpful in interpreting the data in this research.

Despite what has been written about study abroad and Japanese international students, gaps in the literature remain. Firstly, there does not appear to be any research specifically dedicated to Japanese tertiary students focusing on both their academic and social lives. Taylor (2008) commented in her research that "there needs to be longitudinal research that looks at the academic outcomes as well as measures the experiences of Japanese students as they progress through their programs" (p. 248). Secondly, questions remain as to why Japanese students choose to study overseas. Considering the points presented in the section on employment outcomes, it is possible that studying abroad is as much about the adventure of the overseas experience as it is about promoting one's future employability.

In the context of GFC, questions that examine the reasons behind the Japanese students' choice to study overseas and, once there, the nature of their academic and social lives become especially curious. After all, GFC students have left Japan to study abroad, but they have seemingly arrived and settled into another 'Japan' that happens to be in New Zealand. Although GFC is a Dejima outpost on foreign soil, I believe that the only way we can effectively understand the lives and experiences of Japanese students studying there is through their own words. In the following chapter, I will detail how the voices of the participant cohort in this research told this particular story of studying abroad.

Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1. The research paradigm

My research goal was to investigate the expectations, needs, responses to experiences, and possible subsequent individual identity evolution of a cohort of Japanese international students living and studying in a New Zealand private tertiary institution. I implemented a two-phase model (Schulze, 2003, p. 13), initially using a quantitative method (a questionnaire prior to the students' arrival in New Zealand) and then switching to a longitudinal qualitative approach (multiple sequential interviews after the students' arrival in New Zealand). Through using this approach, I could understand the thoughts of the students before they came to New Zealand which helped me create a foundation of knowledge from which to build in the longitudinal phase. The rationale behind the switch to a longitudinal qualitative approach can be explained by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie's (2004, pp. 17-18) argument that "research methods should follow research questions in a way that offers the best chance to obtain useful answers". Sato (2014, p. 38) observes that "the current literature suggests that there is the need for additional research regarding study abroad during longer periods of time" and research, such as that undertaken by Taylor

(2008), who suggested that a longitudinal approach would be beneficial in looking at the development of international students during their study abroad period, was also convincing. Based on the literature, I concluded that a longitudinal qualitative approach would be the most effective way because it would allow me to construct a strong basis of understanding of each participant's experiences, interpretations, adjustments and also to give the data a "distinctive 'real life' immediacy and resonance" (Mason, 2006, p. 22).

Due to the uniqueness of the cohort's learning environment at GFC, the probable multi-faceted nature of their experience and the resulting unpredictability of how things may play out, I considered the Constructivist Grounded Theory approach of Kathy Charmaz (e.g. 2006) as the best fit for my study. Charmaz, constructivist grounded theory's leading proponent (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006), sees the approach as "a contemporary revision of Glaser and Strauss's…classic grounded theory" (2009, p. 129), and like the classic version, the theory emerges directly from the data, rather than being predefined (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). One of the key breakaway areas of the contemporary approach is in how it "assumes a relativist epistemology" (Charmaz, 2009, p. 129); its followers believe that there is no absolute truth. Another is in the way the researcher consciously enters into the participants' world, resulting in data attached to, and mutually constructed by, the participants and the researcher (Charmaz, 2002, 2009). This interaction under constructivist grounded theory casts the researcher in a creative author-like role (Mills et al., 2006), and as such, rather than being objectivist, they acknowledge the relativity of their data and the subjectivity that enters its collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2002, 2009). A researcher's views, assumptions, understanding and beliefs influence their observations, and the data reflects the interaction between the researcher

and participants (Charmaz, 2004).

Charmaz (2009) highlights constructivist grounded theory's move beyond "scanty data collection and superficial analyses" creating an intimate knowledge that provides the researcher with "a different location to understand studied life than those who remain outside it can attain" (p. 146). In brief, constructivist grounded theory "encourages researchers to become active, engaged analysts" (Charmaz, 2011, p. 361).

Glaser and Strauss, the founders of grounded theory, emphasized delaying the review of associated literature until the conclusion of data analysis to avoid preconceptions and ensure the maintenance of an open mind (cited in Charmaz, 2006, p. 165). Agreed, it is essential that researchers approach their research open-mindedly. However, given my initial theoretical understanding of some sections of my topic area and my desire to produce a high-quality study, I felt it essential to build a foundation for my research from the literature rather than stumble along blindly. I believe that in reality most, if not all, researchers possess prior knowledge and a healthy interest in their topics and it is this that motivates them to undertake the research in the first place (Seidman, 2006, p. 92). I subscribe to Dey's opinion (as cited in Charmaz, 2006) that there "is a difference between an open mind and an empty head" (p. 48).

The perspective that I took to achieve this was initially to understand the students' pre-arrival attitudes via a questionnaire and then build dense, complex narratives as the main part of the project through longitudinal interview-based research. Conducting several one-shot interviews would have undermined the project by not allowing the researcher to develop a rapport with the participants and create "a nuanced understanding of social process" (Charmaz, 2002, p. 682), and would have thus been based on "thin contextual

ice" (Seidman, 2006, p. 17). Therefore, in constructing the 'truth', I wanted to conduct a series of interviews with the same participants over a period long enough for their stories to emerge.

4.2. Developing the tools

The pre-arrival questionnaire was administered in February 2012, prior to the participants' arrival in New Zealand in April, and the interviews were held in six rounds, spanning from April 2012 to January 2014. Other data collection tools were occasional email correspondence, observations and conversations with cohort members. A detailed description of the data collection plan can be found in Appendix 2.

4.2.1. Pre-arrival questionnaire development

A pre-arrival questionnaire was used to gain an understanding of the expectations and desires of a group of New Zealand-bound Japanese students. I believed that having students complete the questionnaire two months prior to leaving Japan would gather valid and reliable data that was not colored by the excitement over their looming departure. There were numerous steps in the questionnaire development to ensure its reliability, validity and comprehension; these steps will be covered in the following sections.

The one-chance nature of the pre-arrival questionnaire meant that the data collection tool had to be as reliable and valid as possible. The items needed to be short, unambiguous and few enough to fit in to a spaciously formatted questionnaire of no longer than four A4 sides (including the front information sheet) because I believed anything longer would appear

less attractive to the participants.

I created six general focus areas or constructs (biographic details, education up to present, college choice, preparation, expectations and support) and then constructed a list of 50 potential items. Following the principles of questionnaire design proposed by Brace (2004), Bradburn, Sudman and Wansink (2004), Brown (2001) and Fowler (1995), these items were reviewed for the following:

- Relevancy to research questions

- Appropriateness and wording

- The presence of negative and double/1½ barreled questions

- Length – below 20 words per item

- Repetition of items or closeness to other items

- Bias – avoiding the use of 'loaded words' (such as 'clearly' and 'obviously')

- Comprehensibility and unambiguousness

- Overlapping choices– each item should make respondents feel that only one option is appropriate

Problematic items were either reworded or deleted, which reduced the number of potential questionnaire items to 28. However, to further reduce the number of items I felt that further weeding was required. To help with this process and promote questionnaire validity and reliability, a Q-sort method (Nahm, Solis-Galvan, Rao & Ragun-Nathan, 2002) was used in conjunction with Moore and Benbasat's (1991) evaluation indices known as the 'Hit Ratio', also presented in Nahm et al. (2002). The attraction of this process was that it provided objective feedback from other scholars familiar with my area of research. The Q-

sort method is "an iterative process in which the degree of agreement between judges forms the basis of assessing construct validity and improving the reliability of the constructs", while the Hit Ratio is considered both a measure of "the reliability of the classification scheme and the validity of the items" (Nahm et al., p. 2).

4.2.2. The Q-sort process

The Q-sort/Hit Ratio process went through the following stages:

1. Two judges placed potential questionnaire items (randomised in order) into what they considered to be the item's relevant construct on a Pre-arrival Questionnaire constructs grid. They then returned the Pre-arrival Questionnaire constructs grids to me.

2. I entered the judges' placements in the Hit Ratio Matrix.

3. I identified any incorrectly placed items and items deemed ambiguous.

4. The items in stage 3 were reworded or deleted.

5. Stage 1 was repeated using two new judges.

The Q-sort process went through three rounds and involved different judges each time (see Appendix 3 for the documents sent to the round one judges). After round three I felt that a satisfactory level of agreement between the judges had been achieved and I designed the questionnaire. Brief details of the judgements can be seen in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Q-sort process results

Judgement Round	Total items placed	Number of agreements	Hit Ratio %
Round One	56	40	71.4%
Round Two	44	38	86.3%
Round Three	44	43	97.7%

Note. 'Total items placed' = overall number of items placed - there were two judges in each round, i.e. the number of questionnaire items is doubled.

4.2.3. Questionnaire translation and pilot

From experience, I realized that the English proficiency level in the proposed cohort could vary greatly, so to facilitate the interpretation of the questionnaire items and promote the response rate it was necessary to administer the questionnaire in Japanese (Misra & Castillo, 2004, p. 145). As per the back-translation directives provided by Cohen et al. (2011, p. 192) the questionnaire underwent the following stages:

1. The original (English) version of the questionnaire was translated into Japanese by a translator fluent in English and Japanese.

2. The Japanese translation of the questionnaire was sent to two translators who translated it into English (which produced two re-translated copies). Through using two translators, both unknown to each other, working on this stage raised the validity of the process (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 192).

3. The original English questionnaire from stage 1 and the two re-translated English versions from stage 2 were compared. Any item on either re-translated questionnaire that had a different meaning to its equivalent on the original version was highlighted.

4. The original English questionnaire and its Japanese version from stage 1, along with the two retranslations from stage 2 (with discrepancies highlighted), were sent to a native Japanese speaking lecturer in a New Zealand tertiary college, who rectified the issues in the Japanese version.

The final Japanese draft of the questionnaire was piloted by a class of Japanese students at GFC and found to be free of issues.

4.2.4. The longitudinal interviews

To gain a deep insight into the participants' worlds I decided to undertake a longitudinal interviewing process spanning between 18 months and 2 years that would allow their stories to fully emerge for interpretation. In relation to this, Cohen et al. (2011, p. 205) highlight that "inter-view" literally means a view between people, i.e. it is not a one-way process, and the interview data is a joint (re)construction that is negotiated between the interviewer and interviewee (Charmaz, 2004, 2006; Collins, 1998). Interviews were chosen for the research because I believed that for data to be valid it had to be grounded in the participants' own words, and the longitudinal nature of the data collection allowed me to identify key points that appeared in interviews and explore them in more depth in subsequent rounds.

Keeping Charmaz's approach to data collection in mind, I constructed my own longitudinal, semi-structured, interview-based data collection model that was informed in the initial stage by data from the pre-arrival questionnaire and involved concurrent data collection and analysis (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 The data collection approach

Writing draft

Sorting/integrating memos & data

Theoretical memo writing & further refining of concepts

Adopting categories as theoretical concepts

Theoretical sampling, seeking specific data

Summaries advanced memos, refining conceptual concepts

Further data collection

Focused interview data collection

Summaries, memos and data identification

Re-examination of earlier data

Initial interview data collection

Informs interview questions

Research problem & research questions

Questionnaire data collection

Adapted from Charmaz (2006, p.11)

The areas that I concentrated on in my initial interview round were:

- Contact with Japan since arriving in New Zealand

- Involvement in GFC clubs

- GFC friendship details

- Impressions of the GFC environment and their classes so far

- Impressions of the outside/local environment and local people

These subjects provided me with a good foundation from which to begin the longitudinal phase.

I was drawn to constructivist grounded theory's philosophy of moving to and fro between data collection and data analysis, which helps keep the data under control and maintain the research momentum, and is particularly pertinent for longitudinal research (Charmaz, 2004, 2006). Each interview over the two-year period informed subsequent interviews, which allowed the flexibility to pursue interesting leads to construct stories that captured the participants' individual ways of defining the world (Charmaz, 2002; Cohen et al., 2011, p. 236), getting beyond what Charmaz (2007, p. 79) called the "public relations view".

Gaining trust is an essential factor in interviewing. Participants have to be confident that the interviewer will not leak any potentially embarrassing information. Once the interviewer has this trust, the potential for gathering rich, authentic, valid data is heightened. Although my interviews did not pose what Seidman (2006, p. 60) calls, "the life and death risk of bio-medical research", they were not entirely without risk. My original research data collection plan included student focus groups. As Morgan (1996) asserts, focus groups have the potential to gain more than "the sum of separate individual interviews" because the participants could "both query each other and explain themselves to each other" (p. 139). However, after substantial consideration of Morgan's view, I saw it as untenable in regard to my research because I needed the participants to be candid. This would have been an extremely unreasonable expectation given the lack of guaranteed confidentiality in focus groups, exacerbated by the fact that the participants lived together and unavoidably met on a daily basis.

4.3. Receiving ethical approval

My initial low-risk ethics application was rejected by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) because I would be interviewing and researching students within my workplace, creating a potential position of power issue which could influence the voluntary nature of my research. The ethics committee at GFC concurred with MUHEC's assessment. Accordingly, I made a full application indicating how I would mitigate the potential issues and attended the MUHEC ethics approval meeting, which allowed me to discuss, elaborate and answer queries regarding my research with the committee. MUHEC approved all sections of my proposal in principal, however they raised concern over the confidentiality regarding students writing their name on the questionnaire; I wanted an identifier on each questionnaire so that if a participant became part of the longitudinal cohort their pre-arrival answers could be put beside their interview data to provide a fuller picture of the changes they had undergone since before departing Japan.

As a compromise MUHEC suggested including a numbered cover sheet to each questionnaire, which participants would write their names on, detach and hand back apart from their completed questionnaire. This allowed me to collect the names separately from the answer sheets to enhance confidentiality. I also made the minor wording changes suggested, and ethics approval was granted. I forwarded this email to the GFC human ethics committee (HEC) who immediately accepted my GFC ethics proposal on the basis of MUHEC's decision (see Appendix 4 for the MUHEC approval and the Massey University research committee confirmation report).

4.4. Pre-arrival questionnaire implementation

Administering the pre-arrival questionnaire upon the cohort's arrival at GFC was an option, but I felt that the students' answers may have been affected by the excitement generated by the new environment and their expectations could not be considered 'pre-arrival'. I believed that the optimal time for the administration of the pre-arrival questionnaire was at the college's pre-arrival orientation held in Tokyo because this was the last time the intended cohort would be together before leaving Japan in April. The GFC Foundation Dean, while in Japan conducting this orientation, volunteered to administer the questionnaire.

All documents required for the administration of the pre-arrival questionnaire were taken to Tokyo by a student support staff member. In total, 37 questionnaires were completed and brought back to GFC by the student support staff member who attended the orientation (See Appendix 5 for the pre-arrival information sheet and the pre-arrival questionnaire). I matched the questionnaires with their corresponding cover sheets, coded the closed questions, translated the open questions from Japanese to English and entered all of the data into a spreadsheet. The coded data was graphed and answers to open questions were listed, categorized and checked for frequency.

This data provided a solid base from which to understand the expectations and desires of the New Zealand-bound Japanese students. As it eventuated, all but one of the students I later interviewed in the longitudinal phase had responded to the questionnaire, which, when combined with the longitudinal data, produced cohort stories two years in length.

4.5. Implementing the interviews

The following parts of this section provide details on the entire longitudinal interview process from the initial invitation for volunteers to participate through to the transcription process of the interview data and a discussion of the validity, generalization and reliability of the interview process.

4.5.1. Inviting the longitudinal cohort

The longitudinal phase information sheet and a detachable top sheet on which students could write their names and email addresses were translated into Japanese by a translator. During a post-arrival GFC Foundation program orientation meeting for the students I gave information about my research project and recruited participants.

I began by handing out the information sheet and allowing time to read it (see Appendix 6). I then introduced myself in Japanese to create a connection with the students. Through speaking in Japanese, I also conveyed the message that participants in interviews wouldn't be expected to speak English exclusively. In closing I requested that the students who wanted to volunteer to participate in my research write their name and email on the detachable top sheet and put it in a special envelope I left for them (see Appendix 7, 1). I then took my leave from the meeting until it finished, at which time I retrieved the envelope, happily surprised that 33 of the 41 students present at the meeting had volunteered for my study. I sent an email in Japanese to all volunteers, thanking them for their support and willingness to participate. In the email, I also indicated that I sought a maximum of 15 participants, whom I would select within that week. Due to the large

number of volunteers, I could base my selections on English language proficiency, which I considered important because of my low Japanese language proficiency. I was also able to achieve a close gender balance in the cohort, which I considered significant because gender may have an influence on how some experiences are perceived. In making preliminary selections I reviewed each volunteer's TOEIC score and noted their class placement (based on English proficiency). To finalize the cohort, I then watched recent English speaking test video-clips of possible candidates.

Once selections had been made I emailed the students who were ruled out under ethical grounds due to the likelihood of them entering courses I was teaching, those whom I had not selected, and finally those that I had chosen to be part of my research. In selecting the cohort, I did not consciously choose them based on whether they had completed the pre-arrival questionnaire, but after checking I found that all except one of my chosen longitudinal cohort had done so.

Later in the year some students approached me and expressed their disappointment in not being selected as participants, which indicated that participation had become a status symbol and also recognized as an opportunity to speak English with a native English speaker in a non-judgmental environment.

4.5.2. Scheduling the interviews

Irving Seidman (2006, p. 50) writes that as interviewers we must be "flexible enough to accommodate the participants' choice of location, time, and date" because they are providing something that we desire, meaning as interviewers we profit most from the

arrangement. In regard to location, I had few options; it was professionally unsound to conduct interviews in the participants' dormitory rooms. For the first three rounds of interviews my working environment was a shared office, so to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of the participants these interviews were conducted in a private staff meeting room. Thankfully, by the fourth interview round I had my own office, which I decorated to be welcoming and comfortable.

When scheduling interview rounds, I allowed at least a four-week window and more than one time option on most days. I used an online scheduling program called Doodle.com which allowed students to see all available time slots and choose an interview time that best fit their schedule. Each time I emailed the cohort the specific Doodle.com link code for each interview round, I also attached detailed operating instructions on how to open the schedule and select a convenient interview time (see Appendix 7, 2 for an email sent to participants for interview scheduling). This was effective, as there were no scheduling issues, the only issue experienced was the participants' forgetfulness; it became evident that sending reminder emails one to two days prior to each meeting was required.

4.5.3. Conducting the interviews

At the start of the initial interview the participants reread the information sheet detailing their ethical rights and signed a consent form in Japanese (see Appendix 7, 3). In the beginning, I worked on building a rapport with the participants by discussing our backgrounds and experiences in Japan. I explained to them that my journey to Japan was similar in many respects to what they had done in coming to New Zealand. I emphasized that I was very interested in their lives at GFC and considered stories of their experiences

as valuable information and stressed that anything they had to say was valid, impressing on them the notion of multiple realities, and Burns's (2000, p. 476) idea that "what *seems* true may be more important than what *is* true"; it was their version of reality that I was most interested in.

The first rounds of interviews were a steep learning curve for me. Kvale explains that "practice remains the main road to mastering the craft of interviewing" (1996, p. 147), and according to Gillham (2000), one of the skills in that is to remain silent and let the interviewees do most of the talking because it "signals to interviewees that that's *their* job, that *they* are the focus of the interview" (p. 36). This was the most difficult point that I encountered in the initial interviews. I had to also keep in mind that the rules of conversation can be different across cultures; specifically, when talking to Japanese long silences and pauses are considered normal (Ryen, 2002, p. 342) and jumping in when silence appears is not always appropriate. With experience, I found that when interviewees in my cohort were silent it often meant that I should provide them with more time to remember the appropriate English word to convey their thoughts.

From my knowledge of Japanese culture, I thought it appropriate for our relationship to be reciprocal, and although I appreciated Seidman's (2006, p. 73) view that payments could bias cohort motivation to participate in a study, I wanted to give the cohort token gifts of appreciation at the conclusion of each interview. The gifts were usually chocolate bars, but after the final interview I gave each participant a $20 voucher from a supermarket close to the college. The participants were surprised to receive their voucher and one participant wouldn't accept the voucher initially, stating that he hadn't contributed enough to the study to deserve it. I based this gift on my knowledge gained from the interviews regarding the

cohort's varying dislike of college food. The validity of my decision was confirmed later when two participants approached me and told me that the previous night they had combined their vouchers to construct a "yummy meal" tastier than that found in the college dining hall.

4.5.4. The interview guides

One of the key elements in the analysis of the longitudinal data was identifying patterns occurring across the participants. On one hand, it was essential to recognize all of the participants as individuals to identify differences, and subsequently personalize their interviews, but I also had to cover many of the same points in all interviews within a data collection round. The vastly experienced Charmaz (2002) stated "I seldom take an interview guide with me into an interview, as I prefer to keep the interaction informal and conversational" (p. 679). I understand that this may work for her, but as I was an inexperienced interviewer I believed that applying this approach would put my interviews at risk of simply becoming undirected conversations. It was evident that I needed something to refer to in order to prevent the participants from doing what Jones (1996) calls "wandering too far afield" (p. 144). In regard to this, I looked to Burns (2000, p. 424), who proposes that rather than having a specific interview schedule or none at all, an interview guide may be developed for some parts of the study in which, without fixed wording or fixed ordering of questions, a direction is given to the interview so that the content focuses on the crucial issues of the study. This permits greater flexibility than the closed-ended type and permits a more valid response from the informant's perception of reality.

One of the primary concerns I had was that without an interview guide I may inadvertently overlook certain points and conclude the interview without achieving its goal. Hence, right from the initial interview I used interview guides in varying forms, while keeping in mind Seidman's (2006, p. 92) caution to avoid manipulating the participants to respond solely to the guide. Jones (1996, p. 144) notes that "the interview guide does not specify each and every question that the interviewer might ask". Consequently, I designed my guides to act as prompts on focus areas, not lists of full questions to be asked. Gillham (2000) explains that "The interviewer's control is of direction, and topics covered, and their order; the actual *content* is determined by the interviewee" (p. 47). This was my methodological approach to the interviews. I allowed the participants to go off on their own tangents and from the second interview, the interviews rarely followed the order of the points on the interview guide. Nonetheless, I made sure that all focus areas were examined at some point within the interview. Based on the grounded theory approach of building up or adding to the narrative, individualized and cohort-wide questions formed from prior interviews were included on interview guides. This meant that from round two of the interviews all discussions with participants were based on their own individual, unique interview guide (see Appendix 8 for the guides used in Shihoko's interviews).

4.5.5. Using other methods in the interviews

Interviews are generally used solely as a verbal means of collecting data. However, to limit them as such is restrictive because, as Bagnoli (2009) argues "our daily experience is made of a multiplicity of dimensions, which include the visual and the sensory" (p. 547). To this end, I made use of non-linguistic visual-based techniques, such as feeling graphs (see

Figure 4.2), future timelines and relationship maps (see Appendix 9). The feelings graph

was a good way to initiate the interviewing process because it provided me with an

indication of how the students felt being in New Zealand, and acted as a springboard for

further questions. The future timeline diagram got the students to plot their most important

short to medium-term goals, which could be revisited, and amended if needed, in Interview

Six.

Figure 4.2 Your feelings graph

Your feelings graph

Please draw a line on the graph to show your feelings over the past 4 weeks. There is an example at the bottom of the page.

	Week One	Week Two	Week Three	Week Four
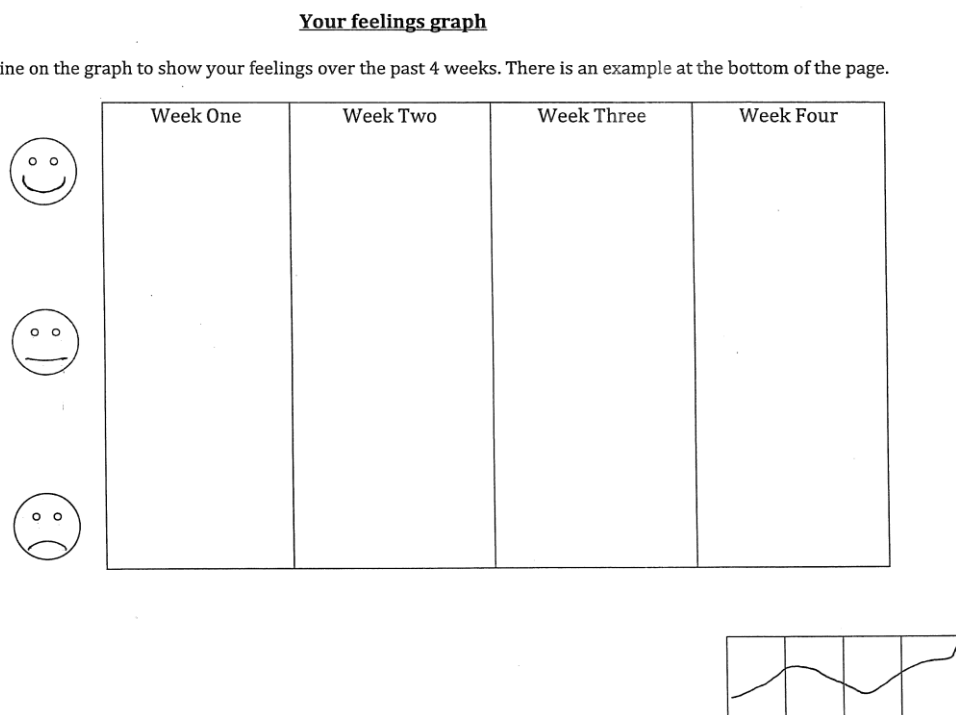
Mixing methods enabled new data to emerge through requiring participants to think about

their experiences in different and creative ways, providing me with a more holistic picture

of their lives. These techniques also meant that I was looking at the data more creatively

and from a different perspective (Bagnoli, 2009, p. 568). I placed the visual techniques

strategically to create short breaks in the interviews, give the participants time to reflect

during the interview and minimize the risk of language stress through communicating in English for extended periods. I believe that this raised the enjoyment levels for the participants and achieved my goal to, as Bagnoli writes, "go beyond the standard interview and expand the domain of investigation" (pp. 547-548).

A key element of non-linguistic visual-based tools is their effectiveness in situations where thoughts cannot be expressed in words easily, a definite concern when interviewing second language learners with varying levels of proficiency (Bagnoli, 2009; Crilly, Blackwell & Clarkson, 2006). The visual tools also served to ease into awkward focus areas; a good example was the decision correctness graph (see Figures 8.1 & 8.2). Commencing in Interview Two and concluding in the final interview, this visual tool began by getting the participants to write the date at the bottom of the left-most column in the x-axis and draw a marker at the percentage point in the y-axis to indicate how strongly they believed that their choice to attend GFC was correct. This same procedure was continued in each subsequent interview with the participants drawing their marker in the column to the right of the one they had completed in the previous interview. I used this tool at the beginning of each interview, and it was excellent in eliciting the participants' current feelings and in teasing out the things that were occurring in their lives that influenced their satisfaction. This often led to broader discussions; as Crilly et al. (2006) illustrate, "diagrams provide a common conceptual foundation upon which discussion can take place" (p. 361). In later interviews, I also revisited earlier diagrams to see how individuals had changed over time. An example is the relationship map that participants created in Interview Two. When this was put beside the relationship map each participant created in Interview Six it showed graphically their friendship shifts over time (see Figure 6.4). This was then used as a

springboard to investigate issues of friendship. As an interesting aside, the relationship maps served as an excellent graphic illustration of the theory of *uchi* and *soto* at work.

4.5.6. Early interviews

As discussed earlier, the main areas that I focused on in the initial interview round were: contact with Japan, involvement in GFC clubs, new friendships at GFC, impressions of the GFC environment and the environment beyond GFC. Apart from discussing these points with the interviewees, I also used the future timeline diagram and a feelings graph. The feelings graph provided me with an indication of how the students felt about being in New Zealand, and acted as a springboard for further probing. In the second interview, I used two further visual-based techniques mentioned in the previous section to gauge friendship dynamics and their current feeling of satisfaction.

The first two interviews allowed individuality to emerge, and I could track the participants' unique trajectories through subsequent interviews. The interviews in round three were more focused on identity and affective factors than the previous interviews. In this round, the first interviewee divulged that many of the students were depressed. This became a focus area in all the remaining interviews of round three and the data collected on this specific point was significant.

4.5.7. Interviewee – interviewer relationship

I think you are the only person that knows all of my GFC life actually. I didn't tell my GFC life to other people. (Yuta 6)

In qualitative interviews, information and knowledge are borne through interviewer and interviewee interaction (Kvale, 1996, p. 127). However, for interviews to be valid and for the environment to feel safe enough for the participant to be candid and move beyond a 'surface conversation' the interviewer must build rapport with the interviewee. Once a rapport has been established, the interviewer must continue to work to maintain it (Burns, 2000; Collins, 1998; Kvale, 1996; Ryen, 2002). According to Ryen (2002, p. 338), the building of rapport with any research participant is difficult, however it is far more complex in cross-cultural contexts, such as the one I was engaged in.

Achieving a high level of rapport and maintaining it was essential to my research because of my longitudinal approach (Cohen et al., 2011). Burns (2000) argues that:

> Only by displaying empathy and acceptance, conveying respect and creating
> an ethos of trust will the interviewee be able to enter into a valid
> relationship with you, in which they are willing to convey their real
> feelings, thoughts and emotions. (p. 427)

To achieve this, in the initial interview I presented myself as an empathic person with some Japanese experience who was interested in their experiences and stories. This proved effective in building the positive relationships that I enjoyed with the interviewees. Evidence of this rapport can be seen through the low attrition rate of participants from the cohort and the quote at the beginning of this section, which typified our relationship.

As some scholars have indicated, I found an increase of rapport over time as the interviewees became more familiar and relaxed with me (e.g. Charmaz, 2002). Over the course of the longitudinal phase the trust between the interviewees and interviewer

developed to a point where I was often amazed by the level of candidness in their comments. This in turn enabled me to tease more personal thoughts and experiences out of them (Burns, 2000; Cotterill, 1992). From this experience, I conclude that an effective interviewer remains friendly, without becoming a friend (Seidman, 2006, p. 97), or, as Cotterill (1992, p. 596) observed, where the interviewer acts as a "friendly stranger" and a "sympathetic listener". However, this comfort was occasionally accompanied by uneasy moments for me. In just her second interview, Kayo began to cry as she recounted her life in Japan compared to in New Zealand, and though Seidman (2006, p. 108) warned of this in interviews, only through experience could I fully comprehend how awkward this could be. In situations such as this, all I could do was reassure the participants that I was there to listen and talk to in confidence and tell them that their life would improve with time.

Due to my position as a teacher at GFC there was always a chance that participants might enter some of my courses. In meetings with MUHEC and HEC, the nature of the longitudinal research and the impossibility of predicting exactly how things would play out was discussed. Both ethics committees accepted my situation of teaching and researching at GFC on the condition that privacy was maintained, and participants were offered the opportunity to withdraw from the study if they became my students. Because I taught courses in the Degree program that were usually taken by students in their final year at the college, no participant entered any of my courses in the first year of research. However, Kami and Shihoko became my students during the time of Interviews Five and Six. Before the semester commenced, I met with both participants individually to discuss the situation with them and gave them the opportunity to withdraw. Both students were adamant that they wanted to remain in the research because they had invested so much in it and wanted

to remain until the study was complete.

I was always mindful to treat the participants with respect and not simply as sources of data. After reading email feedback received from two of the cohort after the final interview I felt confident that my intentions were achieved. I relate to the view of Cameron, Fraze, Harvey, Rampton and Richardson (1992) that "persons are not objects and should not be treated as objects" (p. 23). I am in no way suggesting that Cotterill thinks otherwise, but contrary to her suggestion of ending the relationship at the termination of the interviewing phase, I have been receptive to the participants who wish to remain in contact. To demand the cutting of relations with my research cohort after they had contributed so much would be coldly objective and contrary to the person that I presented myself to be.

4.5.8. Later interviews

Interviews in round four were carried out in a similar way to previous interviews, but after transcribing the round four interviews I reviewed, summarized and tracked all the data collected from each participant up to and including Interview Four. While I had always reviewed the data from each transcript upon completion, this was a more in-depth analysis. I went through every transcript word by word, identifying and underlining all of the main points. I wrote categories in the margins of the transcripts and listed them on a new word document, under which the main points, connected quotes or paraphrases from the original transcripts were inserted. In some cases, the underlined points, paraphrases and direct quotes from the original transcripts were put under more than one category.

Once the process of defining categories and building summaries of Interviews One to Four

was complete, I used the summaries to draw posters specific to each participant based on their data. I presented the relevant poster to each participant at their round five interview for member checking. "Wow, you remembered all this about me?!" (Shihoko 5) was a typical participant reaction when the posters were presented. The participants and I reviewed their posters together, checking for inaccuracies or changes that had occurred since the information had been imparted. The posters were also used to seek further elaboration from the participants and to dig deeper into selected areas. A good example of this process was with Shihoko, who provided further information when discussing an illustration on the poster that portrayed the disappointment she had shown over the large number of Japanese students at GFC:

> It's like if there is Japanese students, I use Japanese to speak. I don't know, but it's just environment caused me that problem. So, I felt disappointed. I wanted to speak English more. I wanted to speak to foreigners more. Eighty percent Japanese made me disappointed. (Shihoko 5)

When asked if she still felt that way, she replied: "No, not now. First term of first year I was disappointed" (5). I then queried Shihoko on what had changed in her experience that allowed her to overcome her disappointment, to which she stated: "When I went to Degree. I needed to study English more. I needed to use English more. My classmates changed. Most people were not Japanese" (5).

Another way in which the posters were utilized was through providing specific drawings that have been presented as figures within this thesis to support the information in the text (see Figures 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3). Examples of two complete member checking posters can be seen in Appendix 10.

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After transcribing Interview Five, the pertinent main points, paraphrases and quotes were added to the summary for Interview One through Four, thereby creating an overall summary for five interviews.

4.5.9. The final interview and beyond

The final interviews were lengthy, and insightful. The shortest interview in the final round was 75 minutes long and would have been longer had the interviewee not had work commitments; however, he subsequently answered further questions via email. All other interviews lasted at least 90 minutes and three lasted 135 minutes. One interviewee stated that she couldn't believe her interview had been over two hours long because she had enjoyed it. After the interviews in round six most of the participants indicated that they would like to continue to help if possible. I have stayed in contact with Shihoko and have met with her during my holidays to Japan. These meetings have been enlightening for me in understanding her struggles to settle back into Japanese life after studying in New Zealand.

4.5.10. Transcribing the interviews

To maintain momentum in the interviews I recorded our talk to release me from writing detailed notes. The recordings of each interview were done on a digital device and saved in a password protected file. Recording the interviews allowed me to give my full attention to the interviewees' words and remain alert to interesting leads (Burns, 2000; Charmaz, 2006, 2002; Jones, 1996). As Jones (1996) concludes, recording interviews:

> Makes it more likely that the interviewer will be alert to those points on which clarification is needed and can make sure that the topics in the interview guide are covered in appropriate depth and detail. (p. 148).

Finally, keeping the original data enabled me to revisit any interview at a later date if necessary (Seidman, 2006, p. 114).

I was offered the assistance of GFC scholarship students for interview transcription, but declined on ethical grounds because the students attend the same college as the cohort and may recognize the interviewees' voices. Significantly, by deciding to transcribe the interviews myself, I could continually reflect on my contribution to the interview process and hone my interviewing skills for subsequent interviews (Charmaz, 2002, 2006; Poland, 2002; Seidman, 2006). Moreover, transcribing gave me an immediate connection with my data, permitting me to attend closely to the meanings in the participants' words (Charmaz, 2004). This was heightened by transcribing the audio files within 48 hours of each interview while it was still fresh in my mind.

Poland (2002, p. 633) noted that clarity, speed, and accent of speech in interviews could be an issue. Clarity proved to be a major issue in one of the interviews where wind noise caused by a fan rendered the interview all but undecipherable. The accent of the participants' speech was not an issue because of my familiarity with Japanese accented English and the dialogue speed of the interview was reduced by the freeware digital sound editing application 'Audacity', which allows speech tempo alterations without changes to the tone.

I agree with Jones (1996, p. 148), that "transcribing an interview takes time, but it is time

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well spent" because not only did my transcription provide "a full and permanent record of the respondent's words for analysis and reanalysis as needed", it also allowed me to analyze the data and note patterns emerging across the cohort as I transcribed. Seidman (2006, p. 115) explained that transcribing a 90-minute tape would take between four to six hours. In my experience transcribing took roughly four times longer than the interview itself; obviously, this meant many hours considering that most interviews from round two onwards lasted between 90 and 120 minutes. I initially believed that as my research progressed, so would my transcription skills; undoubtedly that occurred, but improvements in my ability to elicit information and the cohort's English speaking proficiency meant that by the round six interviews there was a substantial increase in the amount of data to be transcribed. Although hours of transcribing interviews were exhausting, my enthusiasm remained because with every minute of new dialogue came a new discovery or reasoning. The interviews were always transcribed verbatim and I suppressed the urge to omit parts of the audio from the transcription because, as Seidman (2006) outlines, "Once the decision is made not to transcribe a portion of the tape, that portion of the interview is usually lost to the researcher. So, although labor is saved in this alternative approach, the cost may be high" (p. 115).

4.6. The role of social media

Social media proved to be another useful way to collect data. Along with the interviews, information was collected from participants through emails, Facebook messages and Skype chats. This was particularly useful in the case of Taka's last interview where he had to cut it short due to another engagement and answered the remaining questions through email.

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Correspondence on social media between me and some participants after the research had officially concluded was also helpful. All of the information pertaining to participants' part-time work experiences in New Zealand and on their lives after returning to Japan was gained through this method. During one of her holidays back to Japan, Shihoko set up a Skype interview between her father and me to explore whether he thought she had undergone any identity transformations since commencing her studies in New Zealand.

4.7. Data analysis

Seidman (2006, p. 81) argues that "passages in interviews become links to each other in ways that cannot be foretold", which suggests an element of excitement and freedom, and, as a researcher engaged in the process, being part of a dynamic story that has not yet been written. In longitudinal research, particularly grounded theory, the researcher has the opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge and move away from any preconceived ideas, adapting questions to focus on areas that arise out of the data. Also in grounded theory, the analysis begins as soon as data collection has been initiated (Clarke, 2007; Seidman, 2006). From that point onwards, the researcher goes "back and forth between analysis and data collection because each informs and advances the other" (Charmaz, 2011, p. 361). Through this method my data collection became completely grounded in the words of the participants. As Charmaz (2002) states:

> Researchers cannot know exactly what the most significant social and social
> psychological processes are in particular settings, so they start with areas of
> interest to them and form preliminary interviewing questions to open up

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those areas. (pp. 675-676)

In this way, I built on the collected data through coding and classifying the participants' words into themes or concepts and writing memos between collection rounds. After each interview round, I also made a point of analyzing the data across the participants to ensure that I did not miss any common themes that were becoming evident from the interviews. This encouraged me to remain constantly in tune with the data and attend to the cohort's information closely, and rather than searching through the salient points in the data, the main points or categories seem to emerge by themselves (Seidman, 2006, p. 81). Through this process my research became more valid and grounded because it essentially focused on the cohort and their world. From the words of the cohort general theories emerged.

4.7.1. Issues of validity, generalization and reliability in the interview data

Some proponents of quantitative research have argued that qualitative research is not objective. Cohen et al. (2011, p. 121) cite Gronlund (1981) who contended that the subjectivity of the research participants created a degree of bias, so validity should instead be viewed in degrees rather than as an absolute. However, many qualitative researchers have not shied away from this, nor tried to hide it. In fact, Norton Peirce (1995) goes so far as to state that "Critical research rejects the view that any research can claim to be objective or unbiased" (p. 570). I feel that this research is extremely valid and reliable as it is culturally and socially situated; the data is rich, descriptive and reported through the eyes of the participants, who were given every opportunity to make sense of what they said (Cohen et al., 2011; Norton, 2010; Seidman, 2006). To promote the validity and reliability

further, I sent each participant their interview transcripts as soon as they were transcribed, always within 48 hours of the actual interview meeting, so that they could review the contents (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 185). It is possible that not all participants read their transcripts; however, I received emails indicating that some did.

Chapter Five: Going to School

5.1. Introduction to the findings

The following chapters introduce the research findings. Chapter Five focuses on the academic side of the focal students' GFC experience, charting their Foundation experiences through to their time in the Diploma and/or Degree programs. Chapter Six looks at the students' social life, while Chapter Seven examines the challenges and new experiences that the participants took on. The final findings chapter, Chapter Eight, focuses on the affordances that the experience provided the students, their identities, their post-graduation dreams and the reality they found after repatriating to Japan. Data in all findings chapters was collected via the six longitudinally-based interview sessions with each participant. The pre-arrival questionnaire also contributed some data to Chapters Five and Six, and communications with participants after repatriation which they agreed to share contributed to the final findings chapter.

5.2. Pre-arrival

The opening section of this chapter briefly reviews the findings from the pre-arrival questionnaire that was administered two months prior to the participants' arrival at GFC. The responses to this questionnaire helped inform my approach to the longitudinal interviewing phase of the research. Representing more than 90% of GFC's 2012 Japanese long-term (3-4 years) student intake, a total of 37 participants completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered as a launching pad to set up an understanding of the history and mindset of the Japanese students intending to study at GFC, and to provide me with a greater awareness of questions that needed answering. This section includes information pertaining to why the participants chose to study at GFC, the preparations they made prior to leaving Japan, their expectations of the GFC lecturers, and their perceptions of both their English and academic abilities.

The first interesting set of pre-arrival findings concerned the reasons for selecting New Zealand and GFC as a study destination. The most prevalent are shown in Table 5.1. It was clear from the participants' comments in the questionnaire that their motivations to study at GFC went beyond simple utilitarian reasons. This was an open question, but the written responses were remarkably easy to categorize as presented in Table 5.1. One comment written in the questionnaire, "Even if I can't speak English I can be comfortable" showed that at least one student felt that the lifestyle change from Japan to GFC might not be that substantial. This attitude may have come from a familiarity with GFC because the results show that several participants had been through a GFC feeder high school in Japan and/or a GFC open-campus experience. A GFC open-campus experience was effectively a very short study abroad and provided potential students with a rudimentary understanding of life

at the college during a two-week visit to the New Zealand campus during their school holidays: living in the campus dormitories, eating GFC food and attending classes together. The visiting students could also socialize with current GFC students and thus receive further chances to learn about life at the college. Interestingly, academic outcomes were not mentioned by any participants as a reason to attend the college.

Table 5.1 Reasons for choosing GFC as their study destination

Reason provided	Number of participants comments
Other	4
Positive experience during GFC open-campus	4
Attending a Japanese GFC feeder high school	5
Self-growth	5
To gain or use English abilities	9
Desire to be international & live overseas	10

N=37

5.2.1. Preparations and expectations

The questionnaire asked the participants to rate their perceived academic ability and English proficiency. The responses showed that almost half of the participants thought of themselves as poor or below average academically and approximately 75% of them stated that their English proficiency level was beginner or elementary. These results, coupled with expectations of GFC teachers, suggest students who had little self-confidence, perhaps common for Japanese students, and who may have viewed GFC as the best way to improve their academic level and English proficiency.

The entire cohort was still studying in high school when they completed the questionnaire, so they were receiving regular English lessons at that time. In addition to study in school, most participants suggested that they were doing outside preparations for New Zealand. However, it appears that they may not have comprehended the challenges ahead because just three participants took extra classes with a teacher of English, whereas the remainder of the 37-strong cohort 'prepared' on their own. One common method of solitary language study was listening to English songs and trying to sing them. One innovative student considered that playing an English game on his Nintendo DS gaming system was adequate preparation for what lay ahead in New Zealand. In general, it appears that many participants may not have comprehended how to prepare for an extended study abroad experience. One explanation for such scanty preparation may be in this comment on one of the questionnaires: "There is a Foundation course at GFC. I can have time to get English in my first year". Hiro also commented in Interview One that the way that GFC's academic environment was structured was one of the reasons he chose the college as his study abroad destination: "The first year I can study English. Next year I can study other things, I heard".

In regard to the data shown in Figure 5.1, the pre-arrival cohort was invited to tick as many responses as they wished, which took the total number of choices in the figure well past 37 (the number of participants). Figure 5.1 reveals the numerous areas in which the students received assistance from their teachers while studying in Japan and also shows the assistance that the students expected from their teachers at GFC. Juxtaposed against the group's educational experience in Japan, the expectations of GFC teachers were especially high except in one area, sympathy for their status as second language learners (see Figure

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5.1). These pre-departure expectations are potentially important because literature suggests

that academic expectations rarely alter over a study abroad experience, and when

expectations do not match reality, student satisfaction can suffer (Patterson, Romm & Hill,

1998, p. 154).

Figure 5.1 Pre-arrival cohort education history and expectations of GFC Teachers
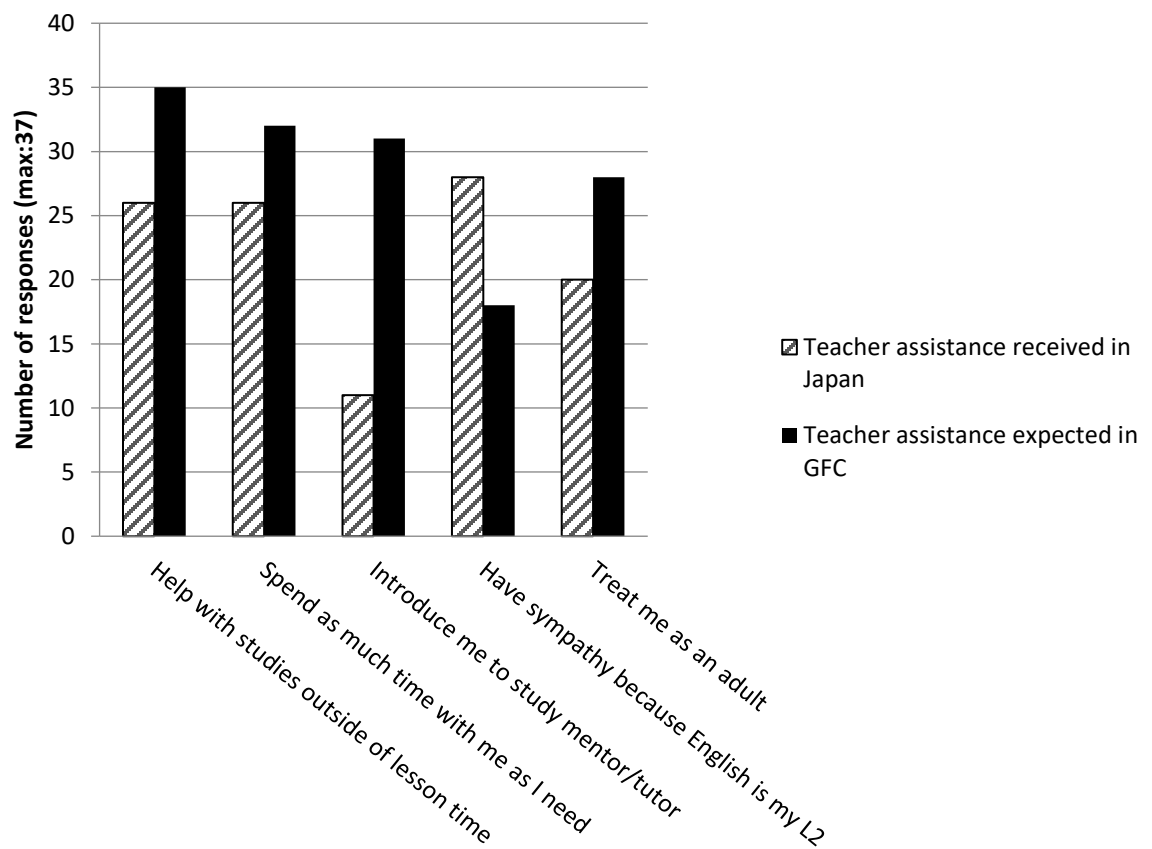
Certain points from the questionnaire provided valuable information about the students,

including those that subsequently formed the longitudinal cohort. This information

represented the desires of many of the Japanese students arriving at GFC and informed

numerous areas to investigate in the longitudinal interviews, which formed the bulk of the

research. The focus from this point forward is on the experiences of the participants in the

longitudinal phase, a period of approximately 20 months. The first interview with the longitudinal cohort was shortly after they had begun studying in the Foundation program and were beginning to understand what lay ahead of them.

5.3. Testing the water: On-site preparations

By the first interview, a month after arriving in New Zealand, the study students had tested the water and were aware of the requirements for academic success at GFC. The central element appeared to be English speaking proficiency, meaning the participants were quickly engaged in one of the main reasons for coming to GFC as stated in the pre-arrival questionnaire: gaining/using English abilities. This was perceived as a marked difference between GFC and studying at high school back in Japan, where speaking skills were not nearly as valued. This realization created an awareness amongst the entire cohort that their pre-departure preparation had been negligible, particularly regarding speaking and listening. As one participant indicated, studying English in Japan "is [studying] grammar" (Shihoko 1). While studying grammar was part of the GFC Foundation program, much of their tuition was spent interacting in English and using it in a more practical way than the study group was used to. English and the challenges that came with it permeated the cohort's experience throughout the research. Because it was such a defining factor of their experience, and central to the very notion of studying abroad, I will begin with an overview of its impact along their trajectory before returning to a longitudinal account of their academic endeavours.

In the initial interviews, all participants alluded to struggling to comprehend English

instructions in lessons and as a result, wondering how they might rapidly increase their English fluency. To become more fluent in English the students planned not only to study diligently during lessons, but also immerse themselves in English outside the classroom. Many of the focal students were adamant that New Zealanders were the best people to talk to for improving their English proficiency. The other readily available group with whom they could speak English, the non-Japanese international students[8] at GFC, spoke a variety of English as an international language which was less demanding of them:

> We can understand each other; we don't need to speak perfectly. But when
> we talk to Kiwi we have to care grammar, if we took mistake of grammar or
> vocabulary they can't understand. (Kayo 3)

Although speaking with local students sometimes made participants nervous, Kayo saw the challenge of being as accurate as possible as a positive aspect of communicating with New Zealanders, rather than as a reason not to. She seemed determined to raise her proficiency as close as possible to that of native speakers, and the route to that end was thought to be through local New Zealand students.

The question of how English was to be improved was elaborated on in interviews over the entire longitudinal period, revealing a unanimous belief in the importance of English fluency in the group. However, the approaches that participants took for improving their

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[8] For simplicity, from this point forward referred to as 'international students' because the cohort used this term when referring to non-Japanese international students.

English were not uniform. While many participants in the interviews just skimmed the surface of raising their English fluency to enable academic success, other participants spoke at length about their attitude to English and how it affected their study approach. Four accounts of the participants' ongoing attempts to improve their English proficiency over the trajectory of their first two years in New Zealand, which reveal the variability of how participants felt about and reacted to pressure to improve, are provided below. The first person is Taka, whose compulsion to improve was driven by an inner pride. Next is Ken, whose pressure originated from his family and a sense of guilt that he had shamed them, and perhaps himself, through academic failure in Japan. In the case of Kayo, feelings and reactions about proficiency stem from reflections on her first semester experience at GFC. The last of the four is Riki, who refused to feel pressured like the other three, but instead was more focused on enjoying his life.

5.3.1. Vignette: The competitor

Taka took a more competitive approach to improving his English proficiency than his peers and was fueled by pride. In Interview One he stated: "My pride is hard, I must not lose. Of course, everyone study every day, but I think I have to study more than everyone so my motivation is better" (Taka 1).

Taka's pride often caused him anguish at GFC when he judged himself against others, whom he perceived as making more progress. However, nobody could deny that Taka was a very driven individual in all that he committed himself to at GFC, including learning English. Taka believed his higher motivation would result in him becoming native-like in his English proficiency:

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I think I can be the same level of native. I believe it someday, three years

ago, or two years ago, four years ago, I don't know, but anyway I believe it.

(Taka 3)

Clearly Taka had set himself very high goals, which, ultimately, he did not achieve. This

should come as no surprise because obtaining native-like fluency in a second language is

extremely difficult, particularly at Taka's age. However, perhaps because of his driven

approach Taka did manage to get solid results in the Degree program and was one of the

most independent members of the study group.

5.3.2. Vignette: The last chance

Ken's account is different. While the pressure he felt to improve his English, like Taka's,

was established prior to arriving in New Zealand, Ken seems to have been driven by a

desire for redemption, rather than an inherent desire to be the best. He entered GFC as a

23-year-old, five years older than most of his peers. Before coming to New Zealand, Ken

had attended a well-known Japanese university for three years; however, he had not

studied seriously and instead spent most of his time singing karaoke and gambling. Such

was the extent of this behavior that he considered himself a: "gambleholic" (2). Ken

openly stated that he thought of GFC as "the last chance" rather than a second chance (1).

Because of this, he was firmly set on creating a positive outcome from this 'last'

opportunity. However, it was clear that the pressure Ken felt did not simply come from

within:

I try hard every day, but over and over my father said, 'Try hard' and,

'Study English'. I know my family worries about me, but sometimes I feel

bad. I promised to my father this year my TOEIC score is 730 over. So, it's

pressure. (Ken 1)

There is a sense from Ken's words that his father, keeping a watch on him from afar, not only bought into the last-chance scenario, but may have perhaps triggered it. Promises of success that he made to his father, which appear to be firmly in the realms of *giri* rather than *ninjo* (see 3.2.1), also saw Ken initially avoid the establishment of relationships with other Japanese students:

If I make a lot of Japanese friends, maybe I speak only Japanese and all

night I play, in nightclub with Japanese people and only speak Japanese.

From now for about one year I don't wanna make many Japanese friends, I

just wanna make foreign friends. (Ken 1)

Ken also commented in his first interview that he had promised his parents that he would not date during his initial GFC year. It appears, however, that this promise was in reference to Japanese females only because Ken began dating a local student two months after arriving at GFC. Apparently, this was met with approval and, as Ken related, "my parents was very happy because I can practice English" (2).

As a result of a committed approach to studying English and the English practice he received from spending time with his New Zealand girlfriend and her family, Ken was one of the only participants whose TOEIC score rose with each subsequent test he took. Ken scored 470 in his initial TOEIC at GFC; his score was 830 one-and-a-half-years later.

5.3.3. Vignette: Sacrificing for success

This vignette is reflective of a miserable period for Kayo, a student who felt that she was sacrificing much in seeking a successful outcome to her time at GFC. Breaking through the language barrier, becoming comfortable and gaining a sense of belonging were common themes in Kayo's first semester at GFC:

> If I go back to Japan at first, I can feel happiness, but now I have to *gaman* [persevere]. Now I have to *gaman* and I miss my friends and sometimes I wanna go home, but if I go back to Japan I will feel happy and I can enjoy myself for a while, but later I'll regret it. But I'm gonna try hard for four years and after I become fluent in speaking English, then I'll go back to Japan. Then spending four years at GFC shouldn't be a waste of time. But I really wanna go back to Japan if I can. (Kayo 2)

'*Gaman*' is a frequently used term in Japan that refers to the cultural concept of facing difficulty or suffering with strength and patience. Kayo truly loathed her initial period at GFC, but vowed to continue trying to develop her English skills and not give into temptation, and showed through her use of *gaman* that she accepted her fate and was willing to tolerate her life at GFC for the betterment of her future.

Kayo asserted that when she first arrived at GFC she intended to join a club, but soon abandoned the idea so that she could concentrate on studying English. Kayo's struggles to comprehend her teachers were a major source of stress. After failing to comprehend classroom instructions and subsequently requested paraphrases of those instructions, Kayo frequently gave in to temptation and reverted to asking her classmates for an explanation in

Japanese. This caused Kayo more stress as she felt guilty and perceived herself as weak, which in turn caused her to apply even more pressure on herself to increase her English understanding.

In contrast to Taka and Ken, Kayo's awareness of her need to strive for greater proficiency in English came from retrospection on her initial months at GFC which encouraged her to start the second semester with new resolutions. In response to her belief that she had spoken too much Japanese in the first term, one of Kayo's strategies was to make a pact with her friends that from the second term onward they would speak only English between 9am and 5pm on school days. Kayo's comment: "When I speak in English my brain is confused, but if I continue to speak English my brain will not be confused I think" (2), indicates that she felt that to raise her proficiency she needed a continued commitment to English. Kayo appears to have believed that committing herself to English only between these hours would clear the clouds of confusion, increase her language skills and help her acclimatize to lessons. Kayo had not made friends with any local students by this stage, so along with her co-national friends she came up with a strategy of creating their own English communicative environment amongst themselves. This system was difficult to sustain and only lasted a few months before it petered out. However, by that time Kayo was friendly with some international students and could practice her English communication with them, which seemed more authentic to her.

5.3.4. Vignette: English is just a tool

At the other end of the spectrum from the rest of the cohort was Riki. It is clear from his comment "I wanna enjoy my life", that he was far more focused on his quality of life than

on studying and increasing his English proficiency (1). Nevertheless, Riki believed a certain level of English proficiency was essential for his desired future:

> English is for me is just a tool to have a conversation with other foreigners, so not important. Yeah just a tool for me cos the reason why I'm studying English is I wanna go anywhere, wherever I want and I wanna do whatever I want at there. That's why I'm learning English now. (Riki 3)

Riki's practical approach to learning English, which focused only on the English that he perceived as necessary to live and gain an element of independence, was probably more sustainable than that of Taka, Ken and Kayo because it was more achievable, perhaps more realistic, and because his motivation appeared to be more intrinsic. In Interview Five, Riki voiced his frustration at studying in English in Degree. Although the course content was in English, it deflected him from the everyday conversational English he aspired to: "It's interesting, but sometimes I wanna go back to the Foundation. I am here to study English" (Riki 5). Although Riki initially wanted to enter Degree, his desire had clearly shifted from studying in English to studying English per se.

5.3.5. Conclusions

The focal students quickly seized on the idea that English proficiency was the key to being successful in their studies at GFC. Perhaps the perceived pressing need to rapidly increase their English proficiency came as a shock to the 22% of participants who declared in the pre-arrival questionnaire that their English proficiency level was in the intermediate range. There were numerous personal strategies used by the study members in their efforts to gain

English abilities, such as avoiding Japanese peers and tolerating a strong sense of hardship for a long-term goal.

5.4. Foundation Studies: Actively studying, yet still preparing

The experiences in Interviews One and Two detailed below occurred concurrently with those discussed in the previous section. However, from this point the focus shifts to institutionally directed study at GFC (see Figure 1.1).

At GFC, the Foundation program was completely dominated by Japanese students, particularly in lower streamed classes, which was viewed as a hindrance to improvements in English proficiency. However, this concern decreased as the members of the cohort rose to higher level classes because the higher the Foundation level class, the greater chance there would be international students in that class. For instance, in one informant's initial Level Six class, only four of the 15 students present were non-Japanese. However, when he rose to Level Seven, he found fewer Japanese students and more internationals. The reason for this was that in general the English level of the international students was higher. Many participants were dismayed at the number of Japanese students in their classes and felt Foundation was "not good to study English" (Yui 1) because in classes participants were tempted to use Japanese to explain things.

5.4.1. Study stress

Another issue in the Foundation program highlighted by most of the participants was study shock and the long hours of class time (i.e., 9am to 3.30pm from Monday through Friday)

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exhausted them. Since they were working completely in English and trying to adapt to a new culture of learning and set of academic expectations, students in the upper classes of the GFC Foundation program found themselves under a great deal of stress. Some participants questioned their own abilities in the early period of their Foundation studies. For instance, Yoichi, though in the top group, described himself as "not a good student" (1) and Yuka referred to herself as "fake five" to explain her placement in Class Five, which she believed was too advanced for her English abilities (1).

Most participants placed on themselves an additional, self-imposed stress in response to the difficulties they were finding in improving their English proficiency. Taka stated that when he was a Foundation student, "I was thinking 'I have to study, I have to study, I have to study'" (6). Taka's comment is indicative of the group's belief that the amount of study they undertook was never enough. Other participants commented that it was a lot more stressful for students in the lower classes of Foundation, many of whom had arrived at GFC with enthusiasm. After finding English so hard to learn and with GFC being a type of Japanese Dejima outpost (as discussed in Chapters One and Three) where there were many opportunities to avoid English, these students completely abandoned efforts to increase their English proficiency and simply reverted to communicating in Japanese.

Although most of the longitudinal cohort had undertaken a GFC open-campus experience, it appears they were unprepared for the challenges that lay ahead of them in the Foundation program. There was also a sense of frustration because, although studying in Foundation was challenging, it was not far enough removed from the study they had done in high school and some participants found themselves spending hours on grammar points that they believed they had already mastered. Yuka, for example, complained of spending four

lesson hours studying the simple past tense (2). Most of the study group viewed the

Foundation program simply as a proving ground or holding station that blocked them from

studying in the Degree program and becoming 'real' students. However, under the GFC

system, the biggest challenge that stood between the students and their goal was arguably

the Test of English for International Communication (see Figure 1.1).

5.4.1.1. The main source of stress: TOEIC

The greatest source of stress during the students' time in the Foundation program was

TOEIC, the gate-keeper for Degree program entry. English skills remained a central focus

at GFC and TOEIC was considered the only 'objective' way to measure students' English

proficiency. However, the test examined the participants' listening and reading skills only,

reminiscent of entrance examinations from high school through to university in Japan,

where writing and speaking are generally ignored. This reliance on listening and reading is

partly because marking can be done objectively, making it is easy for examination

administrators to grade the tests. Thus, the relevance of TOEIC was sometimes questioned

by participants because they perceived writing and speaking proficiency, particularly the

latter, as the most important skills for Degree study.

The emphasis on TOEIC is reflective of GFC's Japaneseness. Japan is a very test-oriented

culture (Rapley, 2008) and improving TOEIC scores were a way of demonstrating student

academic progress to parents back home. In order to promote their TOEIC progress, and

under the direction of GFC's Japanese owner, the Japanese students attended mandatory,

weekly TOEIC night classes soon after commencing their studies. These classes were

available only to Japanese students and excluded all other nationalities, even though all

international students were required to take at least one TOEIC test per year at GFC. The head teacher in this course was Japanese and all classes were conducted in Japanese.

The TOEIC night classes resulted in mixed feelings amongst the cohort, but could generally be considered successful on two counts. In academic terms, the classes provided students with test-taking skills that increased their chances of success in TOEIC. In support terms, the teacher also provided general life advice and a sense of comfort to the students. In Interview Three Ai stated: "Sometimes she cooks something and brings them, so we really love her class. I wanna take her class next term". In Interview Six, Kayo recalled how her TOEIC teacher helped:

> I couldn't increase my TOEIC, but when Toshiko-sensei was in charge of
>
> my class I could increase around 200 points. So, night class was actually
>
> very nice, very good for me, very good for other Japanese students. (Kayo
>
> 6)

As the first comment indicates, the special TOEIC classes also appeared to veer away from TOEIC occasionally and into general support/guidance, and many participants became emotionally attached to the teacher. It is important to highlight here that the teacher was Japanese and thus provided an element of familiarity for the students. Undoubtedly, the support and even the home baking helped the night class members become more comfortable at GFC.

However, despite its positive effect on their TOEIC scores, there were also negative reactions to the night class. Hiro, for instance, spoke of the injustice of the class being exclusively for Japanese and noted that other international students would have to study by

themselves without expert assistance (3). Other participants, such as Shihoko, reflected that non-Japanese students were thankful that they weren't required to go to the class, and thus considered it as bordering on punishment and unfair treatment of Japanese students. In her view, international students were "lucky, cos they don't attend" (6).

The reason for restricting the TOEIC night class to Japanese students may be two-fold. Firstly, in contrast to the Japanese students, the international students attending GFC generally had sufficient proficiency to enter Degree without studying in Foundation, thus there was not a pressing need to push them in regard to TOEIC. Secondly, the TOEIC classes reflected Japan's test-oriented educational culture, thus the GFC management felt pressure to provide quantifiable results to Japanese parents whose children comprised the main client base of the institution, and the singular academic expectations of the Japanese students at GFC reflects the Dejima nature of the institution.

5.4.2. TOEIC status

TOEIC quickly became the way that Japanese students judged both themselves and their peers. This was undoubtedly promoted by the head of Japanese student support who posted the results of the first two TOEIC tests publicly, perhaps in the belief that access to each other's scores would motivate the students. However, as many of the interview participants observed at length, they instead felt a sense of foreboding during the periods surrounding TOEIC. On a few occasions, both Shihoko and Kami spoke of the bullying that arose from the competitive nature of the Japanese students regarding TOEIC. Kami recalled that students exploited their cultural capital gained by good marks on the test, saying such things as "your score is lower than me, ahhh yeah you are not clever" (3). However, Kami

also indicated that even those students who had achieved the higher test scores still felt stress from TOEIC:

> The people who got good marks see the lower people badly, look down on, so lower people always have pressure and sadness, but also the people who got high score have pressure, cos they don't want the lower people to catch up. (Kami 5)

So there was pressure and stress on higher scoring participants as they tried to maintain the gap between themselves and the people below them. A disappointed Shihoko stated: "Everyone jumped, they jumped into me" (4), which alluded to how her peers closed the TOEIC score gap between them and her. In her initial tests, Shihoko was one of the highest scoring students in the Foundation program and as her peers began narrowing the gap, she began feeling like a failure.

The combination of self-judgement, peer-judgement and the fact that TOEIC was the gate-keeper for Degree program entry meant that it created a great deal of pressure on the participants. Riki stated in his final interview that the worst thing about GFC was that: "Everyone see the TOEIC as the important thing" (6). Even the hopes of others, such as family members, created pressure on the participants to do well in TOEIC; consequently, when someone's mark was perceived as a failure, it was devastating. Kami believed she had let down her TOEIC night class teacher with a "terrible" score because her teacher had worked so hard to help her (3). Taka, on the other hand, felt shame that he had let his mother down, because she was expecting better results from him. For Taka, there was yet further loss of face, from his peers back in Japan. After a year at GFC and with the experience of sitting TOEIC numerous times, Taka thought of himself as knowledgeable

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about it. So, when a Japan-based friend contacted him about how to do well at TOEIC, Taka readily lent his advice. During a later Skype call between the two, Taka's friend told him that he had scored 850 points. Taka was amazed and angry, as his score at the time was 645, and hung up on his friend:

> I heard about it the first time, I said "Fuck!" and to turn off the Skype. He doesn't speak any English at all, shit! I was shocked! Eight hundred and fifty?! It's the first time! (Taka 4)

Given the impression he had of his friend's abilities with spoken English, Taka was clearly angry and frustrated by the success of his friend in Japan, and took no account of the fact that speaking fluency and TOEIC were not closely related. Taka came to New Zealand because he believed that through studying in an L1 environment his English abilities would rise dramatically and asserted in Interview Three that he believed that he would be able to speak native-like English within a few years. Whatever English proficiency gains Taka had made by Interview Four were not revealed through the assessment that carried the most weight in his eyes: TOEIC.

Most students needed to sit TOEIC numerous times to achieve their goals. This could be a slow process marked with near misses. In the case of Yui, who fell just short of his goal after multiple attempts, disappointment led to two months of depression. Other students experienced plateauing scores, or even decreases from earlier gains, which was the worst feeling of all, according to Yuta (5).

Table 5.2 Time required for participants to score 730 on TOEIC

Participant	Term achieved (Foundation entry = Term One 1st year)
Yui	Term Two 1st year
Kami	Term Three 1st year
Kayo	Term Three 1st year
Ken	Term Three 1st year
Shihoko	Term Three 1st year
Yoichi	Term Three 1st year
Yuka	Term Two 2nd year
Taka	Term Two 2nd year
Harumi	Term Three 2nd year
Hiro	Term Three 2nd year
Riki	Term Three 2nd year
Yuta*	Never achieved
Ai	Never achieved

*Yuta qualified for full-time Degree by passing two Degree papers as a part-timer (see Figure 1.1).

5.4.2.1. Vignette: TOEIC shame

Ai's experience clearly reveals how a comparatively 'good' TOEIC score was perceived as a status symbol among Japanese GFC students. Her reaction also shows the emotions and sense of self-worth that were attached to the test. With her first test score of 455, Ai was exceptionally proud because, while she did not reach the 730 goal, the overall average of her peer group was 310. Furthermore, she was thrilled to get a higher score than all students in the class ranked above hers. According to other participants, Ai was vocal about her results in comparison to other students, which caused friction with those who scored lower than her. Ai's initial mark motivated her to study harder and she eagerly took part in TOEIC night classes. Within the next seven months Ai took two more TOEIC tests,

and while her score had increased almost 200 points, she was beginning to feel disillusioned because she acknowledged that other Foundation students had also exceeded 600 points and she had not yet achieved her goal of 730. Four months on, in March, when Ai needed a good score to enter Degree, her score decreased and she indicated that she was embarrassed by this fact. Thereafter, she became very guarded about her test scores.

5.4.3. TOEIC post 730

Shihoko breathed a sigh of relief when she reached the 730 goal almost one year after arriving at GFC, and, like many other participants, turned her focus as far away from TOEIC as possible: "Nowadays I don't have pressure. I didn't feel pressure like others because I didn't care about TOEIC. So, I didn't study TOEIC. My TOEIC score is 785" (5).

However, it remained mandatory for all participants to take the test annually as part of their English skills course in Degree. Unlike Shihoko, some participants, such as Ken and Yui, continued to view TOEIC score increases as a badge of honor and always approached the test seriously.

While Shihoko declared that she could distance herself from TOEIC, apart from the annual tests, her pronouncement was premature: TOEIC returned, albeit in a different way, and again increased the stress levels in some of the participants. Namely, towards the end of the longitudinal phase, some of the most academically successful participants were asked to 'volunteer' as unpaid TOEIC night class teachers. This could be viewed as another aspect of the Dejima nature of GFC because in Japan the *senpai* (senior student) assisting the *kohai* (junior student) is a common occurrence. Shihoko was resentful of the pressure

to run these classes while she was busy with her own studies and wanted to withdraw midway through. In Interview Six she offered her own interpretation of what volunteering meant at GFC:

> I was also busy doing assignment, but Nobu-sensei [GFC's head of student support] said to us teachers, "You're a teacher, so you must focus on your students. I know you all are busy, but you chose to do that", means that you can't choose the reason to don't have class. You can't excuse. Yeah, I could choose no or yes, but I know that, "Can you do that?" in Japan means "Yes". I don't think I have a choice. (Shihoko 6)

It appears that Shihoko understood, and perhaps regretted, the Japanese influence on the communication style used by the management of this institution. In contrast, Kayo, perhaps a more willing volunteer, found this experience positive, allowing her to improve her own TOEIC skills. When, however, she found that its demands were impinging on her own study, she did feel sufficiently empowered to withdraw from the role after one semester. This experience also had considerable ramifications for Kayo's future. Kayo entered GFC with the dream of becoming a public junior/senior high school English teacher in Japan; however, from the high demands of her TOEIC teaching role at the college, she decided that she did not want to pursue teaching as employment and changed her dream to working in tourism.

To summarize, the TOEIC score was the major hurdle that participants linked to success while in the Foundation program, and, as such, was an enormous source of stress. Comments about the impact of TOEIC expectations echoed through the interviews: TOEIC was "the most important thing" (Yui 3); "lots and lots of pressure" (Kayo 6); "stressful",

"painful" (Riki 6); "we always think about TOEIC" (Yuta 5). Stress built up within the students, but also came from outside ranging from comments and bullying from peers to feelings of guilt at having let down teachers and family members. So, while students concentrated on their Foundation classes, TOEIC was constantly in the back of their mind. The test tended to wear them down and it was never viewed in a favorable light.

5.5. Post-Foundation experiences

5.5.1. The Diploma program

Students who did not qualify for full-time Degree study through their TOEIC score and/or success in part-time Degree study entered the Diploma program. Diploma was thought to be easier than the Foundation program and its students were perceived as being babied by teachers, who adjusted their English to a very low level to increase comprehension. Another perceived negative was the makeup of Diploma's student base, which was more dominated by Japanese students than the Foundation program, meaning Diploma offered few opportunities for meaningful contact with non-Japanese students and negligible chances to communicate in English during lessons.

Most participants had an adverse view of Diploma, which was seen as a holding station prior to studying in Degree full-time at best. Being a Diploma student was not perceived as something to be proud of. In 'Bourdieuan' terms, being a Diploma student meant lacking any kind of symbolic academic capital. GFC management also showed little respect for the Diploma program and openly questioned its long-term worth for students. An example of

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this could be seen through Nobu-sensei pleading with Ai to avoid Diploma because he thought it would be a waste of time (Ai 4). The logic behind Nobu-sensei's argument was that GFC Diploma graduates would have few employment options available to them in Japan where most young people have a college degree.

5.5.2. The Degree Program

The Degree program at GFC was the desired destination of the cohort and opportunity to study in it created 'excitement'. The sense of this excitement can be felt in Yoichi's comment: "This year's gonna be really fun I think for me and it's gonna be a great experience for my future" (4). Becoming a Degree program student carried symbolic capital. It was a realization of the participants' ideal self and appeared to legitimize their identities as 'proper' college students. Nonetheless, some participants felt apprehensive about whether they had what it took to be a Degree student:

> I wanna go to Degree, but I haven't decided yet what I choose the major. I
> heard Degree is of course difficult and my friends went to Degree now, a lot
> of homeworks and of course in the class, we have to answer the question.
> I'm a little bit nervous to take Degree course. (Kami 2)

Despite the unsurprising anxiety held by Kami and other participants, the Degree program painted a far rosier picture for them than Foundation did. There were many perceived positives attached to Degree that Foundation lacked: There would be more close contact with international students, varied subject matter to study using English and a freer schedule, which is why most participants preferred post-Foundation program life over

studying in Foundation:

> When I was a Foundation student the class was from 9am to 3.30pm so I
> thought that was too tight and busy, so I couldn't do what I wanna to do, but
> now I have time cos my class start from 11am and the last class from 1.30
> to 3.20pm. Now I have a lot, I can make time to sleep of course and chatting
> with my friends and assignment or other studying and reading books, I like
> reading books. It's really good and I think Degree is better for me. (Kami 4)

As Degree students, the participants enjoyed the freedom to select courses of greatest interest to them. They were also free to choose their majoring subject. However, as Kami eventually found, being in Degree meant more homework than when she was in Foundation. So, the free-time that she initially perceived as having was often filled with study outside the classroom. Some participants specialized in specific majors, such as Taka, Yuka and Ken, who focused solely on business studies. Most participants, however, felt that specializing on one area was either too difficult or not interesting enough and settled on an eclectic approach: Those who opted for this graduated with a general degree. Taking the eclectic route appealed to some students such as Yuta because they could "choose the paper I want to study" (5). There was a logical thought amongst these participants that the variety of focuses and interest they generated may keep their motivation at an effective level.

Having recovered from the nerves she mentioned in Interview Two, Kami appeared to thoroughly enjoy studying as a Degree student at GFC most of the time. Kami seemed to link leisure, reading and independent study to an identity as a grown up, legitimate Degree student. A major factor behind her seemingly happy and relaxed disposition was the

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absence of TOEIC pressure. She stated that during her time in the Foundation program she constantly thought, "I have to study for TOEIC test, TOEIC test, TOEIC test" (Kami 5). While she asserted that the Degree program was not free of pressure, particularly when assignments were due, the pressure came in intervals and was not constant like that arising from concentrating on TOEIC in Foundation. In the back of many Degree students' minds, nevertheless was "the possibility of failure" (Hiro 5). Degree students could and did fail courses. By contrast, Foundation students could not really fail a course in the program, but they could certainly fail in an external sense because low TOEIC scores meant they were destined for study in the negatively perceived Diploma program rather than in the Degree program.

5.5.3. Perceptions of success

Most participants maintained 'B' averages in the Degree program, which was usually perceived and celebrated as a good mark. This attitude is understandable considering that the students had to operate in English and were not given favorable marking, due to their L2 status, vis-à-vis local students. However, some participants pushed themselves for success more than others. Taka, for instance, pressured himself and was harsh in his self-criticism:

> I could pass but I couldn't get A- or B+ in all papers. I know business papers
> are more difficult than other papers, but I was pretty sure I could get the A-
> or B+ grade, but I couldn't. I think my score is B+, B+, B- or C+, but other
> people said you score is enough. It's better than other classmate, my friend
> said. I know that B+ is better, B is better, B- not bad for other people, but is

it enough for me? No! (Taka 6)

5.5.4. Degrees of comprehension

Degree papers studied by the students focused on particular subject areas, such as accounting, the environment or cultural studies. Nevertheless, real-world English language skills remained essential for success in the Degree program and an entry score in TOEIC did not equate to guaranteed success. Gaining and using English skills was one of the main reasons the study group had undertaken their studies at GFC and the Degree Program was generally an opportunity relished by many participants. In Interview Two, Yoichi happily remarked: "It's different from studying English, it's using English". However, this feeling was not universal. Riki, whose desire to have an easy life was mentioned in 5.2.4, was exceptional in the cohort and did not believe that he was developing his English skills as he studied in Degree.

The focal students found Degree lecturers spoke quickly and some were L2 English speakers with accents that were new and, unlike Foundation teachers, were not English language teachers accustomed to adjusting their language use to the proficiency of their students. This perceived difference in instruction was a classic 'be careful what you wish for' situation because the participants regularly complained of being babied by Foundation lecturers in their English language courses and longed to be 'legitimate' students in Degree, yet once in Degree they often felt as though they had been somewhat abandoned. Moreover, they had to learn the specialized vocabulary for each Degree subject they were studying:

It was the first time for me to study accounting and it's not even my

language, some word was first time to hear and some phrase were special

term for accounting, so take some time to understand. I cannot ask anyone

to tell me to understand because when I asked my friend they cannot speak

Japanese so they also explained to me in English, but they almost said the

same thing as the teacher, so it doesn't help me. (Yuka 6)

Yuka raised a valid point, which the participants may have taken for granted in

Foundation: because of the sheer number of Japanese students in those classes, she could

always ask a classmate for a Japanese translation to any English she could not understand.

Now that she had become a 'real' student in Degree opportunities to receive translated

explanations were all but nonexistent. Despite dreaming of being able to use English with

other students, when participants entered Degree they felt they had been figuratively cast

adrift in an ocean of English and had only themselves to rely on to stay afloat; this

sensation reduced with time and experience, but it never vanished completely. The main

reason for the subsidence of this sink-or-swim notion was because participants were

usually shocked into action and it would be remiss not to acknowledge that the

participants' English abilities were in a state of continual development throughout this

research.

In Interview Five, Yuka recollected finding an old Foundation journal she wrote, which

served as a testament to how far she had progressed since starting at GFC 18 months

earlier:

I just cleaned up my room and I found a journal which I was doing in

Foundation. I did it by myself, but I don't even understand what I wanted to

say, you know. My grammar was so ahhh, don't know how to say but my

sentence or structure was terrible. One sentence is too short, but still got the

mistake and then cannot catch what I want to say from the journal when I

was Foundation. Just wanted to throw it away, ashamed, like I handed it in

already and my teacher saw it. (Yuka 5)

This reminder provided Yuka with confidence just as she entered the third term of her

business degree and behind her embarrassment was a sense of achievement that she had

come so far in a short time.

The freedom gained with entering Degree, touched on in 5.4.1, came at the cost of

increased responsibility. The participants who took it easy and did not study diligently in

Foundation suddenly found that they needed to put in a far greater effort outside the

classroom as Degree students. The harsh reality of potential failure kept the participants

motivated:

During the Foundation, I didn't study hard after school, but now I need to

preview that class. I never feel like I totally understand today's class, so I

need to study hard and teacher speaks English. I need to make an effort

every day. (Yuka 4)

Yuka's statement indicates that she was being strategic and finding a way to act

autonomously in response to not being babied as in Foundation. The necessity to use

English skills in their studies and the double loading scenario indicated by Yuka above was

a source of struggle.

Many participants, such as Ken, had viewed Foundation as tedious because it focused

mainly on grammar and vocabulary (5). This was one reason why Shihoko was excited by

the new challenge of Degree where she could study a variety of things:

> I couldn't learn like internationalism or something special. In Foundation,
> we study just English…it's not really knowledge for me. But I like learning
> society, like international issues or environmental issues. (Shihoko 5)

Another new element in Degree was the greater presence of international students and their

English language and academic prowess, which made some participants feel inadequate

and self-consciousness speaking up in class, despite their own increasing proficiency in

English. Ken's assessment of the GFC Japanese students' academic caliber vis-à-vis that of

the international students was as unflattering as it was blunt:

> Compared to normal Japanese college student…are not so
> intelligent…maybe Vietnamese, they are really intelligent and clever and
> they could choose the other college…but…they have strong aim, like…to
> live in New Zealand permanently, but Japanese student don't have strong
> aim, just 'I can't go to Japanese college cos I'm not so intelligent, so I can
> go to GFC'…So, I think the quality of student is really different between
> Japanese and non-Japanese. (Ken 5)

However, many participants, rather than feeling self-conscious, enjoyed the enlightenment

that came from sharing classes with other nationalities and were inspired by it. Shihoko

liked the fact that she could "know the different opinion from other country", and seemed

surprised that those opinions were "quite different from ours" (Shihoko 4). Participants

were stimulated by the knowledge and experience that non-Japanese students brought to

their classes, and were interested in hearing different opinions and perspectives. The participants enjoyed sharing the lessons with these students because they added new dimensions to the classrooms, something that had not been part of their education in Japan. However, they were less impressed by the academic attainment and motivation of their New Zealand classmates.

5.5.4.1. Differing perspectives of Degree

The four accounts of experiences in the Degree program below provide an understanding of the extremes and differences within the cohort. The initial account is about Shihoko, who was the first in her group to enter Degree. Kayo is focused on next because her experience in Degree led to a level of self-discovery regarding what she wanted in her future. In contrast to Shihoko, Ai came into GFC full of confidence and anticipated her Degree program entry and her account has affinities with Kayo's, although with less success. The concluding experience is that of Riki, who, unlike all other participants, never seemed to have a concrete study plan and instead focused on the social side of life at GFC, ultimately with negative consequences.

5.5.4.1.1. Vignette: Early entry

Unlike her peers in the same intake group, Shihoko qualified for part-time Degree via her TOEIC score at the end of her first term at GFC. Shihoko was anxious whether she could pass her courses or not, but her mother instructed her to listen to her heart:

> I didn't have any English skills, so I was really nervous. Can I catch up

studies? I knew that many people went overseas once, and studied overseas

in my year. In the orientation, we talked to each other, 'I used to study in

Australia' and 'I used to study in Austria', 'ok, that's a big problem for me!'

cos I never studied in overseas. (Shihoko 5)

Facing her fear, Shihoko decided to enter Degree at this early stage and navigated through

her studies by adapting her approach to meet every new requirement that she faced. In the

Foundation program Shihoko asserted that she: "Just did assignment that they gave us and

I just enjoyed conversation with my classmates in class" (5). However, once in Degree

Shihoko studied at least three hours per night at the library, listened intently to her

lecturers, and did a lot of background reading to learn course specific vocabulary. One

specific skill that Shihoko developed as a result of transitioning to Degree was time

management:

I know how to manage it and I know how it takes. I can make time for my

own and I can make time for study. So, it's not really problem for me now.

(Shihoko 5)

Despite her initial lack of confidence and concern that she would be left behind by her

peers Shihoko enjoyed more academic success than the peers with overseas experience that

she mentioned above. She thrived in the GFC environment and had the distinction of

graduating from GFC first in her Japanese peer group.

5.5.4.1.2. Vignette: Feeling misplaced

Kayo was one of those students who sometimes struggled to find topics that were

motivating or practical for their future. She entered the Degree program with the future

goal of teaching English in a Japanese public high school; however, her comment: "I

couldn't enjoy class at all…just listening or checking on Facebook in the class or just

sleeping with time" (Kayo 5), indicate that she felt misplaced and uninterested in her

studies. In Interview Six Kayo spoke more on what subjects held her interest:

> Studying other subject like environment or international relations is very,
>
> very boring, but studying language is interesting for me because everyone
>
> starts from same place, I mean no background or no experience. (Kayo 6)

The phrase "everyone starts from same place" is a very telling one because it highlights

one of the main issues in Degree that troubled Kayo: the fact that she had little to no

background knowledge in the Degree courses she was taking. It also appears that Kayo

may have been constructing her academic identity through comparisons with her peers

which, considering her propensity to self-criticism, often had a negative impact on how she

viewed herself. According to Kayo, many local and international students had some study

and/or practical experience in Degree courses – like environmentalism. Because of this

belief, she selected Mandarin as her favorite Degree course, a subject where everyone

basically started from the same place. It was, figuratively speaking, a level playing field.

Though her results in Degree courses indicated that she would have been successful, Kayo

realized that she no longer wanted to teach English in Japan and felt more enthusiastic

about working in tourism. This revelation prompted Kayo to transfer to the Diploma

program just after the research period so she could study in tourism-focused courses. Kayo

was unique because she was the only participant who, with the ability to be successful in

the Degree program, transferred 'down' to the Diploma program because she believed it

made more practical sense to what she wanted to do post-graduation. However, there were also numerous signposts throughout this research that indicated Kayo struggled to transition to life and study at GFC.

5.5.4.1.3. Vignette: Returning home with a second-class qualification

Ai enjoyed initial academic success in the Foundation program and achieved a good first TOEIC score. However, she soon began struggling and never qualified to study in Degree full-time, a circumstance which was perceived by many Degree students and GFC management as a failure. Ai studied some Degree papers part-time as a Diploma student, but was not successful, and this, coupled with her poor attendance record, resulted in her losing her GFC scholarship. At times, Ai seemed adrift and at a loss with what to do with her life:

> I lost my goals about what I should be in the future and what should I be studying. What do I have to study now? Why am I in New Zealand? I should have choosed a Japanese university or something? I was thinking about that and then I couldn't woke up and I don't know why I struggled sometimes. (Ai 6)

It seems clear that at the time of her final interview Ai was lost and confused; this was a rather dramatic fall for someone who had arrived at GFC overflowing with confidence and pride. However, according to Ai, after the conclusion of the research and while still at GFC, she found herself in a romantic relationship that brought her not only stability but also the composure in her social and academic worlds to allow her to go on and graduate with a Diploma.

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5.5.4.1.4. Vignette: Returning home without a qualification

Riki was the only research participant who left GFC before he graduated, returning to Japan with nothing to show in an academic sense. He indicated early on that study was not a top priority for him. In his second year, after entering Degree, Riki was frequently absent from lessons due to oversleeping because he often worked late into the night on his various club and committee commitments, which physically exhausted him. When he did attend class, he invariably struggled to focus:

> It's difficult for me to concentrate on one thing if it's not fun. Like I am
>
> playing the Japanese drum and it's really fun for me, so I can concentrate on
>
> the Japanese drum so much, but for the class it's really difficult for me.
>
> (Riki 6)

It appeared that everything in Riki's life had to have an element of enjoyment attached to it or he quickly lost interest. Unlike the other study students, he refused to apply himself to anything he perceived as boring. Club activities seemed to consume Riki's attention and for a period he almost completely abandoned his studies – appearing to accept the consequences of his actions with equanimity. In Interview Six he stated: "I decided to do Japanese drum team instead of study…so even if the class, my score was bad, no worries". To state that Riki was dedicated to the drum team would not do justice to his level of commitment (see 6.8.3 and 6.10.2). Also in his sixth interview, he revealed: "For me, the Japan drum team is the reason why I am here. If there was no drum team here, I'm not gonna be here" (Riki 6).

Riki received a warning letter that he might lose his scholarship. If this occurred he would

have to return to Japan because his parents would be unable to pay the fees, but that did not appear to daunt him: "The life is always 50%. It depends on how you think. So maybe I can still enjoy my life even if I failed here" (6). His nonchalance did not last, however. Soon after his final interview he messaged to say that he had withdrawn from the GFC drum team to concentrate on studying. Unfortunately for Riki it was a case of too little, too late: Riki had to drop out of GFC one year before he was due to graduate. However, as will be shown in chapter six, when one considers the immense personal growth that Riki made outside the classroom, his time at GFC could hardly be considered a failure.

5.6. Encountering a new academic culture

At whatever level the students were studying, the academic culture at GFC differed from what they had experienced in Japan and this was the subject of comment throughout the interviews. One example was the lack of textbook use, which some participants found unsettling initially. Even in Foundation, a program where they might have been easy to apply, textbooks were seldom utilized. The Japanese culture of education is heavily based on textbooks and they were the cornerstone of most courses the students took at school until their arrival at GFC. All of the focal students struggled with classroom English initially and many participants argued that being able to preview content from a textbook before lessons would have benefited them greatly. When textbooks did feature in lessons at GFC, the participants commented that they were used in random ways:

> Maybe all Japanese university, college or school have a textbook each
>
> class…I can preview if I have textbook, but this school doesn't have text, so

I can't preview. Some of the class have a textbook, but in Japan when we

use a textbook we learn in order, but this school not in order, for example

one day we learned about page six, but another day we studied one hundred

seventy-six, like this…It's not good for me. (Kayo 2)

The activeness of many GFC classrooms, beginning with Foundation, was found to be very

different to Japan. Participants recalled that in Japan they were passive learners sitting in

silence while their teachers talked:

One teacher from Japan say, "In Japan we have to wait for the student's

response for 5 minutes, but here we have to respond in 5 seconds". So, we

have to talk here, normally Japanese college or schools don't learn about the

speaking. (Riki 5)

The associated demands stemming from the student-centered classrooms, such as being

expected to provide answers in front of the class, was daunting for some participants

initially:

I don't like answer the question in the class, especially in front of many

people. So sometimes I feel I don't wanna go to my class if teacher says "Hi

Kami", but maybe I can't answer the question. What should I do? I don't

wanna go sometimes. (Kami 2)

However, some participants quickly acclimatized to GFC's student-centered environment

and flourished by throwing caution to the wind and seizing their study abroad opportunity

by actively contributing to lesson activities. Shihoko, for instance, stated: "I wanna to talk

to friends in class and I wanna to explain my opinion in class…I like this style" (2). At

GFC, lecturers often acted as facilitators after establishing the lesson topic and students were expected to participate in a range of ways from contributing to small group discussions to presenting in front of the class. For most study students, adapting to this new normal took some time. It required them to have a higher degree of confidence both in themselves and in their abilities in English that was perhaps unfamiliar. Shihoko felt more energized by GFC's student-centered culture of education than she did in Japan, and despite a requirement for a far more active role in the New Zealand classroom, she did not feel pressured by it. The pressure that Shihoko had felt in Japan was generated by its test taking culture, which she perceived as different from GFC:

> It's really different from the Japanese class. When I was studying in Japan
> teachers were always talking and we had to be quiet and all we had to do
> was test for entering university or high school, it was a lot of pressure, but I
> don't feel pressure here. (Shihoko 6)

While the frequent TOEIC tests taken in the Foundation program were reminiscent of Japanese education, this ended with entry to Degree.

Not all GFC teachers allowed for a high level of student-to-student interaction, however, and many participants were disappointed that in some classes the opportunities to make non-Japanese friends assumed by the presence of international students in their classes did not play out. Frequently, the teaching delivery in Degree classes was not conducive to intercultural mixing and intra-class relationship building. Kami here notes the contrasting experiences that eventuated:

> We don't have connection with other nationalities, but in Class A it was
> really good to talk each other, so we can know each other. But the other

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class is like just listening the lecture and after the finishing the class,

goodbye. I have never spoke with T.J., but [after studying in Class A] we

had opportunity to talk each other, so out of the class we sometimes talked.

Kiwi students I've never talked, but now 'hi' and sometimes talking. (Kami

6)

Kami's quote is typical of the frustration felt regarding relationship building with non-Japanese students in Degree, where some lecturers' approach to teaching left the participants dwelling on lost opportunities and what might have been. International friendships will be further discussed in 6.6.4.

5.7. Final achievements

By the conclusion of the data collection the cohort members, except for Jun and Riki, were achieving steadily in their studies which would ultimately see them successfully graduate GFC. However, academic success is only one way of measuring gains in study abroad. Ai and, in particular, Riki both achieved a lot of personal growth during their experience at GFC. So, to consider them failures and suggest that their experience at the college was a waste of time surely does not do justice to the gains that they made through their own agency.

5.8. Conclusion

The findings of Chapter Five show that study abroad generally had an academic intent. Many of the participants arrived at GFC focused on gaining English skills. This level of

focus increased after they discovered that their pre-departure language preparations were negligible and that English proficiency was key to their academic success. The participants used various methods, depending on the individual, to meet that end. As shown in 5.2, the study group faced numerous academic struggles as they navigated through their programs during the research. In the Foundation program, the main obstacles were TOEIC and perhaps the limited opportunities to connect with non-Japanese students in classes. Post-Foundation studies threw up different challenges for the cohort to deal with. Those participants in Diploma faced a lack of symbolic capital and their classes were dominated by Japanese students and not challenging academically. Being a Degree student, on the other hand, was a status symbol and the program itself was very international. However, many participants struggled with the new academic culture and had to contend with double loading in English.

There was a wide range of academic results amongst the participants, from personal triumph and graduation with a New Zealand-based degree to dropping out and returning to Japan with no qualifications. In either case, however, as Chapter Six reveals, there were other considerable gains outside of the classroom that should not be overlooked, but rather celebrated and acknowledged as an integral part of the study abroad experience. Though studying at GFC was a struggle for the participants until they adapted to the new culture of education, living at GFC was perhaps a bigger test, which, for some participants, offered the greatest opportunities for growth. This is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Six: Life outside the Classroom

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the cohort's life outside the classroom and underlines the importance of a holistic perspective when examining study abroad. The things that occur in the international students' social environment undoubtedly have a flow-on effect on their attitude towards and ability to study in the classroom, and vice-versa. It came through in the interviews that participants could not remember the exact details of their academic scores or interesting incidents within a classroom setting, but could recall minute details of interesting experiences in their everyday life. This tends to suggest that study was something they did while overseas, but the living and experiencing their new world was the priority for them. The first section is a brief overview of the expectations of the pre-arrival questionnaire cohort. The commentary following this looks at the social aspect of the focal students' lives at GFC and shows that many of their initial feelings changed over the course of the research period. There is often a trajectory with international students studying abroad that includes an initial period of struggle before settling into the new environment. In the numerous sections that follow, this chapter will give an account of

trajectories based on the various findings that emerged in the research.

6.2. Social Expectations

The information in this opening section comes from the pre-arrival questionnaire. The
collective desire of the 37-strong cohort for local and foreign friendship at GFC is
illustrated in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Pre-arrival Cohort Friendship Desires

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Dont know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I want host friends	31	6			
Hosts should approach me for friendship	6	5	17	5	4
I want international friends	34	3			

(N=37)

There appeared to be affordances for friendships with local and international students at
GFC's student community. Envisaging making such connections in English, however,
brought a range of responses about who should be the first in making the approach to
friendship. While participants clearly prized the opportunity to develop friendships with
New Zealand students, it appears that their confidence levels or the fact that they would be
guests in the country may have influenced their opinions on who should 'make the first
move'. Further information from the questionnaire also indicated that the focal students
were optimistic about making foreign friends. From written comments, it was evident that
participants believed that joining clubs would provide them with the most opportunities to

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develop these friendships.

Figure 6.1 Pre-arrival Cohort Expectations of GFC Support Staff
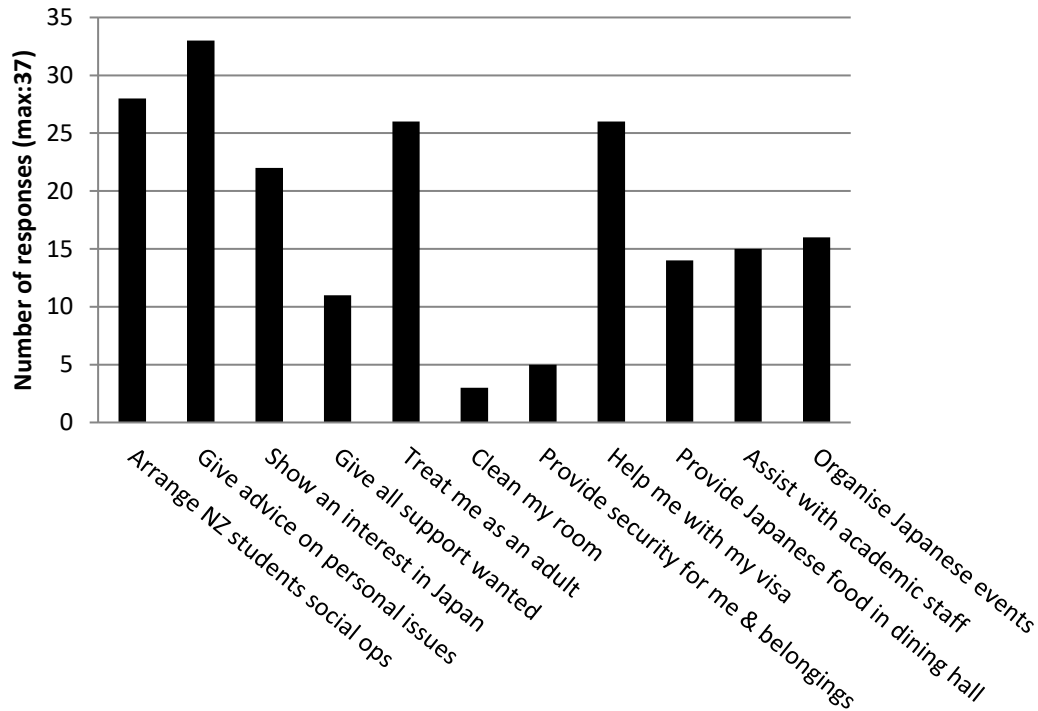
Another significant group whose contribution to their overseas experience was anticipated in advance was the official support staff of GFC. The students had numerous, and in some cases high, expectations of the support staff and these are shown in Figure 6.1. As can be seen, the main expectations that the students had were: advice on personal issues, the arrangement of social opportunities with local students, adult treatment and help with arranging visas. Providing personal advice should be considered a main role of student support, however, the level of importance placed on this and the high expectations of support staff to arrange social opportunities with local students may be an indication of low social confidence. Participants seemed to acknowledge that leaving home and exiting their teenage years meant they were becoming adults and expected to be treated accordingly. An

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interesting finding was the participants' low expectations of support staff providing security for self and belongings in comparison to showing an interest in Japan, organizing Japanese events and providing Japanese food.

The valuable information regarding the pre-arrival cohort's friendship desires and beliefs, along with their expectations of official GFC student support gathered from the questionnaire informed numerous social areas to investigate in the interviews from the longitudinal study and this will be the subject of the rest of the chapter.

6.3. Living in a Dejima outpost: The GFC Japanese enclave

All information presented from this point forward pertains to the longitudinal cohort's life at GFC outside the classroom over the course of their stay in New Zealand. Many aspects of life at the college appeared to the study group to indicate an intention to recreate Japan as much as possible. In line with this, the following section looks at how the institution functioned as a Japanese Dejima outpost within New Zealand.

6.3.1. The physical campus: Visions of Japan

When the students arrived at GFC, many of them seemed to be overwhelmed by their initial impressions of their new life. The two main things that struck them about the campus were:

1. The physical beauty, which appeared to be a hybrid between New Zealand and

Japan. This was invariably welcomed by the cohort. In Interview One, Kayo stated: "Like my home country, lots of nature…It is very good for me". Yoichi seemed to view it as a wonderland. In his first interview, he described the college as "awesome" and added that "every day is so happy" and it was "a good place to get a dream" (1).

2. The number of Japanese students studying there, which dampened some participants' spirits. In his only interview, Jun stated: "there are so many Japanese person…maybe I can't stand here cos I don't like to talk to Japanese people".

The physical appearance of GFC in places was like a Japanese compound lifted directly from a picture book on Japanese life, nothing contributing more to this impression than the cherry blossom trees lining the driveway from the administration building to the front gate. The cherry blossoms and other elements of GFC's physical environment, such as the *dojo*[9], gave GFC a Japanese feel and seemed to make the Japanese students feel comfortable. Kayo noted that the college's physical environment was a mixture of Japan and New Zealand, cherry blossoms stood alongside Maori sculptures and native New Zealand plants (3). However, she argued that access to Japanese media made the college feel more Japanese than Kiwi: "In library we can find Japanese books. If this is not Japanese school finding Japanese books is a little bit difficult, but this school has lots of Japanese [books]" (3). In the GFC library there was a large collection of Japanese books and DVDs for

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[9] A room/hall where judo and other martial arts are practiced

student use. In fact, the college library is said to possess the largest collection of Japanese manga[10] in New Zealand.

Shihoko pointed out that media in the library were only in English and Japanese, despite the presence of speakers of other languages in the student body (3). Kayo and Shihoko's comments about GFC's environment suggest that it was a Dejima outpost, with overt displays of Japaneseness that allowed students from Japan to view the local environment from the safety of a figurative Japanese island. This familiarity was viewed with a degree of positivity; however, another factor that provided strength to GFC's Dejima image, the dining hall food, was viewed in a more negative light.

6.3.2. The menu

The initial issue with the presence of a Japanese-themed menu in the GFC dining hall was at a material level: there seemed to be a discrepancy between the intention of providing Japanese food and the execution, i.e. the taste. Kayo was especially critical and appeared to suggest that the food was not 'truly' Japanese:

> Japanese food is very good, especially Hokkaido food. Have you ever eaten breakfast at here? Breakfast is very bad: rice and miso soup and some vegetables, or yoghurt, or cereal, or bread and some vegetable only. Usually

---

[10] Japanese comic books

in Japan there is rice, miso soup and some main dish; fish or meat or

something. (Kayo 1)

In the second round of interviews all participants complained about the food, which was

frequently described as 'tasteless' and 'disgusting':

When I came to New Zealand I remember the first word is 'disgusting'.

Disgusting is a very useful word I think. Not good meal…so difficult to bite

and also sometime disgusting smell. (Ken 2)

These quotes appear to indicate that GFC was determined to recreate a Japanese

environment for its Japanese students, right down to the food available in the dining hall.

However, the college did not make the investment in qualified Japanese cooking staff that

could have made the taste of Japan a reality at GFC. Recreating Japan is difficult and the

taste of the Japanese food offered by the campus dining hall was clearly not met with

approval. The hybrid nature of the institution seems to have worked against the complete

success of the dining room, as did the absence of Japanese cooking staff, even though

Kayo mentions two staples of the Japanese diet were available, miso soup and rice.

Over time, however, concerns from the participants in regard to the dining hall menu

became more sophisticated and related to identity. The sense of exclusivity taken by the

college in the campus dining hall emerged as a source of tension for the participants.

Yoichi seemed embarrassed by the lopsided, Japanese-influenced menu, which he

perceived as "kind of unfair" because only Western and Japanese food was offered (3).

Comments from Yui and Kami echoed similar sentiments:

Dining hall food is, I think, for Japanese. Breakfast we can eat rice and miso

soup[11] and at lunch we always can eat noodles, udon[12] or soba[13]. (Yui 3)

In her third interview, Kami stated: "Sometimes my friend from Vietnam said, 'I can't eat Japanese curry, but every day dining hall has Japanese curry, disgusting'. When I heard that I thought sorry" (3).

The amount of Japanese food on GFC's dining hall menu clearly made the participants feel uncomfortable, guilty and frustrated because they sensed it created an anti-Japanese atmosphere amongst non-Japanese students, and there was little that the Japanese students could do about this situation. Additionally, Taka proposed that the menu was hurting Japanese students by stopping them from becoming international people and that the college's culture of rice epitomized management's efforts to keep Japanese students Japanese and undermined their desire to learn English:

> We should reject the Japanese culture if someone wanna study English. We don't need to have rice every day because international people doesn't have rice every day…I think and the food is like Japanese style, it's not international…here is not international. (Taka 3)

Taka's comment suggested that the dining hall's menu added to GFC's Japan-like enclave quality. However, just prior to concluding this research, GFC's dining hall management

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[11] A traditional Japanese soup
[12] Thick type of Japanese noodles
[13] Japanese buckwheat noodles

changed and with this came menu alterations. The addition of international dishes to the menu may have been an attempt to reduce the Dejima-like atmosphere of GFC. Whatever the reason, the participants felt more comfortable with the inclusion of other ethnic foods because it reduced their 'chosen ones' image in the eyes of the international students.

6.3.3. Living spaces

Another way in which GFC management appeared to attempt to make its Japanese students feel at home and quickly settled was by housing them together in the campus dormitories. The only non-Japanese students housed in Japanese-dominated dormitories were local students, perhaps in the hope that they might provide the Japanese students with English practice. An example of GFC's ethnically-oriented accommodation policies by management were apparent when Riki requested to live in a shared room in the GFC dormitories to save money: Only international students were accommodated in shared rooms, so Riki was effectively asking to share a room with one of them. GFC's accommodation manager told Riki that Japanese students were fonder of cleanliness and privacy than other nationalities, and could only live in individual rooms, so turned down his request (4).

In Interview Six, Yuka recalled another example of the management's intention to keep the Japanese together, apparently in the best interests of study, when a request she had made to be shifted to her Thai friends' dormitory building was refused:

> I asked Dan, but I can't move to Hall Ten…he said because the
> environment, Hall One has better environment to study. But if I move to

> Hall Ten I can stay with the people who come from another country, so I
>
> use English the whole day. I don't know why he said it like this. (Yuka 6)

The exclusively Japanese living environment, with the exception of a handful of locals, had a negative side. Hiro explained that in the library and dining hall he could see many international students, but a "Japanese society" formed in his dormitory block because of the perceived institutionally based groupism (5). Kami explained the groupism-promoting accommodation arrangements in her final interview:

> Most of international student is living in Hall Seven, Eight, Nine, Ten. The
>
> opposite side, across the road and most of Japanese people are living in this
>
> side. We don't have connection with other nationalities. (Kami 6)

The effect of forcing the Japanese students to live together in the same dormitory halls led to a domination of co-national friendships (which will be looked at in more detail in 6.9.1). In Interview Six, Kayo, with the help of a photograph, talked about a typical Hall One gathering that illustrated how the process of friendship through close living proximity operated:

> This one, girls' party at the corridor at Hall One. These are my neighbors,
>
> Kami, Harumi, Mami, Yukie...Recently we are close, so we met in corridor.
>
> For example, I met Kami at the corridor and when we were talking Yukie
>
> came back from her part-time job and then talked together. Then Mami
>
> suddenly appeared from her room and joined talking. Then Harumi is living
>
> in front of Kami's room, so Harumi sometimes appeared and talked with
>
> everyone. Then someone said, 'I'm hungry' and then others said, 'Me too,

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me too', and then, 'Let's cook something together', and go to common room

and cook something and eat something and talk until midnight. (Kayo 6)

6.3.4. Social Dejima

Beyond the decisions about physical environment, food and accommodation, the sheer

weight of numbers of Japanese relative to other groups on campus created a Dejima-like

social environment and this was another major factor in making some of the focal students

feel as if they had not left home. Consequently, Shihoko and Yuka in their first interviews

questioned their wisdom of studying at GFC because they felt they could get the same

level of internationalism in Japan:

> Oh, many Japanese people!... it's not a good thing. In Japan also have
>
> foreigner, so like Kansai foreign language college looks the same with
>
> Japanese people and other country's people. If I go to in Japan college it's
>
> the same, so I was disappointed. (Shihoko 1)

> I thought that the number of Japanese students was half what it really is. I
>
> only found out there were so many Japanese when I got here. The pamphlet
>
> and Internet said that the percentage of Japanese was thirty-percent. I
>
> thought there would be a lot more foreigners, but the chance to speak
>
> Japanese is more than I expected. There are not as many chances to speak
>
> English than I thought. (Yuka 1)

Taka suggested that GFC was a Japanese college, which international and Kiwi students

came to:

I never thought that here is like international college. Global Family

College, no! Japanese College of Education I think. Japanese island exactly

I think. It's like small Japan, we shouldn't have an opportunity to speak

Japanese in here! (Taka 3)

Many participants commented that they often heard Japanese spoken as they walked

through the campus. Yui suggested that this had a negative effect on those students

wanting to learn English. In his first interview he stated: "Japanese always speak Japanese

when Japanese speak to Japanese…only Japanese, not use English. So, not good to study

English" (1). Ken appeared to believe that students did not need English to operate at GFC,

and commented: "Lots of Japanese student live in hall, so if we don't try to speak English

we can live without English. So, feels like Japan" (3). Shihoko felt she was only outside

Japan when she was off campus.

Although the initial shock did dissipate, Riki was the only participant to change his

thinking and perceive the number of Japanese at GFC positively because in his mind it

meant that the Japanese students would not be influenced by non-Japanese cultures in ways

he felt were negative:

I changed my mind because I found the meaning of first language. The

foreigners, person who speak English, maybe if I talked with they guys and

played with they guys it's improve second language, but Japanese and

Japanese relationship is really good for make a adult personality. Some

Japanese say, 'Japanese is really bad' or 'Japan is shit' and they don't like

Japan. Maybe I think they guys too much thinking about improve English

and forget about improve own self. If some student go to America or

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something, and almost student is only American, the student gonna be like

don't like Japan, become like Americans. It's really important to remember

the Japanese spirit. I think many Japanese is really important for us

Japanese student. Don't forget develop my humanity. (Riki 2)

In the quote above, Riki is touching upon the theory that when we travel outside of our

own culture we find ourselves negotiating new identities and new ways of seeing ourselves

in the world. His mention of the Japanese spirit and his other pro-Japanese suggestions,

however, are the most significant part of the quote because they seemed to embody the role

that Mr. Suwa was having GFC play in the lives of the Japanese students, which arguably

aligned Mr. Suwa with *nihonjinron* ideology on some level.

6.3.5. Groupism at GFC

As touched on in 6.3.3, GFC appeared to be intent on grouping the Japanese students

together perhaps in an effort to help settle the students quickly, but this was at odds with

their desire of making non-Japanese friends and becoming international. Inevitably, it

created tension. Many of the new students were disappointed when they arrived and found

large numbers of Japanese students at GFC. It appeared that affordances for making friends

may not have been obvious to the focal students. They may have viewed making non-

Japanese friends as being too hard and requiring too much dedication. Furthermore, there

seemed to be a lack of will by the institution to support the students in making non-

Japanese friends, which was a popular pre-arrival expectation, even though the literature

suggests that non-co-national friendships would struggle to form without some form of

intervention. The end result was that most participants found it easier to stick with

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Japanese and became members of small Japanese-based groups that made up the large Japanese-based group at GFC. These groups appeared to form naturally at GFC due to the large number of Japanese students and their proximity to each other (see 6.3.3). Taka also suggested that forming groups was a Japanese trait in even the most basic facets of life, such as using the restroom:

> Almost all Japanese people wanna make the group only Japanese people.
> So, if one people decide to go the bathroom, two people or a few people
> follow him. 'Do you really wanna go to the bathroom?' I wanna ask them.
> It's like bad habit of Japanese people. (Taka 3)

Kami also commented, somewhat regretfully as she looked back at the initial few months at GFC, about the group-mentality of the Japanese student groups, stating that in general, "Japanese people tend to gather, Japanese and Japanese" (6).

Many study members observed that it was not just the Japanese students who formed exclusive groups; in fact, all nationalities at GFC seemed to do this. According to Kayo, the dining hall was the environment where nationality grouping was most evident as students sat and ate in their national groups and spoke their native tongue. In her fifth interview, she stated: "Kiwis are always having dinner with only Kiwi students, and Indonesia, Vietnamese as well, Japanese as well" (5).

Because of the evident grouping of students at GFC members of the cohort saw themselves as separate to the other international students. In her last interview, Ai also turned her attention to the groups found at GFC and provided a possible reason for group formation:

> Japanese students is the biggest group at GFC, so we feel Japanese student

and Kiwi students and then international students. I also feel like we are not

included in international student. Maybe for Japanese student, international

student means Vietnamese, Thai, Indonesia student, not Kiwi, not Japanese.

(Ai 6)

Ai suggests here that the origin of the perception that Japanese students were separate from

other international students may have been their numbers. Ai's use of the word 'we' in the

first line indicates her belief that the Japanese students were a separate entity at the college

and this appeared to be widespread amongst all Japanese students and possibly the other

student groups as well.

Without doubt, all of the participants considered Japanese students as one of three student

groups at the college: the local students, the international students and the Japanese

students. Hiro talked about the student dynamics he discovered when he arrived at GFC

and how he began differentiating students into groups. In the same interview he stated: "Of

course the Japanese can speak the mother-tongue, Japanese, and Kiwi students can speak

very good English, native speaking, and international students are the middle" (Hiro 5). By

calling Japanese 'the mother-tongue' of GFC, Hiro may be drawing on a perception similar

to the Dejima metaphor introduced in Chapter Three. In his final interview, Hiro added:

I divide the people, Kiwi or Japanese or International because of the

language…Of course, I care about the nationality; Chinese, Taiwanese and

Vietnamese…but they almost the same, they are categorized into

International. (Hiro 6)

In remembering official questionnaires that management required her to complete during

her first year at GFC, Shihoko provided evidence that the college management also differentiated them from international students in the way they officially broke down the student body:

> Japanese are not international students. I attended SA[14] meeting and everything is divided into three groups, like Japanese, International students and Kiwis. We have a questionnaire during the semester and it says, 'Japanese, Kiwis or International'. If you are Japanese tick Japanese, or Kiwis or International. Cos GFC is doing that means it is official. (Shihoko 6)

Shihoko recalled that in official meetings GFC's manager, Fukuyo-sensei, spoke in a way that indicated he considered Japanese students as unique:

> Fukuyo-sensei said, 'International student wa' [in regard to international students]. He uses that way means you know we are going to consider we are Japanese and the others are internationals. (Shihoko 6)

It seems evident that GFC management considered the student body as consisting of Japanese students, local students and international students. The way international students were referred to, the special accommodation rules for Japanese students and the TOEIC night classes all appeared to be deliberate efforts to separate them from other nationalities

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[14] Student Association

at the college.

It could be argued that even new connections between Japanese students were intercultural. Yuka and Kayo were surprised to find that being a member of the Japanese group required negotiation because the Japanese were not as homogeneous as they appeared to be from the outside.

> First year everything new for me and then to meet the people who come
>
> from another prefecture like Osaka or somewhere it's also for the first time.
>
> They grow up different culture, quite different because their personality is
>
> kind of strong. So, I didn't know how to deal with that cos I don't have
>
> family in here. I need to have a friend, but it was so hard cos I don't know
>
> who I can trust. (Yuka 5)

> Kansai people talkative. Kansai's people talking is funny, but Hokkaido's is
>
> not so funny. They don't care if their talking is funny or not, but Kansai
>
> people really care about that, so if I talk something and after finish talking
>
> they said, 'So what?' They want the funny end. It's called ochi, they want
>
> ochi when they speak something, but Hokkaido people doesn't have that
>
> kind of culture. How can we make ochi in our talking?...There are some
>
> little differences, how to speak as well. Kansai people talk to other people a
>
> little bit strongly. Hokkaido people doesn't say, 'Aho ya ro!' We speak

softly. Chotto[15] different. (Kayo 6)

During their initial time at GFC many participants appeared to be negotiating through an accessible pool of potential friends to figure out what groups they would best fit and this is where they had to make adjustments. Participants noted that Japanese students from different regions had unfamiliar customs and even had different tastes when it came to food, showing that Japan is not as uniform as *nihonjinron* philosophies would have us believe.

6.4. Tied to home: The role of the Internet

In addition to connections on campus, connections to home were also very important to most participants, particularly as they were striving to settle into the new environment. This section looks at the role that the Internet played in the lives of the participants during the research period.

6.4.1. Homesickness and the desire to remain connected

Although GFC appeared to replicate Japan in certain ways, both physically and socially, this was not enough to alleviate the presence of occasional homesickness in Japanese students. Some participants talked of feeling blue on occasions over the research period,

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[15] A little

many cases of which were surely linked to homesickness to some degree and brought on by lower than expected TOEIC scores and unavoidable events, such as the death of a family member. Kayo was the only participant to open up about her struggles with this affliction, and openly wept when talking about missing her Japan-based friends in Interview One. However, after settling in and gaining a good friendship base she was far happier. What may have set Kayo apart from the other participants was that she felt lonely and marginalized in the student community at GFC, partly due to the age difference between her and her Japanese peers. Kayo was three years older than her Foundation peers and spoke of struggling for their acceptance:

> I'm 21 and next month I will be 22...Most of the other students are probably
> 18, so I am three years older than them. The other students notice the
> difference in age...I don't care about the age difference, but usually friends
> are call name, for example I am Kayo, so they would call me Kayo. But do
> you understand onesan[16]? They call me that! (Kayo 1)

In Interview Five, Kayo stated that even after making friends and spending time in Degree, she was still occasionally singled out due to her age and called obasan[17] or onesan. As well as the social aspect of her study abroad, Kayo struggled to negotiate with the physical surroundings of the campus:

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[16] Older sister
[17] Aunt or old woman

It's difficult to feel comfortable at GFC because it's first experience for me

to live in dormitory. Such a dirty dormitory and…dining is not good and

study is very hard. All of facts made me tired and sometimes made me sad.

(Kayo 6)

Perhaps significantly for Kayo and her level of discomfort brought on by missing home, she did not remain connected with her Japan-based friends and rarely contacted her family. However, other participants made an effort to be electronically connected with Japan-based friends and family and it appears that this may have acted as an antidote to homesickness.

6.4.2. The electronic umbilical cord

Electronic connections with families tended to be made most when participants struggled with their new GFC life. Kami, for instance, regularly contacted her mother to feel accepted, receive advice and hear a familiar voice when she needed it:

I'm trouble in something between my friends or in studying, so I consult to

my mum and my mum will give me advice so I can be fine…my mum is

very important. (Kami 3)

Kami continued to contact home throughout the research to gain stability at times when she felt most vulnerable:

When I didn't wanna meet my friends or hangout with my friends I always

Skyped my mum and she said, 'If you don't wanna meet someone, you can

just talk to me in your room'. It was really make me more comfortable.

(Kami 6)

Even in cases where participants did not contact Japan, the knowledge that they could easily reach out to people back home appeared to be reassuring. Shihoko said that she was happy, but was reassured to know that her family would be there if she was sad (1).

Figure 6.2 is a pictorial representation drawn by me (based on the data she provided), for the process of member-checking, of Shihoko's online connections to Japan. She was typical of the students in this study in embracing numerous Internet tools to contact loved ones. The main tools used by the participants to contact home were email, Skype, Line[18] and Facebook. Connecting to Japan was so important to some participants that they left their computers and applications such as Skype on, so that they did not miss any calls from Japan (Yoichi 1).

Figure 6.2 Shihoko's online connection to Japan

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[18] A Japanese Internet-based communication tool similar to WhatsApp

6.4.3. Scheduling contact

Before leaving Japan for GFC, some participants studied how to use computer communication tools with their parents; however, others did not bother because, in addition to themselves, at least one other family member was computer literate. Unfortunately, this occasionally meant that less digitally literate members of the family, often mothers, were reliant on other family members, often males, to help them make contact. This finding echoes Kang's (2012) research where older female family members tended to lack voice or autonomy in regard to communication with their children residing abroad. In Interview Four, Kami commented that her mother "didn't know how to turn on the power and she never touched the computer", which meant that she could only contact Kami when her husband was present (4). Kami also got a Japan-based friend to visit her mother to help her set up Facebook, so that she could view her online photos:

> I told her 'Please make Facebook to watch my photos', but she said, 'I don't
> know how to make Facebook', so I told my friend, 'Please teach my mother
> to make Facebook' and she could. Recently she said, 'I don't know. I forget
> how to use Facebook. I can't watch your photos. Please tell me'. My mum
> really, absolutely don't know how to use computer. (Kami 2)

This scenario was common. Shihoko's family created a regular communication timetable, arranged to coincide with her father's holidays and her grandmother's visits to her family home (2). In the weekends, Shihoko's father would log into Skype and leave so that Shihoko and her mother could talk in private (4). In Yuka's case, her father lacked computer skills, which, coupled with his long working hours, meant he seldom

communicated with her (4).

6.4.4. The effects of connectedness

The ability to remain connected to Japan via the Internet seemed to assist the students in their gradual transition to feeling at home at GFC. Contact with participants also benefited the parents, who were naturally concerned about their child's wellbeing. However, participants generally began to contact Japan less frequently as they made the transition to calling GFC home. In an interesting switch of roles, from this point on the initiation of contact often came from parents in Japan, who with time and practice had become proficient at using Internet-based communication applications. This parental contact sometimes distracted the participants:

> My mum try to Skype every day, every night video chat. 'Hi Kami, what
> are you doing now?' 'I'm studying now, so bye, bye'. She always worried
> about me, 'Are you ok?' GFC has email for our parents and my mother
> reads the email, she knows everything about me. (Kami 2)

For some, such as Hiro, frequent contact was resented. He valued his independence from his parents and was sick of his father keeping track of his online activity. In Interviews Four and Five he provided examples of this issue: "Father always checks my mood message on Skype. Sometimes I wrote something, he asked me what happened. I can't write bad thing" (4).

> My father likes Facebook, he usually check the Facebook and he knows my
> friends and my friends' profile and who my friends dating. I don't like that,

but he knows that. Maybe if I don't talk with him he knows what is

happening from Facebook, that's enough. 'Why you know that?' I said to

my father. (Hiro 5)

Most parents also checked to see if their child was studying diligently. Shihoko dealt with

this by simply ignoring calls from her parents when they seemed to be pressuring her (6).

Ken, on the other hand had made promises to his father and could not avoid his father's

regular calls during his Foundation year to chastise him, which often left him depressed.

The Internet appears to have been an important tool in the initial stages of settling into

GFC, and the reassurance that parental support was only a Skype call away cannot be

underestimated. The Internet also put parents at ease because they could check on their

child's health and study results; however, it also seems clear that participants sometimes

felt their independence compromised by this.

6.4.4.1. Skype, Line, Facebook or email?

Over successive interviews an interesting pattern emerged amongst the study students in

regard to their choice of Internet communication application tool. While Skype was clearly

the main communication tool used in contact between parents and participants, Facebook

appeared to be the most prevalent electronic way in which participants stayed in touch with

friends in Japan and at GFC. Facebook became like an addiction for some participants,

such as Kami, who desperately wanted to maintain her link with Japan:

I watch twice or three times every day and sometimes I upload my photos. I

have many friends on Facebook. If I don't check the Facebook maybe the

Facebook will be new one, new one, new one, new one, so I have to check

regularly. (Kami 2)

Facebook contact with Japan-based friends was often a double-edged sword for

participants in their first year. When participants saw photos from Japan they sometimes

became nostalgic or melancholic. Both Yuta and Yoichi commented in Interview Two that

they felt "food sick". Yuka and Kami were negatively affected by Facebook posts of

hometown events that they would have attended if they were home:

I wanna see the fireworks because my Japanese friends takes photos of

fireworks and send Facebook and I watched those pictures. I wanna see the

fireworks, but New Zealand has not fireworks. (Yuka 2)

While Yuka's feelings may have been mild, Kami's, on the other hand, made her openly

question her choice to live in New Zealand. In Interview Six she stated: "If I see the

Facebook and my friends in Japan are really enjoying that time. That time compared with

my life, 'Am I enjoying here?' I asked myself" (6).

On the other hand, Facebook was used by some participants to show off their life, so

though participants felt blue after viewing some Japan posts, they reveled in the envious

and positive comments from their Japan-based friends. Shihoko's friends, for instance,

commented on her photos of GFC social life that she posted on Facebook:

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I had black and white party in Mr. Cue[19] and I put [photos] on Facebook

and I weared dress and they say, 'You wear dress?' She [Shihoko's friend in

Japan] really wants to wear a dress, but there is no opportunity to wear dress

in Japan because we don't have party quite often. We just wear dress

farewell party. Yeah, and they can't go to club because of age, 'You can go

to club?', 'Yes, of course!' so she envies me. (Shihoko 2)

It was evident upon hearing Shihoko recall this story that the reactions of her Japan-based

friends lifted her spirits and made her feel more positive about the affordances her life at

GFC offered.

6.4.4.2. Vignette: Backing away from Facebook

Taka was the only participant to voice negative concerns about Internet-based

communication, commenting that it lacked a sense of personal touch and compromised his

studies at GFC. To combat this, he undertook a unique step to get his life at GFC on track.

At first, Taka, like most of his peers, used Facebook every day to upload photos, check

peoples' status and send messages. In Interview Two he referred to it as his "life tool",

however, he also spoke of his concerns about Facebook being a distraction to him and how

some types of electronic communication, such as chats and email, were sterile and

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[19] A nightclub in the local city

potentially damaging to the future of face-to-face communication.

In Interview Five, Taka revealed that he had taken the unique and bold step of closing his Facebook account:

> Two days ago, I closed my Facebook account because Facebook became a distraction. If I open the Facebook I have to see some photos of my friends in Japan, they went to the sea or barbecue or something. Sometimes I envy and sometimes I can't concentrate the things in front of me, like job, or study or assignment. So, I decided to close, the distraction has gone. Facebook is working as one good of the ways to connect with other people in Japan, messaging and chatting, but it is not needed for study. I still have a social device, Skype. If someone needs to connect me, it's easy, email me, Skype, whatever. I think it is difficult to decide to close the Facebook account. Actually, I had a little bit of hesitation to close it. (Taka 5)

Taka appeared to be rather concerned that his Facebook activity was getting in the way of his studies, and showing the strength of character and self-discipline that set him apart from some other participants, his Facebook account remained closed until he felt satisfied with his course marks:

> Yesterday I opened it. This term is finished, no study anymore, no class anymore, so that's why I opened it and I be back to Japan soon actually, so I need to connect to other people to arrange time…For any other people may be fine, but I think all student should close it because Twitter, Facebook, other social website will be definitely distraction…this stuff can waste time

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easily, it's cool, but it's not cool for student. So, if a student can get good

grade while using the Facebook or other social website, fine, no problem for

that student. But I think almost all students can't do it, that's why closing

Facebook or social website will be fine. (Taka 6)

Taka's concerns over the sterility of Internet-based communication tools, mentioned

earlier, convinced him to occasionally write letters home because he believed letters

conveyed his feelings more effectively. During GFC's summer vacation he wrote letters to

his family and closest Japan-based friends:

I wrote seven letters for my friend, my parents, my grandmother. Letters,

not email! I felt like I need to write, or I need to convey or tell my feeling

for my special friends or people. Email is easier definitely, but I felt letter is

more better. I took a long time to write seven letters. When I was writing

the message on the paper I was reviewing one year and to, not recall, but to

remember the life in Japan. One year was gone, my first year in abroad in

New Zealand, finished, reviewed and to find new goals. Thinking about my

future and I felt to tell my parents about my gratitude. So, I wrote the

message to my parents first. (Taka 4)

The process of writing letters home seemed to be therapy for Taka as he reviewed and

digested the events of the past year, he could see how far he had come and how far he still

had to go. Figure 6.3 is a diagram drawn by me, for the process of member-checking,

based on the information that Taka provided on experience of writing letters home.

Figure 6.3 Taka's letters home
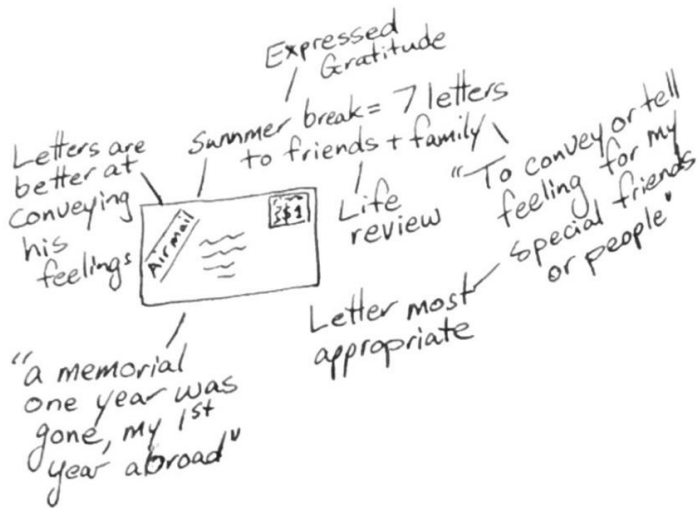
Taka clearly had a strong sense of the impact of different channels of communication, as can be noted in his views on email. He did not completely cut himself off from the Internet, but rather discriminated between connection tools that were more intrusive, in this case Facebook, and those that were less intrusive, such as Skype.

6.5. Negotiating a sense of relocation

Adjustments needed to be made in many areas, both in and out of the college and even in response to new relationships with other Japanese students. Interestingly, although some participants complained strongly about the college's large Japanese student body, it appeared to aid them in the transition to feeling at home at GFC, as Shihoko's reflection of cooking Japanese in the dormitories suggests:

> I often make dinner for me and my friend because dinner is not good. My
>
> mother sent me some ingredients, like soup or easy to cook main dish. I

cook nikujaga[20] and fried rice and stir fried, Japanese food. I wanna eat

Japanese food because I think it's good for my health. (Shihoko 2)

The weight of numbers facilitated such moves to maintain themselves within a Dejima-like environment around the comfort of familiar food. However, despite the large number of Japanese students and staff present at GFC and inherent nature of the Japanese college itself, the transition took substantial time and it varied greatly between participants. Riki and Kami, typical of the cohort, asserted that it took them a year to fully settle into life within the college:

I can feel comfortable in half of a year maybe, but after that I getting know

the what my friend like and then it's getting uncomfortable again. After a

year, I completely understand the personality of people here. (Riki 6)

Kami found that in the Foundation program relationships between students changed every day and her life felt unstable, and her words give the impression that the sense of permanence was not immediate. As she indicates, it was not until the end of her Foundation studies that she began to feel some stability:

It's really difficult to explain, but when I was a Foundation student I don't

think it's a normal life. It's kind of school trip, that's why I couldn't enjoy.

Everyone thought that this was a kind of trip and fighting a lot. It was

---

[20] A traditional Japanese dish based on meat, potato and onion

difficult to accept the lifestyle, maybe many people have stress and they

didn't know how to release the stress. (Kami 6)

In their initial period at GFC none of the students were required to interact with elements

beyond the college. However, Shihoko was one participant who chose to do so, by doing

things such as visiting the capital city on a solo shopping trip, and estimated that it took her

from four to six months to adjust to her new life in New Zealand:

I think in the first year in the first term everything was new and I didn't even

know how to take a bus to go to town. Banking system and food is different

and was first time to study English. (Shihoko 6)

By the end of the first semester Shihoko was ready to take on a new challenge and venture

beyond the neighboring city. In her final interview, she recalled: "During term two, I think

I was comfortable to live here. I traveled between term one and term two and it was ok, I

didn't face any problems" (6).

6.6. Friendship patterns

6.6.1. Co-National friendships

The physical closeness of other Japanese students (forced on them by GFC management)

meant that the development of co-national relationships was unavoidable. Despite this,

there were some participants who tried their best to keep from entering any close social

relationship with Japanese students. Ken, for instance, spoke of having planned to avoid

co-national friendships in his first year because he feared they would tempt him to party all

night and speak a lot of Japanese (see 5.3.2), thereby inhibiting his English development (1). With time, Ken's resistance broke down, and like all participants he found co-national friendships inevitable. In some cases, the focal students' friendships were exclusive and many became inseparable from their closest friends. The closeness of co-national friendships developed, in large part, as a result of peer support and it could be argued that peer support and friendship cannot be fully separated. The origins of co-national friendships were numerous, the main ways were through attending a GFC feeder school, a GFC open-school, or the GFC pre-arrival orientation in Tokyo, GFC club membership, or sharing classes in Foundation.

Despite the students arriving at GFC with plans of establishing friendships with people from many different countries, language, culture and customs were extremely potent elements in the formation of friendships. The ability to identify with co-national peers more easily than non-co-nationals was also a telling factor, particularly when searching for inspiration as Kayo was:

> My GFC friends are all hard working, they are my ideal. Even though they
> are in trouble or they are in difficult situation, they don't say, 'I wanna run
> away from here', they don't! They are strong and I'm not strong, so I wanna
> be like them. They are hard-working, but I'm not, I'm very lazy, so I wanna
> be like them. They are always smiling even though they are sad or they are
> very tired, so I wanna be like them. (Kayo 4)

A further way in which co-national relationships were enriched was through cooking and eating food, most often Japanese, together (as indicated in 6.3.3). After becoming settled many participants found ways to supplement dining room food. Participants returning from

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holidays in Japan often brought back ingredients and occasionally family members posted

participants special ingredients from Japan (see 6.5), which were mixed with food

smuggled out of the dining hall by participants in frequent group cooking sessions:

> Twice or three times in a week I am making dinner with my friends. It is
>
> really good, before nothing to do in the night, but now watching movie or
>
> talking with my friends and with dinner. Make me happy and sometimes I
>
> forget what the time. Sometimes we are gathering in common room and
>
> chatting until two a.m. or one a.m. with some sweets, cookies or bananas
>
> puddings. (Kami 6)

The preparation of food by the participants was about more than just taste; they cooked,

talked, ate and shared time together with co-national friends, allowing their stress to

dissipate. Because of their common language, culture and customs, and the enormous

amount of time that they spent together (due to GFC management's living arrangement

policy shown in 6.3.3), participants had effectively reconstructed home and, according to

Kami, participants developed family-like relationships between their Japanese friends:

> Before just like we are good friends, just good friends. We are changing
>
> friends to family, so now is more closer than before and they consider the
>
> other people than before. Kind of family. (Kami 6)

While groups of Japanese students developed family-like relationships, the level of support

signified the closeness of each friendship. Peer support in these groups was especially

strong, however the closest co-national friends always looked out for those that were

struggling, regardless of what was happening in their own lives. Kayo and Shihoko, for

instance, proved their dedication to Kami after she returned to GFC from Japan, following

the death of her uncle:

> The beginning of term one, when I came back to GFC from Japan, I was in
>
> depressed because of some problems, but Shihoko was always helping me.
>
> She cooked dinner for me or talk to me anytime and sleeping together. She's
>
> really awesome. Kayo and Shihoko are the top friends. They helped me
>
> even they are busy or they have also problems. But the other friends, if they
>
> have problems or they are busy I guess they will not help me. This is the
>
> difference. (Kami 6)

Eventually, friendships with co-nationals became far more favored than local or

international friendships, perhaps because the participants had reached a higher level of

self-understanding and gravitated to those that made them feel most comfortable:

> Japanese is the best for me. I am comfortable with of course Japanese
>
> because I'm Japanese and of course the language is the main point. The
>
> other is knowing background, it's really the same. (Kami 6)

> Mostly I talk with Japanese, so I think I'm still being Japanese. I am
>
> Japanese and I know the cultural stuff and I can speak Japanese. So yeah,
>
> Japanese is most comfortable. (Riki 6)

Another possible reason for the favoring of co-national friendships could have been

because the participants did not have many opportunities to test out friendships with non-

Japanese. Harumi, the only participant who remained dissatisfied with her co-national

dominated friendship circle throughout the entire research period, disliked the idea of co-

national friendships but found them impossible to avoid:

> My teachers said it's up to you, if I try to stay with only foreign people you
> could do it. But it's teacher's opinion, for student it's difficult because of
> course I will try, but some Japanese come to me I can't say 'Go away'. So, I
> stay with Japanese friends, but it's not good for me. (Harumi 6)

In his final interview, Yoichi summed up the feelings of most of the study students when he stated that the Japanese friendships he had made at GFC were "The most important thing I got in New Zealand".

6.6.1.1. Vignette: Finding the right distance

While this vignette, told predominantly through Kayo's words, is an anatomy of a single friendship between two of the participants, Kayo and Kami, it also provides an insight into friendship processes typical of the almost claustrophobic environment of GFC. Kayo's relationship with Kami faced challenges over the research period although both acknowledged its closeness. Before joining the GFC drum team, Kayo felt ostracized from the Japanese group, partly due to her age (see 6.4.1). Her only close friend was Kami and she was fiercely protective of their friendship:

> I put a picture up of Kami and I because she is the best friend of me at GFC.
> I always be with her. When I lived in Japan, when I went to high school, I
> didn't wanna make friends because I was such spoiled with my hometown
> friends, I didn't need any more friends…I can't be interested in them, but
> gradually my feeling was changed. When I came to here I thought I can't

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make friends because I am not interested, but she changed my mind…so she

is a little bit important for me at GFC. (Kayo 2)

Sometime between Interviews Two and Three, Kami and Kayo's friendship cooled. According to Kami this was because Kayo was too clingy and dependent on her (3), and this period marked the low point in Kayo's time at GFC:

Do you remember before I had a close friend named Kami? Recently I

haven't been together with her because now she has the closest friend at

GFC and she always be with her. We are the same class, but we always sit

different table. Recently our distance is far. (Kayo 3)

Kami appeared to flit between being closest to Shihoko and Kayo. At times when Shihoko did not have a boyfriend Kami would become closest to her and ignore Kayo, which upset Kayo:

Shihoko and Kami was close, but Shihoko got a boyfriend and then Kami

came to me and we are together. Shihoko broke up with her boyfriend and

then Shihoko came to Kami again…When we went to dining hall to eat

lunch or dinner sometimes she asked me to go to there and also I asked to

Kami. Now she asks Shihoko or Shihoko asked Kami. (Kayo 3)

At this time, Kayo decided to make a change in her life and joined the GFC drum team. Through her drum team friendships, Kayo relied less on Kami, who, in turn, felt less pressured by Kayo. By the time Shihoko entered another romance and Kayo moved next door to Kami's room in Hall One, Kayo had learned to give Kami enough space for their friendship to grow:

Now my current room is neighbor is Kami, so we often hang out together.

Maybe before I got jealous, I wanted to be with Kami, but now I really don't

care about Shihoko. Even if she is with Kami, I don't care. I don't have to

think about that anymore…I spent lots of time at GFC, so I don't have to

rely on only Kami, I've got other friends. (Kayo 6)

It appears that Kayo had matured and also gained some self-confidence in dealing with others. In Interview Five Kami also noted the change in Kayo's approach to their relationship and seemed to be comfortable with how their friendship had evolved, "I have really good distance with my friend, not too close and not too far, comfortable" (5). Perhaps due to the close confines of dormitory life, it was sometimes difficult to find a suitable distance in relationships, such as Kayo and Kami's, to flourish. It was not until they found suitable boundaries that they became comfortable, stable and supportive.

6.6.2. Friendship left behind

Study Abroad literature generally focuses on the experiences of forming friendships while studying in the foreign country, similar to what has been presented above, while the dynamics of friendships back in the home country rarely receive mention. Japan-based friends had an important role in the everyday lives of the majority of the study group. Most participants maintained a healthy connection to Japan-based friends via the Internet or re-connected with them when they returned for their first holiday back in Japan. Yuta asserted that he never considered his GFC friends the equal of his Japan-based friends because the latter had a long history together and felt like family (6). Hiro even stated that meeting his old friends was more important than catching up with his family when on holidays back in

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Japan. In Interview Six, Taka brought photos of a care-package sent by five of his Japan-based friends:

> Normally some kind of stuff is send by my mum or parents or family. But
> friends?! Amazing! I was surprised, 'Who send me?' I checked the invoice
> and it was my friends' names was written on the invoice. It is like I went
> back my hometown! (Taka 6)

Receiving a care package of souvenirs, food and t-shirts from Japan underlined the strength of Taka's bond to his Japan-based friends and their long, shared history suggested his old friends would probably always be closer to him than his GFC friends would.

However, it is also important to acknowledge that as friendships are made overseas, so too can home-country friendships grow increasingly distant. In this research, some participants, such as Yoichi, drifted away from their Japan-based friendships. Although, Yoichi initially enjoyed checking Facebook daily to maintain his link to his Japan-based friends (2), a year later he indicated that he had lost contact with them and had become closer to his GFC friends (6). Yoichi's friendship maps, based on the concentric circles of *uchi/soto*, are shown in Figure 6.4: Interview Two's map is on the left side and Interview Six's map is on the right side. The figure shows Yoichi's friendship patterns over time and are literally graphic illustrations of *uchi* and *soto*, where those who are *uchi* are in the innermost circle surrounding Yoichi.

These friendship maps were originally completed on a whiteboard by Yoichi, photographed and redrawn on paper by me with the names changed to maintain anonymity (as are all references to people in figures in this research). It is plainly evident that many

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people that Yoichi considered close in Interview Two had been almost entirely replaced by his GFC friends by Interview Six, showing that perhaps proximity had a large effect on his friendship pattern.

Figure 6.4 Yoichi's friendship shifts

Interview: 2

My Mother
Little brother
Takuya
Ryotaro
Band members in Japan
Yoichi
Toshiyuki
GFC friends
Riki
Mr. Kometo
Kenta
Friends in share house I lived
Dance members
My high school friends

Interview: 6

Kawaii
Mr. Nobu
All GFC Students
Taiko team
Riki
girl friend
Yoichi
family
Fukuyo
All GFC Staffs
Party Committee
my Students
Party Committee
Part time Job → boss Colleague

During their first holiday back to Japan, Yoichi and Riki saw that their old friends' lives had progressed in their absence and neither of them had as much in common with these Japan-based friends as they once did, perhaps because of identity changes made at GFC. Upon returning to the college, they found they could relate more easily to their new friends in New Zealand:

> Some of my friends are like different a lot. Some of friend got more adult, grew up a lot. The GFC students are more closer, so I feel more closer as a friend. I didn't talk a lot with my Japanese friend [living in Japan], so I felt our distance or heart is a little bit far away. (Riki 4)

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Yoichi said that his reliance on his recent GFC friends for support instead of friends back in Japan that he used to contact via Facebook served as "the evidence that I'm enjoying New Zealand" (Yoichi 6). Clearly, co-national friendships at GFC evolved and became an integral part of participants' lives; in Riki and Yoichi's case they became so important that they replaced those friends that they had left back in Japan.

6.6.3. Relationships with local students

The pre-arrival questionnaire indicated a unanimous desire for local friendships (see Table 6.3). Although it appeared to the participants that they had few chances to form close bonds with non-Japanese international students, they had more opportunities to make local friends. Many Kiwi students at GFC appeared to be infatuated with Japan and GFC's inherent Japaneseness was possibly the main drawcard for them attending the college. The apparent Japanese obsession of local students meant that there seemed to be a level of connection between the local students and Japanese students that excluded other student groups. In Interview Five, for instance, Ken noted that in the dining hall he often saw Kiwi and Japanese students mixing, but never Kiwi and non-Japanese.

However, generally with time, the relationship between local and Japanese students cooled. Taka, for instance, began viewing the local GFC students as childish and tried to befriend non-GFC locals instead, who impressed him as being more mature than the GFC students:

> GFC Kiwis are like children. I can feel the courtesy from the non-GFC
>
> student. I can talk with them about economy or petition, the world situation,
>
> the war in the world or something. But I can't talk with the GFC Kiwis with

some serious things. (Taka 3)

Another reason for the distance that developed between the two groups may have been the local students' unsophisticated preoccupation with Japan. Kami, for instance, felt uncomfortable with what she perceived as a childish obsession that two local Degree students had with all things Japanese:

> Some Kiwi student in here are playing Pokémon or having Pokémon cards. In Japan, it is for kids ten-years-old, but here twenties or something. Wayne made wallet with his Pokémon cards and tape. He made it and showed it me, like, 'Is it cool?' Rudi and Wayne were playing Pokémon cards at midnight and they were fighting! What? Twenty! I look at people who are into Pokémon and Japanese animation, which is good for Japanese economy, but for me too much otaku is so kakkowarui [too much of an obsession with anime and manga is so uncool]. Rudi sometimes says, 'I can understand what Japanese people think!' Obviously, you don't understand what Japanese people think! So strange Kiwi people are here. (Kami 6)

A major motivation for the decreasing interest between both groups seems to have been the local students' drinking culture, which was commented on throughout the entire research period. The local students frequently drank alcohol, while most participants had no interest in a party lifestyle. Early in the research, Yoichi commented about New Zealand students, "They drink alcohol so much" (1) and Kami felt that occasional parties were fine, but that partying that the local students did every night was "scary" (2). Later, as the leader of Hall One, Shihoko was very distressed and frustrated with the aftereffects of Kiwi drinking sessions:

Kiwi students sometimes drank in their room and after they finish party,

some people threw up, but they don't clean up. I often see the vomit on the

floor in the bathroom. (Shihoko 5)

The local students' attitude to alcohol still made Hiro uncomfortable even after he had

spent almost two years at the college. In Interview Six he stated: "I don't like the situation

and the drinking style, Kiwi's style in drinking. I don't like the drinking game…I wanna

talk to them very calmly and quietly" (6). Although Kami agreed with Hiro's opinion, she

did have some sympathy for the local students. She appeared to appropriate the blame for

the drinking culture on the college environment, which she felt was tedious, rather than the

students themselves:

Drinking is the only way to fun. Nothing to do here, so every weekend most

of students are drinking until the morning, then they are sleeping all day and

Monday they are going to the class. (Kami 6)

The drinking culture was not the only thing that participants struggled to understand about

local students. Shihoko, for instance, was frustrated by local students in her dormitory who

did not seem to respect the space and wishes of others in the same way that Japanese

students did. An example of this was how they often played loud music that disturbed other

members of the hall. It seems clear that this was a major cultural difference and perhaps

highlights the need for intercultural tolerance from both sides. In her final interview,

Shihoko commented: "They think music is fine, 'Why I can't hear music? Why can't I

listen to music?' They think music is alright, they think, 'Why you complain about

music?'" (6). When Shihoko became the leader of Hall One she had one of the worst

offenders in the hall moved to another dormitory, indicating that students accommodated

in the Japanese-dominated dormitories might have been living under Japanese rules. These findings suggest difficulties based on cultural differences and appear to support GFC management's theory of separating different nationalities regarding accommodation.

Another area that potentially offered affordances for friendships with local students was the Degree classroom. However, despite attending classes with local students for an extended period in Degree, none of the participants made any enduring friendships with them. Although some of the group initially complained about not having any local friends, all of them, with the possible exception of Harumi, seemed to become content with their friendship circles not containing any local students. This shows a large shift in friendship desires and is perhaps an indication of the difficulties in forming friendships with people from another culture. It is possible that the study group may have felt that making local friends was not worth the considerable effort needed because all of them intended to return to Japan after a few years. The only participant who truly developed close bonds with local GFC students was Ai, who became close to them through her Kiwi boyfriend and even holidayed in Japan with a female Kiwi student. Shihoko and Ken also dated local students, but never really became close to other locals.

6.6.3.1. Vignette: Harumi's story

Harumi was one of the few participants who could claim to have made friendships with non-GFC locals, and was the only participant to join a club outside GFC, the handball club

of the nearby Vessar University[21], because she wanted to be in a Japanese-language-free environment to improve her English proficiency (1). While she was familiar with the game from high school, it took courage to join a club of strangers who could not communicate in Japanese. Through her membership, Harumi had some unique experiences:

> I went to Auckland with my Japanese friend and Vessar students for
>
> handball tournament…That experience was very rare because my friends
>
> and I were just two Japanese and other students were native speakers. I was
>
> very nervous because…I wanted to talk to them, but I didn't know how I
>
> talk to them. They started talking to us and after competition we go out and
>
> has dinner together. After that we went to night club so it was very exciting.
>
> (Harumi 2)

Unfortunately for Harumi, her association with the team ended when she was forced to return to Japan on sick leave during her first year.

6.6.4. Relationships with non-Japanese international students

Although many participants arrived with the expectation of making international friends, they, too, seldom eventuated. However, participants who were suitably motivated did find opportunities to connect with international students on campus outside the classroom. A

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[21] Pseudonym

novel approach taken by Ken and Yui was using smoking as a point of contact. Ken felt that, "Smoking is really great just to start conversation" and he convinced Yui into smoking as a way to make friends:

> My best friend is smoking so first he recommend to me to smoke because
>
> he knows I have smoked. I'm not good at making friends, so I thought
>
> smoking will help in making friends.   (Yui 2)

The smoking area was multinational and the common language was English, so through this dangerous habit, Ken and Yui's English proficiency increased more than it may have otherwise.

In spite of early value assumed for friendships with local students, international students often proved preferable. By Interview Six, Kayo stated that internationals students used easier English than local students, and she felt less pressure talking to them. One international friend that she enjoyed interacting with was from Taiwan:

> When I'm talking to Kiwis I feel nervous. I always wonder my grammar
>
> might be incorrect or my pronunciation might be incorrect. They might not
>
> understand or something and also when they talk to me it's difficult to
>
> listen. Sometimes I cannot get what they say. But Amber, I don't have to
>
> feel nervous because her English is easy to listen and her vocabulary is not
>
> so difficult. (Kayo 6)

It seems that a further attraction associated with many of GFC's international students, such as Amber, was their lack of Japanese language skills, meaning all conversations with them had to be conducted in English. However, most of the local students came to GFC to

learn Japanese and were intent on practicing their language skills when conversing with Japanese students. Kayo's time with Amber helped increase her communication confidence and English skills in ways similar to Yuka's experience in the Thai group presented in the vignette below.

Despite some later connections, all participants generally experienced difficulty in establishing lasting relationships with international students and subsequently reduced their efforts in trying. Kayo indicated that one of the main reasons for this was groupism:

> After joining a group another person can be accept, but just once. Just when they are having dinner he can join, but the other day he cannot if he go there…normally they don't invite him as a member. (Kayo 5)

Kayo's quote shows that Japanese students were not alone in forming exclusive, nationality-based groups, and while members of the cohort occasionally socialized with members of different national groups, they usually did not feel as accepted as those of the nationality that the groups were based on. In Interview Five, Ai also commented that: "International students hangout with just international students" (5), and although Ai and Kayo's quotes above refer to the difficulty of entering international student groups, both the Japanese and local student groups also appeared to operate in the same way to outsiders.

6.6.4.1. Vignette: Becoming Thai

As shown earlier, nationality-based groupism appeared to be common at GFC and most participants gave up trying to make non-Japanese friendships. Yuka was an exception and

was able to enter the Thai community (at least temporarily), proving that becoming an accepted member of another nationality-based group was not impossible.

The number of Japanese students at GFC disappointed her and she felt duped by GFC's management because she saw few chances to speak English. Soon after arriving at GFC, Yuka began distancing herself from the Japanese group and considered transferring to another college. In her second interview, she explained her actions: "After school I don't meet foreign people friends, only Japanese, so after school I only speak Japanese" (2).

In her second term, however, Yuka met some Thai students in her Foundation class and became friendly with them. They provided her with access to membership in the Thai group, which resulted in abundant English speaking opportunities (3). Yuka also picked up some Thai cultural traits and language proficiency, which altered her views on social interaction and fun:

> After school, I sometimes play tag with my [Thai] friends. In Japan when I
> hung out with my friends they take a photo of food, it's so different, nobody
> run on the field. They are listening to music all the time and like to take
> picture. They are living with high technology, but I'm not. Playing tag is
> much more fun! (Yuka 4)

In Interview Five, Yuka hinted that her membership in the Thai group was nearing an end because her closest friends in the group had graduated and the new Thai students who came to GFC changed the group dynamic. Another issue was that she was not totally comfortable surrounded by the new language culture and grew tired of it, unlike she did around Japanese people. Yuka's experience shows that language and culture are extremely

important factors in the formation of close friendships in study abroad:

> I think for me sometimes I feel tired of hearing Thai language because their personality is of course different to me. Sometimes feel so hard to stay with them whole day. So, I think others as well maybe it is difficult to stay with foreign students. So, they prefer to stay with same nationality. (Yuka 5)

Because she clearly felt more comfortable with her Japanese peers, despite trying to distance herself from them initially, Yuka began spending more time with them and by Interview Six had transitioned back to her co-national group:

> Now I prefer to stay [with] just Japanese because I've been with Thai people for almost two years. Last April, new Thai students came to here and they really like to have party every weekend, but I don't. They don't like dining hall food, so they always cook something by themselves. It's so expensive cos I need to pay every day, but I already pay for dining hall food. I don't really stay with them now. I was with Thai people, but sometimes my friend hurt me because I am alone in the conversation because everyone laughing with their language, but I can't understand so I don't even know where should I look at. (Yuka 6)

While she was disappointed, Yuka struggled to feel totally at home in the Thai community and when new Thai students arrived, she realized that she was incompatible with the changing dynamic of the group. It may have also been that Yuka was worn-out by the work, dedication and a conscious effort she had to put in to maintain these friendships. Interestingly, alcohol consumption and the partying culture also appeared to be one of the

main divisive issues between Yuka and the new Thai students, much as it became between the majority of the focal students and the local students.

6.6.5. Romance at GFC

Romantic relationships were evidently important as only three participants went through the research without entering a romantic relationship. All participants', other than Ai's, Shihoko's and Ken's romances, were always with other Japanese GFC students and the participants shared similar opinions on why romance was so prevalent at the college. Many focal students, such as Taka, believed that the reason may have been due to the living environment:

> GFC is too small and everyone living in the dormitory, so the distance between the students is too close. In Japan, everyone has the home, but it is spread…sometimes we can't meet some of friend or girlfriend when you wanna meet. I think it cause good relationship and it keep some couple good relationship. The case of GFC, we can meet the girlfriend or some other friend whenever we want. I think it is one of the reason for there's many couple in here. (Taka 5)

Kayo, on the other hand, believed boredom was behind many romances at the college:

GFC and Apiata[22] [the small city where GFC was located] don't have any

entertainment, so they rely on boys or girls to enjoy their life. If they met in

Japan or other urban city they wouldn't become a couple because the urban

city has many entertainment…They can enjoy their life without partner.

(Kayo 5)

6.6.5.1. Effects of romance

Dating provided students with someone to confide in, and it also gave some participants

motivation to make positive changes. Kami, for instance, stated that from dating her

boyfriend she wanted to become more responsible and grown up:

Sometimes I make some dinner for him. I try to be good woman, cooking

and cleaning up my room, but it's a good point for me. I don't like cleaning

up my room or cooking, it takes much time, but now being more like adult.

So, these are good effect for me. (Kami 5)

Ken's situation was perhaps the most remarkable. Through the influence of his Kiwi

girlfriend, Jane, his identity underwent a radical transition – his English proficiency rose

significantly, but perhaps more importantly his self-esteem blossomed and he positively

renegotiated his relationship with his parents:

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[22] Pseudonym

First when I come to New Zealand I didn't have confidence, but now I got a

girlfriend. Every day I talked with her. I can't speak English not fluent, but I

can speak English and I can write English, so I had a confident. From get

confident I started to talk with my parents because before come to New

Zealand I didn't study hard, so I always thought bad for my mum or dad.

Now I studied English every day, so I think I have enough effort to study

English, so good for my mum and my dad. I can talk with my parents. (Ken

2)

Ken also got to experience Kiwi life through his extended summer holidays at Jane's family home and he felt that the Kiwi approach was his "perfect lifestyle" (6).

Shihoko's experience in dating a local student was less successful than Ken's. In Interview One, Shihoko stated that getting a Kiwi boyfriend was one of the main reasons why she came to New Zealand and soon after arriving at GFC she began dating a New Zealand student. In a way that seems to echo how most participants felt about local student friendships in general, Shihoko appeared to be unable to express herself fully in English and as a result suffered stress in her relationship due to communication issues and cultural distance, which eventually out-weighed the benefits for her and their relationship ended:

I didn't have good English in the first year and he doesn't know Japanese at

all, so I couldn't ask him what he is even saying at that time. It was like,

'Ahhh I wanna know, but I can't know!' He used really easy words that I

can understand, so it was good, but still I was frustrated because I wanted to

say something…he said, 'Please try explain yourself, explain your feeling',

but I couldn't. (Shihoko 6)

Shihoko later began a relationship with a Japanese student, and commented that it was far easier and less stressful than dating a Kiwi because she could express her feelings fully (6).

6.6.5.2. Negative aspects of campus love

One of the main factors in the prevalence of dating at GFC appeared to be the close living proximity of the students. However, some participants, such as Hiro, found that the close environment made dating difficult to maintain:

> I was dating for one month and 20 days, but I broke up. She frequently stayed my room. It was too close for me! I wanted to have my time! I couldn't do well, so I broke up. Dating at GFC is very difficult, too close. I frequently missed my friends. She often said, 'The best in your mind is always the friends and the second is me'. I don't think so, but actually maybe my friends is best in my life. (Hiro 6)

Clearly, Hiro valued his independence and found it compromised while dating in the close confines of GFC. Another issue Hiro touched on above was the concept of leaving friends behind. Participants in relationships often spent the majority of their time with their partners and neglected their GFC friends. This sometimes resulted in loneliness and depression in those friends left behind, as talked about by Yoichi earlier in his time at GFC:

> Every weekend my friends gathered in my room and having a chat. Recently, you know, everyone's got a girlfriend and no one came. I'm just playing the guitar and reading comic books, it feels kind of lonely. (Yoichi

3)

Kayo also found GFC's close living conditions difficult in regard to romance, albeit for different reasons from those described by Hiro. There was a sense that the impossibility of avoiding ex-partners on campus prolonged the anguish after a romantic breakup. After breaking up, Kayo found it impossible to avoid her ex-boyfriend, stating that: "Even if someone think, 'I don't wanna see him anymore', they have to meet the person at the dining hall or on campus" (Kayo 6). Failed romances were factors in the high stress levels that some students suffered. Jun was the most affected by a romantic breakup and the outcome was almost tragic. After he broke up with his girlfriend she began dating numerous boys and because of the close environment of GFC he could not avoid her or ignore the gossip about her, highlighting the claustrophobic feeling of the campus. Jun developed a strong sense of self-loathing and began self-harming. Eventually, through the intervention of one of his friends, this came to the notice of the GFC authorities and he returned to Japan for his own wellbeing and that of his peers.

6.7. Support

6.7.1. Official support

Another element of the college that no doubt made the participant's feel more comfortable and acculturate more quickly than they otherwise may have was the official student support provided at GFC. The Japanese students had their own dedicated support manager, Nobu-sensei, who was assisted by two additional Japanese staff members to look after the

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Japanese students, and during the research period there were no complaints of insufficient support. Student support was a leading factor for many participants in their decision to attend GFC and after they arrived, the presence of Japanese staff at the institution appeared to be reassuring for the Japanese students and many felt that this was an advantage the college had over other tertiary institutions:

> It is great to have Japanese here because if there is a problem it is better to have a Japanese teacher than not. When you go to a normal overseas university there are few Japanese, so probably you don't have support, but here there are many Japanese so there's no problem. (Kayo 1)

Support with health issues also provided peace of mind. In Interview One, Yuka explained that staff assistance was necessary for Japanese students until the students had the English proficiency to explain things, such as symptoms when they got sick. Nobu-sensei was well respected and highly valued by most of the focal students, who felt a strong sense of both *amae* and *giri* towards him. Kami, for instance, asserted in Interview Four that she would have left GFC long ago without his support. In Interview Four, Riki suggested that his feeling towards Nobu-sensei may have been more *ninjo*-like: "Without him I'm definitely not here", and that Nobu-sensei was "just like a dad" (4).

Kayo expressed a concern felt by others while agreeing that Nobu-sensei was "like a father", when rhetorically asking, "but how about international students? Do they have that kind of person?" (3). Even though Nobu-sensei's support was often welcome, the participants noted that he could only communicate in Japanese and once again they felt uncomfortable with the perception of being GFC's 'chosen ones' because the level of official support they received far exceeded that received by others at GFC. Kayo added

that the Japanese students were treated "too importantly" and treated "totally different" to non-Japanese students (3).

The support from Nobu-sensei, once highly valued, became far less welcome with time and many participants complained about being over-supported. They perceived themselves the subjects of draconian rules, treated like children, and more closely monitored than non-Japanese students. Perhaps in contrast with the desired level of support that the participants indicated in the questionnaire before they arrived at GFC, it appears that they felt their increasing maturity warranted being treated as adults. Taka reflected on a complex balance to be achieved between being supported and being able to meet the long-term goals of being an 'international person' and an independent adult:

> I think Japanese support team is important for GFC student, especially Japanese, but if it's possible for the students they shouldn't rely on them cos when someone move to the university no-one help them…Japanese student at GFC can rely on them in four years until graduate from here. I think they will not be able to be the real international person…I think Japanese support team are affect Japanese people and gave them the good things to them, but here is New Zealand not Japan. So, if Japanese support team was not here I think they will have to find their own measures. (Taka 4)

Some college policies appearing to favor Japanese students were perceived as burdens by participants:

> I think sometimes it's not fair for Japanese. We have lots of meetings and extra class, like night class and we are observed a lot, like attendance by

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Nobu-sensei, but the other [non-Japanese students], no! International

students need to apply for visa, so maybe they should have that observed,

their attendance. Sometimes Nobu-sensei is going to knock on your door if

you are absent, but I don't think any international students get that. (Shihoko

6)

Shihoko's comments suggest micro-management of the Japanese students' lives by support

staff. One example was at the end of each academic year she felt that GFC management

was trying to hold her against her will because GFC's owner, Mr. Suwa, insisted on the

Japanese students remaining at GFC until after the graduation ceremony. In contrast, the

international students who were not graduating usually left New Zealand after finishing

their exams, which finished weeks earlier:

It's kind of forcing us to stay here…It's our choice whether going back to

Japan or not. But the other international students, one of my friends, already

went back to their home country cos they finished all their tests and classes.

It's fine nobody didn't tell her it's not good or something like that and I felt

that it's not fair. Sometimes…I think, 'Ahhh the other international student

are lucky cos if they don't attend meeting it's ok and if they don't attend

graduation ceremony it's ok'. But I am going back to Japan before the

graduating ceremony, he was so angry. Nobu-sensei, he was like, 'It's

taboo; don't leave GFC [to go on holiday] before graduation ceremony!' He

also said, 'Don't leave GFC in the first year' [to visit Japan], I did, I did

both. (Shihoko 6)

However, much to her chagrin, Shihoko was unable to defy GFC's Japanese-specific

accommodation policy that restricted Japanese students to living in the campus dormitories, effectively confining them to the 'safety' of the figurative Japanese veranda overlooking the host environment. This was possibly the rule most negatively perceived by the Japanese students, and Shihoko spoke of her disappointment at being denied, by what she perceived as a malevolent ruling, when she found 'perfect' off-campus accommodation:

> I found the place and it's really lovely and they are all Vessar students and they wanna girl, and it's close to here. I can walk from here, just like within 10 minutes or something, so yeah, I wanna do flatting, but I can't do that. (Shihoko 6)

Student safety was the reason provided by GFC management for not letting Japanese students live off campus; however, all non-Japanese students were free to live wherever they pleased in the city. Harumi's comment hints at some frustration generated by this ruling:

> It's dangerous to live outside of GFC, Nobu-sensei said. Nobu-sensei promised our parents to take care and keep safe, so he always watch our life. If something happen in campus he can help, but outside of GFC he can't do anything. But I wanna be outside GFC. (Harumi 6)

In Interview Six, Shihoko suggested that the rule was established long ago after a Japanese student got in trouble in town after drinking. However, she mentioned that some students were suspicious that there was an economic reason for dictating that Japanese students could only live on campus.

Participants identified a number of issues that they believed were created by this ruling. Taka, for instance, asserted that it meant Japanese students received too few opportunities to make local friends (6) and Kayo added that it hindered English proficiency development:

> I like dormitory very much because there are a lot of friends, but if I continue this situation my English won't improve at all. Now I feel like my English is getting worse, so I wanna live outside of campus. I felt like I started doubted GFC's system. It sounds odd, weird. (Kayo 6)

These comments indicate that GFC may have been working against some of the main reasons why participants had chosen to study at the college, such as giving Japanese students the best opportunities to make non-Japanese friends and a fertile environment to improve their English. After speaking with a senior Japanese GFC student, Shihoko thought she knew the answer to the college's seemingly Japanese-biased approach. She was convinced that Mr. Suwa had built the college for Japanese who wanted to study overseas, but lacked confidence and skill in English.

Although most participants suggested that they were not interested in being the sheltered children of the greater Suwa family that Mrs. Suwa spoke of in the 2014 GFC opening ceremony (see 1.3.1.), official support was not dismissed by everyone. Some participants relied heavily on support staff for assistance with things, such as monetary and visa issues, and medical problems.

6.7.2. Peer support

As the participants became closer to each other within the Japanese social group and established social support networks, they began relying more on each other to provide support and relied less on official student support. While this may be reflective of the closeness of the friendships they were developing, it may also be a sign that they were beginning to adjust to GFC life and the main issues they now faced were student against student disputes and romantic break-ups. The main forms of support which participants valued from their peers were talking/listening, providing advice, and giving comfort and/or sanctuary. The strength of the friendships has already been seen in 6.6.1 and was the result mainly of shared social experiences and long hours together in Foundation classrooms in their first year.

It is perhaps a sign of increasing maturity that the students continued to strengthen the peer support networks as their dormitory societies developed under the close living environment. Hall One was the dormitory that housed Japanese female students and participants, such as Shihoko, spoke about the close identification with their dormitory and the community that had developed with their hallmates:

> Hall One is like Hall One. We really know each other and feel. But when I
> go to Halls Two, Three, Four, Five or Six I feel different, like atmosphere is
> different and also smell is different. Most friends live in Hall One. When
> someone's sad we use someone's room and talk to each other. It's like a
> family and Mami, Yukie, Yukiko, they are like my sister. So, I have a
> problem, like I couldn't understand and I told them and then, 'Ahhh don't

worry, don't worry'. They are like big sister. (Shihoko 4)

It seems that some participants developed *ninjo*-like relationships with the friends that they lived with and their attachment to their dormitory hall was due to these friends. The grouping of Japanese students in the dormitory accommodation thus had some positive aspects because most students were instantly in tune with each other's feelings due to the shared cultural ideology. Kami, for instance, explained that her hallmates could quickly read signs of trouble in her behavior and check to see if she was okay:

> I listen something like depressing songs in my room and suddenly Mai
> knocked my door and, 'Are you ok?' I said, 'Ok, ok'. They realize when
> I'm in depress, it's nice environment. (Kami 6)

The peer support systems were usually reciprocal types of arrangement: It should be noted that there were numerous support networks within the Japanese group at GFC and they appear reminiscent of the concentric circles of *uchi* ideology, where the most *uchi* received the most support and those people more *soto* received much less support. Kayo outlines this below and seemed to feel compelled to support only those who had supported her in the past:

> I just wanna be kind and I wanna support everyone; everyone means only
> my friends. When they are in sadness or when they are in trouble I wanna
> support them because I was supported by my friends when I was in sadness
> or in trouble. They gave me a lot, so I just wanna give them a lot. (Kayo 6)

6.7.2.1. Community cooperation

With many Japanese grouped together studying in a foreign country one may expect some level of inter-co-national cooperation across the different year groups at GFC. However, this was often absent at the college, particularly between the Foundation students and everyone else. Each group while in Foundation was quite separate and did not connect with those above them until they entered Degree and shared classes. It seemed that making one's own way socially and academically at GFC was like a rite of passage because each intake of students before had done it alone.

The Degree program was perceived as the pinnacle of GFC and many Foundation students, such as Taka, placed Degree students on a pedestal. For instance, in his second year Taka remembered back to when he was a Foundation student; he made it a point to know personal details about the degree students, such as which part of Japan they were from and which high school they had attended. Once students had entered their second year at GFC and were studying in Degree (either part or full-time), they appeared to generally look down on the first-year/Foundation students. Taka, for instance, admitted to becoming apathetic towards Foundation students once in Degree after taking so much notice of others in his first year. Apparently, this was typical: There was no cross-fertilization between new and old students, and there was no scaffolding provided by experienced students. Hiro tried to break down the social barriers in his dormitory when he became a second-year student. However, he found it impossible as the attitude of his *kohai* (juniors) seemed to perpetuate the status quo:

> Some Foundation students are living in front of my room, every morning of

course I say, 'good morning' and talk a little bit. They care about the second

[year] student. One of the Foundation student age is the same as me, but

they still talk in keigo[23], formal Japanese. I talk with him frankly, but they

care that I am a second-year student and he is a Foundation…I wanna talk

on the same level. (Hiro 4)

Yoichi also talked about this situation and considered the gap between Foundation and

Degree students as natural and unavoidable because they were at different stages of their

experience:

You know, we, the senior students, already have some society here and they

arrived and they are trying to make friends or things like that. Obviously,

there is some gap…I don't really like that, but it can't be helped. (Yoichi 4)

Yoichi attempted to bridge the gap between him and his juniors by designing and teaching

a preparatory course to help them for their entry into Degree. This was reminiscent of the

senpai-kohai relationship, which is a common culturally-based concept in Japan where

senior students help their juniors, and the notion of *amae* (dependence). While Yoichi was

obviously helping a small community of students; however, at the college, it was only the

taiko club that could be truly considered a community of practice where oldtimers

supported the initiation of novices into understandings of the new context (Lave &

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[23] Most polite, honorific style of Japanese

Wenger, 1991).

6.7.3. Safe zones

A further assistance that developed solely through the participants' agency were areas I termed 'safe zones'. These were areas where participants could escape from relationship stress, homesickness, loneliness and language stress – where speaking Japanese was a central element. Some form of safe zone was established by almost all participants, some of whom used these areas simply as an escape from English when feeling overloaded. Yoichi, for instance, commented that while he came to GFC to speak English, "sometimes we need to speak Japanese for ourself" (1). His safe zone was his dormitory room, which his Japanese friend would come to after classes finished each day and at night before going to bed. In this safe zone, they would speak Japanese, which Yoichi commented "reset myself" (Yoichi 2). Similarly, Shihoko remarked that she visited her friend next door regularly to speak Japanese because, "sometimes I'm so tired to speak English or to thinking English word" (1). Other participants, such as Kayo, established their safe zone to avoid loneliness:

> When I stay in my friend's room I was saved every day. Every day I went to
> my friend's room. I think it is important because I don't wanna stay lonely,
> I wanna stay with someone every time. (Kayo 1)

Although GFC management had gone to great lengths to create a Japan-like environment at the college, the students seemed to need to find their own way to feel safe and familiarity appeared to be a key element because in nearly all safe zones featured links to

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the participants' life in Japan. Sometimes participants decorated their rooms/safe zones in extravagant and overt displays of Japaneseness. Harumi, for instance, seemed to be trying to recreate her old home environment by hanging Japanese posters on her dormitory walls, stocking her shelves with books from Japan and playing Japanese music (1). Not all safe zones were within the GFC campus. Taka, for instance, liked to sit in a nearby field at night with hot tea and a blanket: "I watch the sky, the star, it's a good place, quietly, it's not light – so dark. I can relax" (1). Nor were all safe zones physical; Ai stated that for her, close friends functioned in the same way as safe zones: "Sometimes if I get really tired from the relationship with my friends or something, I need someone who really understands me or cheer me up" (5).

Despite most participants being increasingly supported by a wide range of people in their dormitories as time went on, the perceived need for a safe zone never vanished completely. Shihoko, for instance, was one of the most settled participants, yet still spoke of her need for safe a zone:

> I use English all the time, read, write, read, write, then I feel I have to speak
> Japanese. So, speak Japanese, Japanese friends and I escape. Kami in her
> room and we talked about Japanese food or Japanese things. (Shihoko 5)

Although most safe zones included connecting with others in person, Yuka found solace in a single photo hanging on her wall, which kept her grounded when times were difficult:

> When I wake up and when I go to sleep I can always see the picture. My
> best friends made it for me and this picture always helped me because
> sometimes I feel alone in my room. They didn't have time because they

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need to study for entering the university, but they went out together and take

a picture with four of them and made this one together for me. It taught me

that I have a friend in Japan, it always helped me. (Yuka 6)

6.8. Conclusion

Chapter Six illustrates the complexities of the students' living and social world. The

college appeared to be a Dejima outpost that often reminded them of home. The

participants arrived at GFC with dreams of making non-Japanese friends. However, for

numerous reasons this did not eventuate. Instead, the students developed close co-national

friendships, the support from which largely replaced that from official channels. These

close relationships were often developed through participation in extracurricular activities,

such as in clubs. The challenges that participants took on and the extracurricular activities

they engaged in are the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Seven: Taking up challenges & new experiences

7.1. Introduction

Chapter Seven looks at the various extracurricular activities that the students took on and their experiences through them during the research period. The chapter begins with a focus on the *Kawaii* dance group, of which three participants were members, and then presents vignettes of the extracurricular experiences of two of *Kawaii's* founding students: Riki and Yoichi. The aim of these two vignettes is to demonstrate the level of dedication that some students had toward their extracurricular activities, which was sometimes to the detriment of their studies. The chapter continues by looking at the Japaneseness of the most prominent GFC clubs. The *taiko* club is then given special focus because of its reputation of providing students with a sense of security and strong peer support. This is followed by a vignette illustrating how the *taiko* club turned Kayo's life around when she was at her most vulnerable. The chapter continues by looking at the participants' growing maturity and the responsibilities that some of them took on inside and outside the college. It concludes with an examination of the part-time work experiences of some participants as they attempted to gain more independence and/or alleviate the financial burden of being a

student.

7.2. Taking on challenges

Despite indications of pressures to study, it was important to the participants to construct a meaningful life outside the classroom, be physically active and make social connections. A few participants joined various clubs, undoubtedly to make friends and gain English speaking opportunities, but also to challenge themselves and gain new experiences. Those that did this often appeared to undergo immense self-growth. Taking on challenges was done in a myriad of ways, such as entering different cultural groups, learning a third language or joining a club to beat loneliness. Yoichi and Riki were the two who stood out most during the research for their attitudes and dedication to getting new experiences while in New Zealand. Their involvement in various activities eventually moved them beyond matters of personal development into leadership roles which enabled them to support other students and enrich their lives.

The first of the following three vignettes will focus on the life of the *Kawaii* dance group that Yoichi and Riki formed together. The two remaining vignettes will longitudinally present some other standout experiences of both participants during their time studying at GFC.

7.2.1. Vignette: *Kawaii* dance group

Kawaii was an all-male dance group, formed by Yoichi and Riki, and including Hiro, to compete in the *GFC's Got Talent* contest:

I and Yoichi talked about gotta do something at *Got Talent* and suddenly he

said, 'How about dance or something?' 'Oh, it's quite cool', I said. We

searched on YouTube some dances. At first, we found a good dance and

then we collect the member together and we practiced that kind of dance.

But one day we find not good dance, awesome dance, 'Wow, it's gonna be

great!' (Riki 2)

Kawaii was very successful, but never became an official GFC club because it was simply

a group of seven friends having fun. The members of *Kawaii* had no expectations of

success, but won the top prize of $500 in the talent contest (Riki 2). The group enjoyed the

success, but it was the close bonds that convinced the members to keep performing

together and keep challenging themselves. The group danced in Apiata and also travelled

to Wellington to busk on that city's famous Cuba Street, making over $100:

First time was so nervous, but when we do the two times or three times we

had confidence cos already they gave us some money. Yeah, we got kind of

relaxed and we could dance. (Yoichi 2)

That a group of Japanese international students with limited English would be adventurous

enough to travel to a major New Zealand city to dance on a street renowned for busking

and make money was astounding and their GFC peers naturally had difficulty believing

their story. Riki was so proud of what *Kawaii* had accomplished that he sent his mother

performance videos via the Internet (2). However, as the participants became busier with

other things in their lives, such as girlfriends, club activities and study, it became more

difficult to devote time to dancing and *Kawaii* eventually disbanded when half of the group

returned to Japan to continue their studies. For their swansong, *Kawaii* traveled to Napier

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during the city's Art Deco Festival and performed in town:

> I went to Napier; you know the Art Deco Festival? We went to that festival
> and we did a street performance on the main street in front of Starbucks all
> day. [We made] more than $120 or $130 and after that, using that money,
> we went to hot spa and buying alcohol. After going back to the
> accommodation, we drinking and eating. (Yoichi 4)

Although *Kawaii* lasted less than a year, the group members gained a lot from it. The most important thing they received was the close friendships through shared toil. They also got to travel to different areas outside the college region and share in the unique experience of dancing in public as a form of busking, perhaps only made possible through the collective courage of the group.

7.2.2. Vignette: Yoichi

Yoichi's first challenge began before leaving Japan when he had to work two jobs to raise enough money to attend GFC:

> I couldn't get visa cos my parents couldn't pay the money, so I decide to
> come to GFC by my own money, so I started to working. I was working for
> the Internet shopping company in the daytime and at the nighttime I was in
> the factory. I was in the Fujitsu [factory] and making smart phones. I was
> really looking forward to coming to GFC. I came to GFC three years ago,
> by open campus. I work hard and come to GFC this year. Finally, I came.
> But it was so hard; I sometimes thought I just wanna quit, quit to come and

stop working. (Yoichi 1)

Though Yoichi struggled, it is evident that he had made a considerable investment, in all senses of the word, in studying at GFC. My diagram in Figure 7.1 shows Yoichi's extracurricular activities and indicates that he was determined to experience a great deal during his study abroad. It is worth noting here that Yoichi's participation in his various activities also increased his chances to operate in English, which would have contributed positively to the academic part of his life.

Figure 7.1 Yoichi's GFC activities
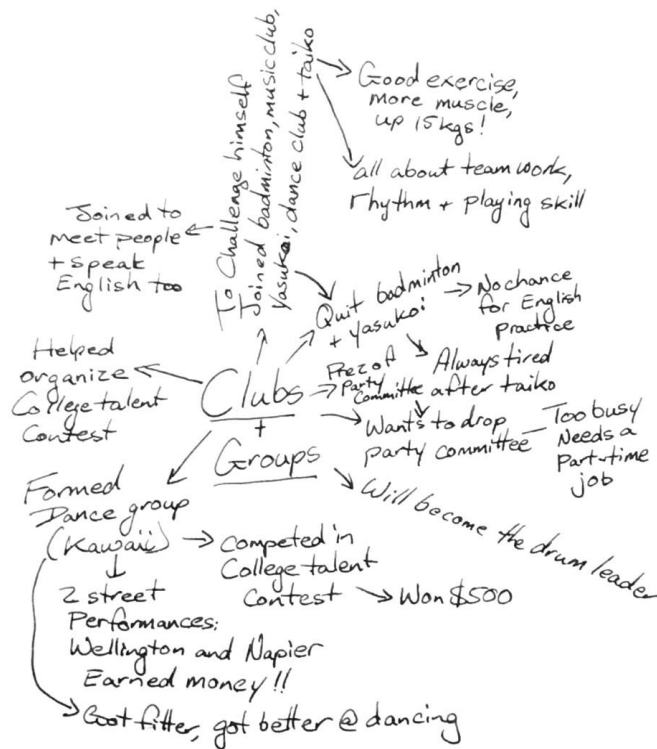
As mentioned previously, Yoichi initially joined numerous GFC clubs:

Taiko club, a dance club, badminton club, music club, *yosakoi*[24] club. I'm

just challenging myself. I don't wanna say this is the limit or something. I

just wanna try, try, try and make me bigger, stronger. (Yoichi 1)

Yoichi was most passionate about *taiko* and dancing because he found them both cool and

new (2). New Zealand seemed to provide affordances that Japan did not, even in arenas

outside study and Yoichi had the confidence to try things that he was too self-conscious to

do back in Japan. This was especially the case for his experience with the *Kawaii* dance

group: "In Japan, I will do some things in Japan the same as in New Zealand, but I won't

do street-live [busking] in Japan!" (2).

After teaching the special English course for his *kohai* (see 6.7.2.1), Yoichi joined some of

the other members of the cohort teaching the TOEIC night classes. In addition to this he

took on more leadership responsibilities in a committee established to organize parties:

I'm now in charge of president of party committee. Bloody busy! I had to

organize the ball party in the 15th of September and of course student

festival in September. In October, I have to organize a music festival. I was

in charge of one of the member of organizing GFC's *Got Talent* student

festival. (Yoichi 5)

Soon after Interview Six, Yoichi messaged to say that he had become the GFC Student

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[24] A traditional Japanese dance

Association president and, a year after the completion of the research, that he had become

the *taiko* club president following Riki.

7.2.3. Vignette: Riki

Riki determinedly downplayed the importance of study to pursue a more holistic approach

to life during his time abroad. Studying at GFC provided new opportunities for Riki, which

he appeared to make the most of:

> If I was Japan there is no *taiko*, no my Kiwi friend and no my Taiwanese
>
> friend. GFC has a lot of things, impossible to do in Japan, everything is
>
> different. Maybe if I'm in Japan now, maybe I'm doing nothing, just study
>
> and nothing to do, but I came here. That's why I can feel like I can do
>
> everything. (Riki 2)

It certainly appeared that Riki tried to do everything because he joined the badminton club,

the drum team, two dance clubs, the singing club and the *yosakoi* club. He later added to

this list the media committee, the party committee, the business committee and the

international committee (3).

Figure 7.2 illustrates the extent of Riki's activeness at GFC and was used as a form of

member-checking. The diagram reveals that Riki was extremely busy outside the

classroom. Apart from being a founding member of *Kawaii*, Riki organized the annual

GFC Taupo relay team trip to Lake Taupo twice during the research period and used it as a

way of inspiring his peers to be more active:

> I'm planning to organize a team for the Taupo Lake relay. I have already

collected 15 people. It's really difficult to organize. Some people thinking

there is nothing to do here, I don't really think so. If you don't do anything

that's why you feel like nothing to do. I wanna change these guys' mind.

That's one of the reasons why I organize the Taupo relay. I don't know

why, but they guys feeling boring, boring, boring. (Riki 3)

Figure 7.2 Riki at GFC
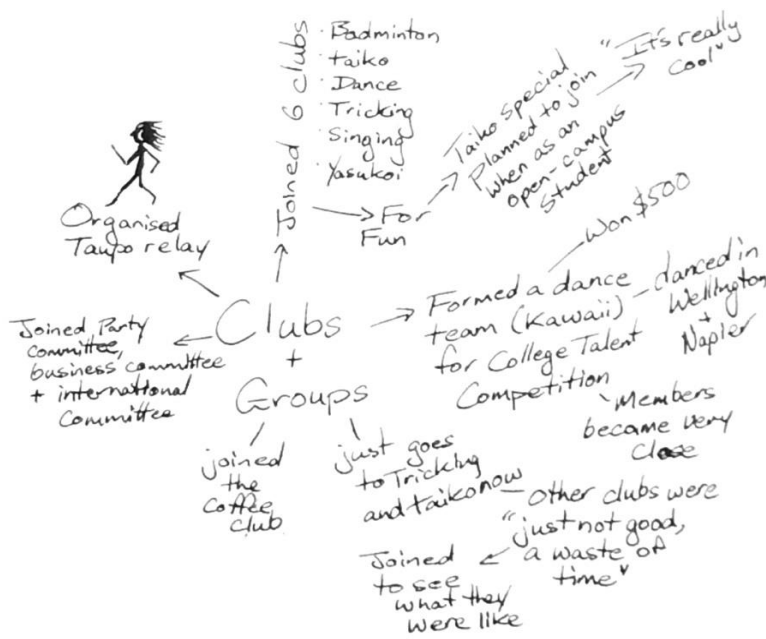
Clearly Riki had a very positive attitude to his life in New Zealand; he was sociable and

friendly, and often tried to positively influence those around him. In Interview Four, Riki

reflected on his experiences during his first year at GFC with a sense of satisfaction and

achievement: "The things I tried last year, it is all good experience, great one! Japanese

drum, *Kawaii* and organizing stuff, you know, like the Taupo Relay" (4).

As suggested above, through his involvement with the Taupo relay team it seems that Riki

was trying to inspire his less active peers. However, arguably his most inspiring

contribution was through his work in the *taiko* team. Riki joined the GFC *taiko* team promptly after arriving at GFC and soon had a leadership role that took him into the local community outside the college to arrange *taiko* concerts. In Interview Five he talked about his role: "I have to organize the performances and connect with the performance offerer and talk about and also negotiate the charges and time or a lot of stuffs" (5).

Being responsible for negotiations with the public provided Riki with opportunities to communicate in real-world English; this English was probably more challenging than what students were used to on campus, where native speakers (both teachers and students) may have altered their speaking tempo and vocabulary to match their perception of the skills of their L2 audience. The noticeable effect this had on Riki was an increase in his communicative confidence. Following this role, Riki became the *taiko* club president and demonstrated his strong leadership skills. He clearly recognized and accepted that his decisions had the potential to create conflict with his peers:

> Last Wednesday was the first practice for me as captain of the Japanese
>
> drum team and we had a meeting, we talked a lot and we battled a lot…I
>
> recognized that sometimes captain need to stick what I want, even if my
>
> friend became one of the opponent. I have to care about the team, not care
>
> about my friend. I can't fall my way because of the relationships. I wanna be
>
> a leader; I wanna make GFC drum team better than previous one. (Riki 6)

It appeared that Riki was determined to make a lasting contribution to the *taiko* club by developing the playing skills of its members. At the same time, it was obvious that Riki was feeling some burden of responsibility:

I want more people to enjoy our Japanese drum team. To achieve that, I

have to make the sound more clearly or make an even more skillful team. I

wanna make it more like performance, not like just the instrument playing. I

wanna express the song. We are just playing now, we are not expressing.

Lots of responsibilities cos the Japanese drum team is obviously the best

club at GFC, so I can't make it worse - always have to advance. (Riki 6)

Riki recognized that his position as the leader of the *taiko* club came at a cost.

However, it appeared that he considered the cost worth it at that stage:

All the time I have to think about Japan drum and I can't do other stuff

really, even if I wanna go. Let's say I wanna to go to travel for one month, I

can't do that cos I have to manage the Japanese drum. I have to choose

Japanese drum always. I decided to do Japanese drum team instead of study.

I'm thinking I chose drum team instead of study so even if the class, my

score was bad, no worries. Of course, I can't take two of them at the same

time – I have to choose and obviously, I like Japanese drum more than

study, so I chose Japanese drum. (Riki 6)

The GFC drum team provided members with affordances and learning opportunities – the

most obvious ones being performance skills and discipline from the requirement to attend

regular, taxing club practices. However, for proactive students, such as Riki, the club

provided much more. Through his various roles in the team Riki gained negotiation skills,

opportunities to practice English with members of the public and leadership experience.

Riki was completely dedicated to the *taiko* team and, unfortunately for him, seemed to

never find a balance between the drums and his school work and he paid a heavy price for

that. Six months after the research ended, Riki messaged to say he had left the *taiko* team to concentrate on studying and improve his grades; however, he left it too late and ended up leaving the college without graduating (see 5.5.4.1.4). Despite his academic failure, Riki's incredible achievements outside the classroom need to be acknowledged. What made Riki's accomplishments at GFC all the more remarkable was the serious heart condition he suffered from. His doctor in Japan instructed him to avoid all physical activity, but Riki refused to abide by his doctor's demands and commented that he wanted to lead an active life or die trying:

> I wanna to do what I want to do in my life, so doesn't care if my heart is bad. Even I gonna dead because of my push my heart so hard, still I wanna get some experience and wanna do what I wanna do. Like if there is the best view or panorama ever in this place, but if I go there I'm gonna die, I'm gonna go there. I don't wanna feel regret or something at the moment when I die. I don't wanna say, 'I wanted to see that!' The doctor said I shouldn't play Japanese drum cos you know the heart beat is decided from since I born, like how many times can be beated. My one is much shorter than normal, so I shouldn't like make it faster. (Riki 4)

This quote is typical of Riki's approach to life; he could see value even in personal setbacks. Riki's drive to lead a normal life meant that the second time he organized the GFC Taupo relay team, he actually participated in the relay. In Interview Four, Riki declared: "I did! Hahaha, and still alive, it's a miracle eh!" (4).

7.3. Extracurricular activities

For all participants being involved in extracurricular activities at GFC was a good way of connecting with other students and solidifying close friendships. Being a club member helped at least one participant, Kayo, to become much more connected and happy with her life at GFC. The members of the clubs that the participants were involved in were almost exclusively Japanese. This meant that there was a strong Dejima-like essence in this part of the focal students' social life as well. However, this was not seen as a negative aspect by the participants.

7.3.1. Club Japaneseness

The environment, the dining hall menu, the groupism (official and unofficial), and the subsequent co-national friendship patterns and romances were all elements that helped create a Japanese ambiance to GFC. However, there was an additional component which was less part of the public infrastructure and over which students themselves could exercise agency: GFC clubs. Japanese students dominated many GFC clubs and Japanese culture permeated through these groups. Shotz, a female dance club, for instance, operated under an adherence to a strict hierarchy, long and exhausting practices and Japanese-based club rules, which appeared to be difficult for local students to conform to. In her fourth interview, Ai stated in frustration: "Now we have about 12 Kiwi students in our club. Maybe culture shock because all the Japanese students come to *dojo* on time, but Kiwi students are not" (4). In Interview Five, she updated the situation in her club:

> Some students already left from the Shotz dance club because practice was

too strict or hard. Rena always say when we are dancing we need sensibility

[a group-minded instinctiveness]. Some Kiwi students couldn't understand

it, 'With the same choreography why do we need to sensibility?' And we

discussed for some time and then they left. (Ai 5)

Some Japanese members of the club also fell short of the club's demands. However, in

spite of its rigors and apparent restrictions on individuality, Ai remained a loyal member

largely because of the close bonds she had established with its other core members.

7.3.2. The Jewel of GFC

Taiko, the Japanese drum club, is GFC's most celebrated club. The club formed in 1990

and is the oldest Japanese drum group in New Zealand. It has been very visible and

influential in New Zealand's *taiko* scene. The group regularly plays in different parts of

New Zealand and has even performed in the national arena to support a visiting Japanese

sports team.

 In contrast to Shotz, *taiko* is overtly Japanese and students entered it seemingly aware of

the Japanese cultural-based operating style, with a rigid hierarchy and Japanese way of

doing things. The Japanese nature of the club may actually be part of its attraction to

members:

Very Japanese! Strict training and practicing and some customs are really

Japanese. The *kohai*s have to respect *senpai*s (seniors), and *kohai*s have got

less opportunity to play *taiko* than seniors because they have to look at them

and learn how to play *taiko* from them. (Yoichi 6)

One remarkable aspect of GFC's *taiko* club is that the team is completely renewed within a four-year period because all members retire after graduation. This point is interesting because the club appears to operate in a way reminiscent of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). New members learn the club ways from established members and eventually become veterans themselves, going on to teach new club members in the future. Five participants joined the *taiko* club for numerous reasons and affordances. Yoichi was initially attracted to the exercise it provided and then played a major role in the club's administration and rose to the position of president in his final year at GFC; however, the participant who arguably had the most influence on the *Taiko* club was Riki. Under his leadership as club president the team made themselves available as a paid act for the first time, traveled throughout the South Island on a concert tour, and played their first fully professional concert in a premier theatre. Riki was also at the club's helm for their greatest feat to date: performing in the 2014 World *Taiko* Gathering in Los Angeles.

7.3.3. Benefits of club membership

Clearly, club membership could be demanding in some respects, however the benefits usually outweighed any disadvantages and made GFC a far more hospitable environment. Gaining club membership provided a platform from which members could interact with a range of people and form close friendships. It was also, undoubtedly a very effective way to access high levels of peer support. In some cases, such as Ai's experience in Shotz, GFC clubs became like a surrogate family, providing trusting relationships and staving off loneliness:

> I hated being in a group, I used to wanna hang out with just one or two

people. But in the dance club everyone consider and think about each other,

care about each other and it's like family, big family. So, we can trust each

other. (Ai 4)

Kayo's road to becoming a *taiko* club member is presented in the following vignette and is

an interesting interplay between friendship issues, the Internet, and her developing

confidence and trust. Although there has been much said in the previous literature about

study abroad students and their online connections with home, Kayo's story shows that her

online connectivity with people at the college in which she was studying was perhaps

every bit as important as any link that any focal student had with Japan.

7.3.3.1. Vignette: Friends, the net and dropping the mask

As shown in the vignette "Finding the right distance", 6.6.1.1, at some stage between

Interview Two and Three, Kayo's close friendship with Kami cooled, and she felt alone

and unwanted. At her most desperate she posted a general comment on Facebook that she

believed set her on a trajectory that completely changed her life at GFC and revealed a

very rare community of practice operating at GFC:

I was thinking of my life and then I wrote in Facebook, 'Now my life is

really boring'. Do you know Genki? Genki is leader of *taiko* team and he

wrote comment, 'Why don't you come to *taiko* club?' So, I went to there

and then I decided to join cos the looks maybe hard and everyone looks

enjoying very much and the atmosphere was really good. (Kayo 3)

Kayo's simple Facebook post was the catalyst for her status to change from being lonely to

having supportive friends and finally settling into GFC. After joining the drum team, she

made numerous close friends and felt high levels of support:

> I often stay with them and cook something or study together. Before I was
>
> like alone, so I was always in my room and always sleeping, but recently
>
> my situation was changed and now I'm getting better. (Kayo 3)

Figure 7.3 Kayo and the drums

Talk
2nd dinner
Watch movies
"The good thing in my life recently"
Like a family
Could make many friends
Hang out together
Stopped wearing a mask because of them
Enjoying it "Very, very much"
Drum Team Taiko
From Facebook post "Now my life is really boring"
Now playing drums
1st joined as flute player
Invite from Club Capt to join taiko
Saved me "Now I can enjoy my life"
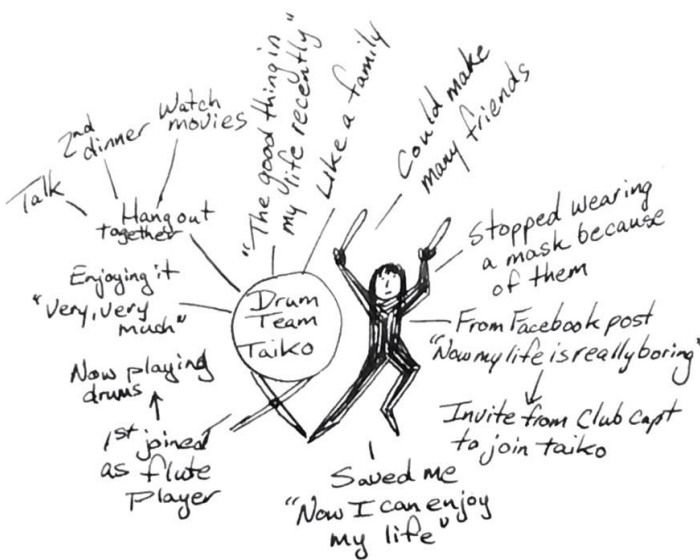
Over a short period in the *taiko* club, Kayo began to trust her fellow members enough to

truly be herself in front of them and for possibly the first time at GFC she felt comfortable:

> I couldn't trust many people actually and I was wearing mask…Before I
>
> was only with Kami and so when I was with Kami I took off my mask. But
>
> now I'm joining drum team and I often hang out with other students. I talk
>
> with other students a lot and I started trusting them. I could find many good
>
> points of them, they are very kind, they are very considerate and they are
>
> funny. I started liking them, so I finished wearing mask. (Kayo 4)

Figure 7.3, based on Kayo's interview data and drawn by me to use in member checking, illustrates some of the benefits Kayo gained from joining the *taiko* club. In Interview Three, Kayo called the club "the good thing of my life" because she started to feel a sense of belonging and the confidence to be herself. Kayo fully invested in being a member of *taiko*, so much so that she began to feel pressure not to let her teammates down (5). Such a level of commitment came at a cost, though, especially as the departure of her closest friends began to loosen her ties to the *taiko* club. As this coincided with an upsurge in study commitments her growing desire to leave the club led to anxiety about the possible ramifications of quitting and perhaps conflicted with her feelings of *giri* towards club members:

> I have been busy recently, so I'm also thinking to quit or have a break…I
> think if I quit the team I might be awkward [with the club members]. I don't
> wanna be awkward with them, but my first priority is being a student.
> (Kayo 5)

It seems that although the *taiko* club was important to Kayo, particularly in her initial days of membership, she held true to her main reason for attending GFC, which was to study. Following Interview Five, Kayo withdrew from the *taiko* team, which had perhaps served its purpose for her to make many friends and at last feel comfortable being herself.

7.4. Growing up, feeling at home and taking on responsibility

This section looks at the responsibilities, both on and off campus, that participants took on. It demonstrates that participants were maturing and feeling an increasing sense of home at

GFC. The initial section looks at ways participants took on responsibility on campus and the second part examines the experiences of those participants that engaged in part-time work while at GFC.

7.4.1. Responsibilities on campus

Aside from club commitments and the busyness of being involved, numerous participants, like Kayo, undertook various roles of responsibility at GFC, all of which were voluntary. One popular role was Hall Leader. Although they were technically unpaid, students in those positions received discounted accommodation and a larger room. The participants who acted as Hall Leaders were Riki, Yoichi and Shihoko. Their most important role in this capacity was to maintain a positive social environment and make sure that their dormitory stayed secure and in good physical condition (Shihoko 5). Shihoko took her role seriously and improved the social environment in Hall One by having one of the party-loving local students removed because she was disruptive.

Another major responsibility of Taka, Shihoko, Kayo and Yoichi was teaching the TOEIC night classes to their Japanese *kohai*. Kayo enjoyed the opportunity to teach, but struggled with the workload because she was busy with her own studies and had trouble planning lessons suited to her students' level:

> Last week was the first time to teach them. I thought that I prepared enough
> materials to teach, but actually although I made many notes, it wasn't
> enough. I thought some idioms or some rules they already know, but
> actually they didn't know that. I skipped to explain that, but actually I

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needed to explain it…It was very difficult and this time I also prepared like

last time, but I think this is also not enough for them…so every time I can't

teach them perfectly. (Kayo 5)

Kayo tried her best, but truly struggled with the work. Her main motive for accepting this

role was to get a taste of what teaching was like to help her decide if she should pursue

employment as a high school English teacher in Japan after graduating GFC. After

teaching TOEIC Kayo was convinced that teaching was not for her, which probably played

a role in her transferring to the Diploma program later on.

7.4.2. Money matters

Taking part in any activity often cost the participants money because they had to pay for

things such as equipment, uniforms, travel costs and food while outside the college.

Despite most participants entering GFC with full or partial scholarships and being

supported further by their parents, New Zealand was found to be expensive and many

students struggled financially. Kayo, for instance, felt trapped and bored without money:

At GFC at New Zealand I can't go anywhere because I don't have car. I

don't have money and I'm not working so I can't get wages. I can't do

anything without money, so now I'm just trying to cut down on my

expenses. I can do nothing here. (Kayo 2)

Many participants spoke of their regrets over wasting money in their first months at GFC.

Yuka, for instance, felt ashamed and guilty because of wasting her parents' money on

alcohol (3). With her parents in mind, Kami lived frugally in her first year, but in her

second year she requested more money from her parents, so that she could enjoy life in New Zealand (5). Almost all participants displayed a sense of increasing maturity over the study period. An indication of this was their growing awareness of their spending and its significance. A further sign was the apparent understanding that dependence on their parents' money keeps them positioned as a child.

GFC responsibilities and club commitments added to the participants' schedules, but for some of them, life was to get even busier after committing to working part-time jobs in the city. Nearly all participants complained of financial issues during the research, and the only real way of easing this strain was to work part-time. Asking for an increased allowance from their parents was not a viable option for some students as they appeared to be trying to gain independence and contribute at some level towards their living costs at GFC. That some participants decided to seek employment suggests, perhaps, that they were well settled in their New Zealand life at this point. The benefits and negative aspect of working while at GFC, according to those that did it, are presented below.

Benefits:

- Cashflow (which could be used for club expenses, social occasions and travel)

- An extent of financial independence from parents

- Work experience, which could be useful in the future

- Life experience off the campus

- Interaction with local people

- Opportunities to use English skills practically

- Opportunities to make outside friends

- Less time to relax and spend time with friends

- Less time to concentrate on studies

- Exhaustion

Yoichi's desire to work was borne from necessity because, although he had a full GFC scholarship, he had little spending money and had to ask his parents for financial assistance in order to remain at GFC:

> I saw that my bank account had not enough money to stay here and get a
>
> visa, but thanks to my mother I could have enough. Then I relieved, I can
>
> stay here much longer, one more year. (Yoichi 4)

As his comment suggested, Yoichi was struggling to stay financially afloat, which meant that he needed a part-time job to continue at GFC because his mother's money would not last. Although he was busy with study and club commitments, Yoichi arranged his schedule to cope with the demands of part-time work and was cautious in how many hours per week he worked:

> I am working in the Eve Café. It's a small café, but it's a nice place. People
>
> are nice, friendly. I'm working Wednesday night and Sunday day, twice a
>
> week, about 13 hours or 14 hours. It's gonna be hard, but I'm pretty much
>
> enjoying it so that's alright. I'm gonna get used to it, doing things at the
>
> same time. (Yoichi 5)

Yoichi was careful to ensure that he worked under 15 hours because he believed that anything more would negatively impact his studies. He seemed satisfied that his financial

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issues had lessened and felt valued by his boss and his colleagues. Yoichi was content that

he was able to gain more independence in an English-speaking context:

> It's gonna be good practice for me to listen to English and connection to the
>
> Vessar students…I can buy a flight ticket to go back to Japan or something
>
> like that. Since I got the part-time job I had to make a bank account and I
>
> have an eftpos. I'm thinking I'm gonna start Internet shopping. (Yoichi 5)

Yoichi and Shihoko's work experience in New Zealand were in contrast. Shihoko felt

unappreciated by her boss and obligated to work what she considered excessively long

hours:

> I'm working in the Mall and I'm a cashier. I worked six days a week during
>
> holiday. After that I got just one day off…After work, I was exhausted but
>
> needed to study...They treated employee like a human that can replace
>
> anytime they want…During Christmas season, our shop becomes really
>
> busy, but there were only three part-time workers. Therefore, I worked nine
>
> days in a row. On Thursday of that week I worked 10am to 11 p.m. with
>
> just 15 minutes' break. I was supposed to finish at five p.m. but Takao, who
>
> was supposed to work from five p.m., came at 6pm saying, 'Oh, you still
>
> working? Who is supposed to work after you? Oops, it's me perhaps!' My
>
> boss said that I can finish now, but Takao said, 'What? I need to work alone
>
> on like this busy day? I want you to work more hours. It's okay for you too,
>
> right? You are lucky cos you can earn more money.' He didn't apologize for
>
> coming late or appreciating me for working extra-hours. (Shihoko Facebook
>
> message)

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Shihoko was clearly bitter over her treatment. However, despite her assertion that working long hours negatively affected her studies, she still managed to be the first student of her intake to complete her studies.

7.5. Conclusion

Extracurricular activities were an important part of the study abroad experience, particularly for their role in the development of relationships and in providing peer support. Responsibilities, such as hall leader roles, involvement in student politics and engaging in part-time work off campus provided some participants with a good environment for self-growth. This growth often resulted in the heightened self-awareness and identity transformations that are the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Eight: Transformations, affordances, dreams and reality

8.1. Introduction

Studying abroad can be a transformative process whose influence on students may not be appreciated until well into the experience. Furthermore, even after students have finished the experience and returned to their home country, their time on study abroad may continue to influence them. This chapter presents the trajectories of various aspects of the participants' lives. In 8.2 it looks at how their views of Japan and New Zealand evolved over time and in 8.3 the discussion moves on to the affordances that New Zealand allowed the participants as evidenced by some unique experiences they had. In 8.4, it is observed that these affordances have a strong influence on student satisfaction and that the social world influenced satisfaction more than academia did. Section 8.5 outlines the participants' developing awareness of their Japaneseness and leads into 8.6, a discussion of identity shifts. This is followed in 8.7 by a commentary on how the participants wanted to be remembered, a reflection of their ideal selves. 8.8 represents a brief section on thankfulness and obligation during the time overseas. Last, the final two sections of the chapter focus on the dreams that the students had for their working future during the research period and the

reality of the actual employment participants engaged in after their return to Japan.

8.2. Getting to know New Zealand, re-conceptualizing Japan

When the students initially arrived in New Zealand they experienced a sense of awe and euphoria. They were fascinated and instantly related to a pace of life that was more easygoing than in Japan. They often found themselves comparing Japan negatively to New Zealand. However, over time they began forming more balanced viewpoints and were able to see positive and negative attributes of both Japan and New Zealand. This section provides a commentary on the participants' thoughts in relation to life in New Zealand vis-à-vis in Japan.

From participant comments, it was clear that the natural environment was what impressed the participants most about New Zealand. GFC was on the edge of the developed area of Apiata and views of pasture-covered hills were seen from many points of the campus. In Interview One, Taka shared his feelings: "New Zealand's scenery is so good, when I came here the first time I fascinated by New Zealand nature. Every day I can feel fresh air, big green" (1). The participants all came from urban areas in Japan, so the natural scenery of New Zealand surprised them. Yuka, for instance, stated that she was "seeing a lot of things for the first time" (1). One of those things was the night sky, which Riki claimed to feel a strong natural energy from (1). Yuka later compared New Zealand's natural environment to Japan's urban one and commented that she felt "the sky is closer than in Japan" (4). The natural environment was not always viewed positively, however; in general, the participants never appreciated the region's weather patterns. Yoichi complained: "Sunny,

cloudy, windy and then rainy" (1). Riki seemed unimpressed with New Zealand's summer: "New Zealand is cold, it's summer! What's going on? Summer supposed to be more hot!" (6).

New Zealand's isolation and relatively sparse population perhaps allowed the participants to become more sensitive to the nature of Japan's highly urbanized environment and its effects on their wellbeing:

> The air was very dirty, like smoky because of PM2.5 [pollution particles 2.5 micrometers or less in diameter] or the sand from China. There are a lot of people, crowded, very crowded. The city and the train is too busy. I was exhausted. I used to like that kind of situation, many people and busy city, but now I don't like it. (Kami 4)

Many other participants became aware of these perceived issues after arriving in New Zealand, particularly the population density and crowds. The New Zealand pace of life, which was perceived as far slower than in Japan, seemed to really appeal to the students. As Taka explained in Interview Four: "Japan is too busy, you know what I mean? Of course, it is different, the environment – each country, but Japan is too busy in the society" (4).

Indelibly linked to the relaxed lifestyle of New Zealand was a sense of tedium. In fact, most participants viewed the local area as boring. Harumi, for instance, commented that the worst thing about the GFC area was a lack of "amusements", but in a paradoxical way also perceived this as the best thing about GFC because she could study with little distraction (2). Kami also grew to consider this as a positive: "I think New Zealand is

boring, but now I can say that New Zealand is a good...I can concentrate on only study"

(4). The lack of temptations in the surrounding area was also seen as positive by others,

particularly Yoichi, who claimed that growing up in the Osaka–Kobe area often led him to

being truant from high school (4).

Unfortunately, with a lack of temptations also came perceptions of inconvenience, such as

with shopping, which led participants, like Kami, to find alternatives. Kami considered

local clothing as unfashionable and pricey. Consequently, she did all her shopping online

through a Japanese website with her mother posting her purchases to GFC (6). Participants

also rated New Zealand's public transport system as poor. Hiro commented that buses ran

too infrequently and the service stopped too early in the evening, meaning that it was

difficult to go anywhere at night (4); along with the transportation issue, GFC's location

outside the city center, created a sense of isolation.

Interestingly, study participants felt that the people of Japan lacked social skills and

warmth because of their crowded and hectic lifestyle. For instance, Yuka stated that she

had never noticed this before returning to Japan on holiday and the self-focused nature of

everyday people surprised her:

> In the train, they always use cellphone and doesn't pay attention to others.
>
> Taiwanese, Indonesian, they are always kind. I like Japanese people, I mean
>
> my friend, but other Japanese people look like so cold. (Yuka 4)

On the other hand, the relaxed and friendly nature of New Zealanders was warmly received

by all participants. Shihoko was amused and struggled to understand why local people

whom she did not know, would greet her on the street like an old friend (6).

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However, many participants also commented on the perceived rudeness of public service people and shop assistants compared to those in Japan. While there was an initial sense of euphoria at New Zealand's scenic, open spaces and how it was so much better than Japan, towards the end of the research the participants were starting to demonstrate a more mature and balanced view of both countries. This was illustrated by Riki, who indicated that he could not easily choose between Japan or New Zealand: "Both Japan and New Zealand have different type of strong point and weak point, so I can't really say Japan is worse than New Zealand" (5).

By the end of the research all participants were looking forward to returning home to Japan. Japan was home and they had gained the ability to make objective judgments on the pros and cons of both Japan and New Zealand, and it would seem that Japan suited them best.

8.3. New Zealand affordances

Some experiences enjoyed by participants were not available to them in Japan and were recounted with excitement. Shihoko, for example, experienced a taste of Kiwi life outside GFC after she began dating a local student soon after arriving and stayed with his family in rural Taranaki. During this holiday, she visited her boyfriend's sister's farm:

> We ride car and his sister, sister's partner and dog, like big dog, and cow
> and dog run [after them]. It's good experience for me, very exciting and
> farm is very big. His family gathered and we ate dinner, it was fun. I was
> nervous because how can I explain? But it didn't matter because they

‘hahaha, no problem’ like that. His mother is like my mother. The

personality is very similar, so I was relax and I enjoyed. His sister’s partner

was woodchopper, he’s famous maybe. He is number one woodchopper in

Taranaki. So tough, so tall, and I never seen wood chopping, so he showed

me wood chopping, it’s cool! (Shihoko 2)

Shihoko’s initial anxiety appeared to be linked to connecting with people, so once the

connection was established her nervousness disappeared. Shihoko had another unusual

experience as she was leaving on holiday to Japan, when she was assisted by a stranger,

whose actions influenced the way that she perceived New Zealand people:

I went to Wellington, I had a morning flight to Auckland and Japan, but bus

from Apiata to Wellington was late, so I couldn't catch bus to go to the

hotel. I was confused and nervous, like ‘What can I do?’ I asked another

bus, ‘Does this bus go to near blah, blah hotel?’ And the bus driver said,

‘No’. But in the bus, there's a really kind woman and she said, ‘Ahhh, it's

near my house, so I can drive you to hotel’. So nice and I had two carry

bags, a suitcase and I was so tired and then, ‘Oh thank you!’ Just a normal

Kiwi person, so I feel, ‘Oh New Zealand! New Zealand people are so kind!’

(Shihoko 4)

Hiro had special experiences dancing in public as *Kawaii* with Yoichi and Riki, but also

recounted a trip to Taupo competing with the GFC marathon relay team. The students

visited a free hot spring that was located in a rural area close to Taupo township and were

impressed by the beautiful environment:

That was amazing, there were nobody running the spa, just naturally

happened. It was really good and star was really beautiful and moon. All

guys jumped in, it was free hot-spring. Ahhh that was good and the

following day we bought alcohol and sitting and drink beer and watch the

stars, that was awesome! My best memory! That scenery was really good.

(Hiro 4)

Yuta also had an enjoyable experience in New Zealand's outdoors. He was an avid

snowboarder and traveled to Queenstown to snowboard during his winter vacation in his

second year at GFC. On the ski slopes of Coronet Peak, Yuta was lucky to receive expert

tuition from a Japanese Winter Olympian snowboarder:

In the mountain, I saw the Olympic player snowboarding who is a Japanese

man and he taught me the snowboarding. Next year Winter Olympic will be

held, so many Japanese player come New Zealand to practice

snowboarding. (Yuta 5)

Ken's unique experience was more social: he got to live within the Kiwi culture for

extended periods with his GFC girlfriend, Jane, at her family home near Napier. In

Interview Five Ken described his first "Kiwi Christmas", while staying with Jane and her

family:

Almost all the time I was swimming in the pool and just chatting with her

parents, cos she was working at The Warehouse and so we couldn't spend

time together. I received heaps of present from her parents and her relatives.

So happy. (Ken 5)

He also spent five weeks living at Jane's house the following Xmas vacation and he felt this gave him a good understanding of what it was to be a New Zealander:

> I spent Christmas time with Jane's friends, and all of Jane's cousins and family members gathered and I hung out with them. I played darts and I swam in the pool and I take a walk, watching movie, typical Kiwi life style, watching cricket. I think New Zealand life is really good and I think New Zealander really like watching a movie and I really like watching a movie as well. I think my perfect lifestyle is very similar to Jane's family's lifestyle. Wake up really early and take a walk and watch a movie and play darts and just chat and start drink alcohol and sleep early. My perfect lifestyle. A very relaxing lifestyle. (Ken 6)

Ken's experience of being able to communicate and live with New Zealanders in an environment representative of a New Zealand lifestyle resulted in self-confidence gains and English proficiency increases, particularly in his listening skills. Ken admitted to being anxious initially, but once he felt he had established a rapport with Jane's family and friends his nervousness dissipated.

8.4. Satisfaction

In Interview One most participants complained about the large number of Japanese students attending GFC and felt duped by the college's promotion of being international. However, as the participants got used to the size of the Japanese student body, most of them became increasingly satisfied with their life at GFC.

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Beginning in Interview Two, participants received the 'decision correctness' grid paper to indicate their life satisfaction at GFC. This exercise provided an excellent jumping off point in each interview and it was easy to monitor the life satisfaction changes in each participant. After concluding the research, each participant's grid was converted to a graph by linking the 'x's to show their life satisfaction trajectory at GFC. Figure 8.1 shows Ken's life satisfaction constructed by this process and indicates that he was very satisfied during the research period. This may have resulted from his positive academic results and the self-improvements he perceived making while attending GFC. During the research, his relationship with his parents improved greatly, he dated a local student and had extended holidays with her and her family, he proved to himself that he could study diligently and, as a result, scored excellent marks in his business course, and he no longer felt tempted to gamble.

Yoichi's graph looked similar to Ken's, however, Yoichi's satisfaction appeared to be derived from his active GFC life, joining numerous clubs and associations, making new friends and learning new skills. Yoichi asserted that at the college: "I can do everything I want. It is a really good place" (6). Riki's passion was similar and he struggled to understand students who perceived GFC negatively:

> Majority of student say, 'Here is boring' and, 'Nothing to do'. That is so
> sad, I love here. There is a lot of things to do here. I can do anything I want,
> whatever I want, like organize something and if I wanna play *taiko* I can. I
> love GFC actually. (Riki 3)

Figure 8.1 Ken's life satisfaction at GFC
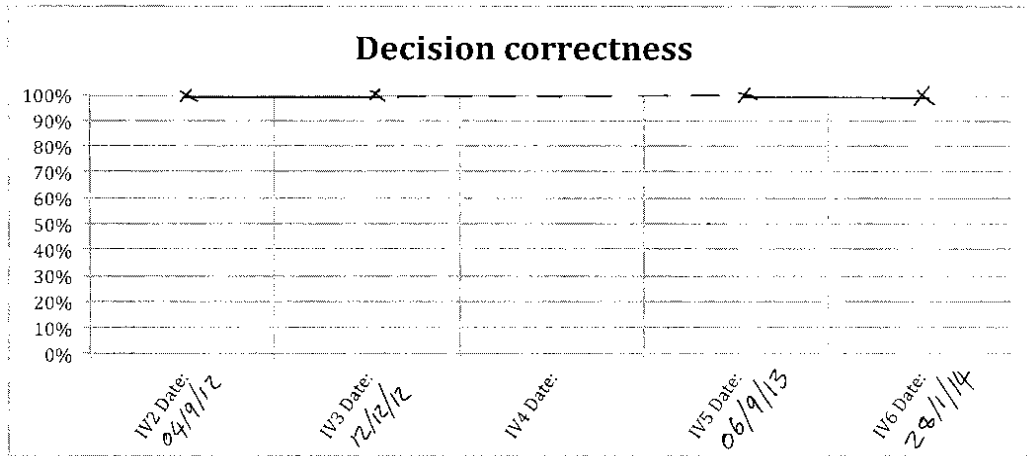
Many participants developed a very strong identification with GFC – despite the physical environment being perceived as far from perfect. Kayo explained, that this was due to friendships:

> The environment of the dormitory is not good, dirty, small, sometimes smelly, noisy, but on the other hand I can hang out with my friend until in the morning at the dormitory because my friends are living very closely. We can cook something whenever we want, or we can do whatever we want at the dormitory. The dormitory is already like my real home, real house.
>
> (Kayo 6)

There are many aspects that contribute to satisfaction in study abroad and they differ between individuals. Riki's data in Figure 8.2 indicate that an attitude to get out and enjoy oneself is very important in satisfaction as are positive relationships.

Figure 8.2 Riki's life satisfaction at GFC
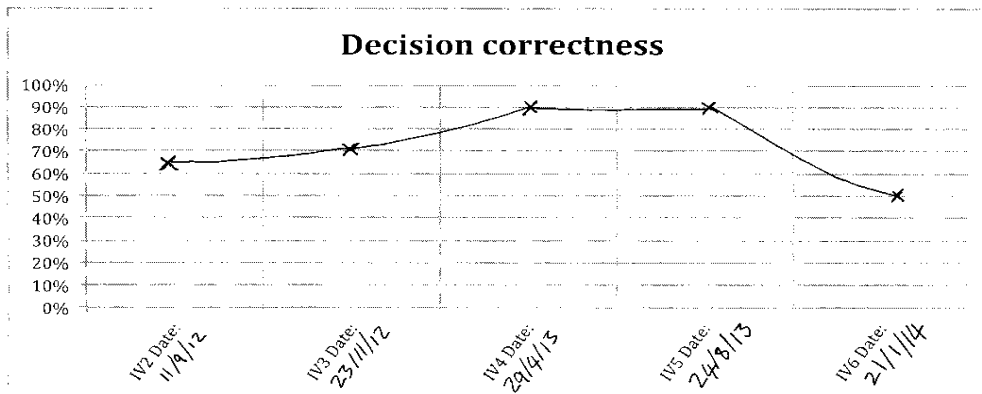
In Interview Six, Riki commented that his satisfaction level had plummeted to an all-time low. He put this down mainly to an ex-girlfriend at GFC trying to re-enter his life. This was also around the time that he became fully aware of the seriousness of his academic status and the threat of failure, which may have also affected his enthusiasm. However, while academic matters are important, the data in this research indicated that the social aspects were far more so. This can be seen in the attitudes of Ai and Kayo, who were also struggling academically around the time of their final interview, yet indicated on their decision correctness graph they were more satisfied than ever. An important question to ponder is whether having local friendships would have pushed the satisfaction levels higher. This is perceived as the magic ingredient for satisfaction in so much of the literature focused on international students studying abroad, yet the data here shows that the focal students were, in general, very satisfied without many local friends.

8.5. Becoming Japanese

Many participants asserted that they felt like just one of the crowd in Japan; however, at

GFC, they were labelled 'Japanese' and felt distinct for the first time in their lives. They gained an acute sense of their Japaneseness from being surrounded by students from other nations and this allowed them to become aware of their own cultural identity. After this period of self-realization, some participants saw themselves as representatives of Japan and felt obligated to act in ways befitting their status:

> Before I came to here I didn't think about Japanese culture really, I thought some other country's culture. I didn't care about what they think about Japanese culture because I was in Japan, a lot of Japanese people in there, so I thought, 'Who care about my attitude?' But at GFC someone see me and think, 'Ahhh, this is Japanese culture'. (Ai 2)

The heightened cultural awareness in participants may have occurred because they were outside Japan, allowing them to compare their definitions of self to their definitions of those from elsewhere. However, it may also have been influenced by the reactions of non-Japanese GFC students towards the Japanese culture in general. The positive way that many non-Japanese students thought about Japan made some participants proud:

> I am proud of Japanese because now I knew another countries' cultures, so I think it is important to think about my country culture. When I was in Japan, I couldn't know how foreigners think Japan. Japan is good place? Or something like that. But I knew the foreign, I mean from another countries' student think Japan has a good culture. I'm in New Zealand, so I can think about Japan more than I was in Japan. (Shihoko 2)

Many participants seemed to become more interested in their culture and developed a

stronger sense of national pride:

> Before I came to here I don't interested in Japanese traditional things, but
>
> after I came here I like everything traditional Japanese things. I want to go
>
> to temple, but before I came here I didn't think like this. Maybe I just
>
> realized how good Japan is. (Yuka 4)

Although a chance to gain a sense of self may not have registered in the minds of the participants before they arrived at GFC, all of them developed an appreciation of who they were, where they came from and a heightened understanding of what it was to be Japanese.

8.6. Identity shifts

All participants experienced identity shifts to some degree. The students who studied hardest generally achieved the most academically. Those who were most sociable generally had the most interesting experiences. Those who challenged themselves the most experienced the most personal growth. This section looks at the participants' perception of the personal changes they underwent during the research period, which generally followed a trajectory of questioning changes to self followed by the acknowledgement of those changes.

Most of the cohort felt that their personality had changed in some way. Riki, for example, believed that *taiko* and his GFC friends had altered his outlook on life to the point where he was "completely differently" (2). Before their first holiday back to Japan, many of the participants were anxious about how they would be perceived by their old friends. Shihoko, for instance, felt she had changed markedly and stated that she was both

"nervous" and "excited" about how her old Japan-based friends would react when she met them while on holiday (3). However, once there, she explained that she felt no different from when she lived in Japan and even more disappointing for her was the fact that the dynamics between her friends and her were the same (4). At the conclusion of the research, during a Skype call with Shihoko and her father in Japan, Shihoko's father stated that he noticed nothing different about her since she left to study in New Zealand. In contrast, when Riki returned home on holiday he found that he had become well accustomed to the slower pace of New Zealand life:

> When I just arrived, I feel like I really wanna go back to New Zealand.
> Maybe atmosphere or like my mind is get changed. My mind is like more
> New Zealander now. Japanese people is too much think about small stuffs,
> so sensitive sometimes. (Riki 4)

Furthermore, Riki's mother recognized changes in his maturity, which seemed to be a major influence in identity shifts and was manifested in numerous ways. Kami, for instance, reminisced in Interview Four about her life back in Japan – where she never cooked, cleaned, and did neither the washing nor the ironing. However, at GFC she had to do those things and enjoyed this as a sign that she was now more independent and moving into adulthood. Kami's increase in responsibility gave her more confidence; indeed, she was pleased when one of her Japan-based friends told her: "You looks the same as before, but your personality or mind maybe become stronger than before" (4). Yuka's growth in confidence provided her with the strength to speak her mind:

> I think maybe before I always passive, like someone ask me to do and I will
> do this. Before always, like they will have party so I will go. They will go

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somewhere, so I will go. But now I won't do this cos I need to study

something or I need to do. (Yuka 6)

Friends at GFC were also a major influence in identity formation. Kayo, for example, was greatly influenced by her *taiko* club friends and Kami who provided her with the inspiration to keep improving herself (5).

Identity shifts and additional identities should be expected when one is relocated to a different culture for a prolonged period of time. However, the Japaneseness of GFC may have lessened the ability or desire to change in some participants. Hiro, for example, believed that the presence of so many Japanese friends at GFC inhibited any changes in his identity and stated: "People don't change easily" (5). On the other hand, many participants believed that they had undergone a great deal of change. It appears that the students who underwent the most changes were the ones who seized on the affordances that GFC supplied in areas such as leadership. Riki, who was a good example of this, struggled to articulate the changes he had undergone because they were "too much, so I can't explain" (6).

8.6.1. Vignette: A perceived need for change

Ken was perhaps the participant who desired a new identity the most because of self-perceived personal flaws:

I always played a game and now I'm twenty-three years old, so I notice that

I can't stay the same. So, I talked to my teacher [his favorite teacher from

his high school in Japan] and asked what I should do. He taught me about

GFC. Compared to staying two more years in a Japanese university, I will have to study in New Zealand for four years, but changing my environment would be better according to my teacher. (Ken 1)

In Interview Two, Ken spoke further on his perceived necessity of change:

When I was in Japan, I didn't go to university and I also decided to succeed to my father's company, so I had to study, but I used to go to gambling, gambleholic. I thought I had to change. (Ken 2)

The most influential person in Ken's transformation appeared to be Jane, his New Zealand girlfriend, because she built up his self-esteem and self-confidence. Ken stated that when he returned to Japan on holiday, his parents were surprised by his new identity and appeared to welcome, accept and legitimize it:

They said, 'you've changed'. [When I lived] In Japan my face is always not smiling, but when I went back to Japan, my parents said 'Oh, you look so smiley'. When I was in Japan I always had bad feeling for my mum and my dad, so I never smiled in front of my parents, because gambleholic. I didn't talk with my parents, but now I can study and now I'm spend a good time in New Zealand. Getting happy and also, I have confidence, so I can talk with my parents. (Ken 2)

Ken decided to change other lifestyle habits at GFC as well, instead of sleeping in and skipping breakfast, he began waking up at 7.30am every morning and eating breakfast (5). He also learned how to manage his money and shut out thoughts of gambling (6).

8.6.2. Vignette: Gaining self-respect

Yoichi was another participant unhappy with his past identity in Japan and after arriving at GFC was determined to change. In his first interview, he signaled his desire to leave his past behind: "I don't really like myself in Japan, so I just want to change everything. I have to change myself" (1).

In his second interview Yoichi commented that he was making adjustments and was becoming the person he wanted to be:

> I feel I'm now going the right way to be a person, my ideal personality. I'm
>
> now working toward my ideal personality. I was kind of lost, but now I can
>
> see that clearly. Very easy to see. (Yoichi 2)

In his interviews, Yoichi often seemed to be struggling with his identity and commented that when he was alone he felt introspective and self-critical. He strived to be someone who was well liked and respected by everyone (3) and while he could still see bad parts in his personality, in Interview Four he stated that he thought they were disappearing. In Interview Five, Yoichi reflected more on his past 'Japanese self' and explained the source of his initial self-loathing that he displayed in Interview One:

> I didn't like myself because I didn't have money for my dreams. I just felt
>
> like I had no power. I really wanted to change, come here and grab a big job
>
> and grab money to do everything. (Yoichi 5)

Yoichi continued to hold onto these dreams for the duration of the research, and as is shown in 8.9., his dreams appeared to become even more grandiose with time.

8.6.3. Vignette: Identity hangover

Two years after the research conclusion, Shihoko emailed, suggesting that she had formed an additional identity, and asserted that the changes she had made because of her time abroad had set her apart from everyday Japanese:

> I have changed, I did not realize, but now I know. I don't know what
> changed me, if it's GFC or New Zealand culture, but people often tell me
> that I am not Japanese-Japanese. I mean they say that sometimes the way I
> think and behave is different from others and possibly it's because I went to
> New Zealand. I thought I was and am always being Japanese, but I am
> influenced by New Zealand culture for sure. I am changed, am different.
> (Shihoko email)

Two and a half years after concluding the research I met with Shihoko in Japan. At the time, she was studying in a cram school to prepare for the difficult Japan public servant examinations because she wanted to work in her town's police department office. Shihoko indicated that she struggled to negotiate a positive identity during her first year in cram school because she did not fit in well with her classmates. In her second year, she began acclimatizing to Japanese life, but asserted, "I still have my side from New Zealand, but I'm kind of adjusted to people from Japan". Although she stated that she did not think that she was bullied by her classmates, she appears to have been ostracized at times:

> I feel like it's not bully but like, 'Ahhh because you went to university in
> New Zealand, so you are different'. People tell me that so many times, 'You
> are a little bit different to us cos you went to New Zealand to study', and I

feel 'No, it's not just that'. (Shihoko Japan meeting)

There may have been multiple reasons for Shihoko's struggle; one may have been her general approach to study, which appeared to contrast with her peers:

> What they think in my cram school is the most important thing is studying.
> Their priority goes to study, but my priority goes to study and to my life,
> like hanging out with my friends. Balance is important, that's the difference.
> They don't even have fun with friends in lunch time. (Shihoko Japan
> meeting)

Another cause may have been due to the way that Shihoko acted during lessons, which seemed to be different to the accepted norm:

> In cram school, teachers ask 'What do you think? What is your opinion?'
> And everyone is silence, but I am like, 'I think bla bla bla'. My classmates,
> they think I'm strange, 'Oh you have your opinion and you say that in your
> class?' The teacher asked, not because they want answers from us, they ask
> but they will soon give the answer. I remember in high school it was like it,
> I have to be silent. (Shihoko Japan meeting)

8.7. Remember me?

All participants had an idea of how they wanted to be remembered by their GFC peers and getting them to talk about it in their final interview served a useful purpose in showing what they valued in their personal experience of studying abroad. Many wanted to be remembered as being a good friend. Both Kami and Kayo wanted to be remembered for

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their kindness and humor:

> Kind and funny, that's it. Kind and funny is enough because even if I think I
> want people to think that I am smart, it's impossible. GFC has got smart
> persons, smart people already. It's not my business to become a smart
> person, I just want to be kind and I want support everyone. (Kayo 6)

Similar to Kayo, Hiro felt it more important to be recalled for his kindness than his academic ability and stated he wanted people to say: "He was kind, he was good friend. I want to be a good friend or best friend, very kind. I don't want them to say, 'Hiro was smart'" (6).

In contrast to Hiro, other participants hoped that their dedication to study and academic achievements would be recalled. Yuka, for instance, wanted to be recognized as the only Japanese female in her intake to graduate with a business degree (6). Another was Taka, who wanted to be thought of as a 'good' student, who never lost sight of his initial goal and approached college life pragmatically:

> The good student can understand why I'm here, why I came over with
> expensive money, expensive cost, you know. That student is good student.
> So, Taka was good student because he could manage himself and whenever
> he was thinking about his future and he had known what was needed for his
> future. I'm pretty sure that my ideal living at GFC is correct. (Taka 6)

Some participants, like Ken, wanted to be recalled as people who evolved and improved themselves. Ken, who had positioned himself as someone on a life-changing trajectory at GFC, wanted to be remembered for changing his life through self-discipline and

determination (6). Yoichi was another who thrived on challenges and positive outcomes. Throughout the research, he always maintained a humble attitude, so it was surprising to hear what he wanted his peers to say about him:

> He is really an activist. He did everything he wants to do. He was good at
>
> dancing, playing the guitar, speaking English, and leading people,
>
> organizing parties. I wanna to be remembered as greatest person in the
>
> graduated students. (Yoichi 6)

8.8. Feelings of *giri*

GFC fees were expensive, so it seems surprising that a *ganbaru* attitude (hard work and perseverance) and feelings of *giri* (obligation) or *oya-koko* (filial piety) towards parents was not universal. In fact, some participants appeared to have an attitude that financial assistance from parents should be expected, and that assistance should not compel them to study diligently. Yuta seemed to view his situation in these terms and positioned himself as a privileged child of rich parents. Because he had no form of income, unlike participants such as Yoichi and Shihoko, who took on part-time jobs, his parents paid for all his needs, including his holidays to different areas of New Zealand.

Kayo also felt little obligation from her parents to study and achieve good grades, but for reasons different to Yuta's. Kayo's strained relationship with her parents appeared to influence the amount of *giri* that she felt. Although she was focused on doing well, in Interview Four she stated that it was "not for them, but for myself" and revealed some deep-seated feelings towards her parents:

I'm not close to my parents. I hate father very, very much and also, I can

only trust my mother a little bit. I can't consult anything to my parents

because I don't trust them and they are childish. I don't wanna talk to them.

Like before, my mother gave to me a Skype, but I didn't answer the calling.

(Kayo 4)

However, in Interview Six, Kayo elaborated that her emotions towards her parents were

more complicated than she had divulged earlier and she indicated that she felt a sense of

oya-koko by stating "I have to take care of them after graduating from this school after

started working because I've been taken care by them a lot". However, while Kayo

admitted to relying on her parents financially, in Interview Six she asserted that she relied

on other people for everything else and commented: "If I've got some problem in my

mind, I never consulted my parents". The reason Kayo gave for her attitude was that her

mother and father were poor parents who were not responsible enough to have children.

In contrast to the attitudes of Yuta, and perhaps to some extent Kayo, most other

participants appeared to have a strong sense of *giri*/*oya-koko* towards their parents. Kami

and Shihoko believed the best way to show appreciation to their parents was to study as

much as possible:

The student fee is really high at GFC, so if I went to the university in Japan

the cost is much cheaper than here, but they paid a lot of money for me. I

can't pay money now, so instead of paying money I have to do my work and

I have to do my best; that is studying. (Kami 4)

I have to work hard. They say, 'Don't study too much, study is of course

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important, but enjoy New Zealand, it's more important'. It's not pressure,

they don't force me, but they pay money for me so it makes me feel more

like I have to do more. (Shihoko 4)

Although Shihoko was on a full GFC scholarship that paid for her education and room and board on campus, and her parents paid much less than her peers' parents, she believed that she had to achieve good results to be worthy of the allowance her parents gave her. Shihoko's sense of appreciation increased further when she later became aware that many of her friends also wanted to study abroad, but their parents could not afford it.

It appears that the power of *giri* was also behind Harumi's return to GFC to complete her studies after taking one year of sick leave following her breakdown:

When I was in Japan last year I thought I change my college…drop out

from GFC then research in Japan or Australia, but my parents spend a lot of

money to GFC. If I drop out the money is gone, just a waste, nothing left…I

couldn't drop out because I thought about money, my teachers, my friends

waiting for me. (Harumi 6)

It is notable here that Harumi indicates a feeling of *giri* towards her GFC friends, considering that she had positioned herself earlier as a loner and not suited to her peers at the college.

Although Kami felt a sense of guilt over her parents paying her GFC fees, in her second year she faced a difficult decision that created an inner conflict. Kami felt that she was not able to enjoy her life as much as her peers seemed to, so she asked her mother for a higher allowance:

Last year I didn't go to café or even town, I just stayed at GFC and I didn't

make dinner myself, but this year I changed my lifestyle and I went to town

many times and to have lunch with my friends or café. Last year I thought it

was the best way, the best way was not to spend much money, but I realized

if I do it I will be bored in this life and it's better to enjoy here if I spend a

little money. I asked my mum, 'Sorry mum, but I need money to enjoy

here', and my mum sent me some money. (Kami 6)

While Kami may have perceived this as a conundrum, in a way she was honoring her

parents' decision to study at GFC and trying to make the most of her experience.

8.9. A working dream

In relation to plans for the future, the cohort could be split into two general groups: Those

whose dreams of employment remained steadfast throughout the research period and those

who adjusted their working dreams. The latter included everyone except Ken and Shihoko.

By the end of the research, the focal students could also be classified into one of three

visions in regard to their future employment: Undecided about their future, decided about

their future with a realizable plan, decided about their future but with a less realizable plan.

Those who were undecided about their future included Yui, Yuta and Yuka. Although

Yuka had no idea what she wanted to do, she entertained the idea of staying and working

in New Zealand so that she could remain close to her Thai friends. However, she decided

against this because she perceived Japanese employers as age-discriminating and thought

she should start working in Japan before her age made it hard for her to find employment.

Both Kayo and Ai were decided about their future and had realizable plans; they would put their tourism study in Diploma to use and seek employment in tourism. Although Shihoko was unable to study tourism because it was not offered in Degree, during her time at GFC she stuck with her dream of working in a big city hotel in Japan. Kami also decided that she wanted to be employed in tourism: "I hope the job will relate to airport, or airplane and travel. Airplane has a lot of dream" (5). Ken was another participant who was decided about their working future. However, in Ken's case this decision may not have been entirely his own. While Ken stated that he intended to take over his father's drug store, it appeared that his goal was more his father's than his own. Although Ken was approaching his mid-twenties, his comments in Interview Five revealed how little autonomy he seemed to have over his future:

> My parents allow me two different options after I graduate from GFC. I can
> directly work in Japan, on the other hand I can go to another college in
> Japan for two years…I think going to business school is not a good idea
> because I think people should go to business school after working for two or
> three years. If you face hardship, then in order to solve the hardship you can
> go to business school. So, I prefer to work in Japan after graduate. (Ken 5)

In Interview Six, Ken commented that he had discussed which direction his life should take with his father, who insisted, against Ken's wishes, that he undertake further study in a business college in Japan.

Yoichi was the sole participant who could be classified as decided about their future but with a less realizable plan. Initially, he wanted any employment as long as it was not in Japan. However, from Interview Three Yoichi's dreams became increasingly ambitious,

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changing and becoming more extravagant with each subsequent interview as his self-confidence grew:

> I might stay in New Zealand and work for two or three years, then I'll go to
> Australia, then get different job…I'll try to earn money, so much money,
> after that I'll do what I want. Maybe I go to travel around the world and I go
> to music way [playing music as a job]. (Yoichi 3)

> I'm interested in finding people who are talented and be a kind of
> producer…Japan's gonna be good start point cos I'm Japanese…I have the
> skill to teach them English. If they are talented enough, they can go to the
> U.S., or Europe, or Australia, or everywhere. Then they definitely need to
> speak English, then I can be their help. (Yoichi 4)

In Interview Six, Yoichi discussed his two new dreams; the main one being playing music "in the biggest live house in Japan", which he stated he "had to achieve…before I die" (Yoichi 6). The other dream was working in a business that helps people achieve their dreams. Apparently, Japan's Kirin Beverage Company ran a promotion where one out of a million of their customers was chosen and the company made their dream come true. Yoichi commented that a man who won the competition was given the chance to star next to Jackie Chan in a movie:

> Maybe I will get a job in the Kirin beer company. That's gonna be cool if
> we've got some companies that supports achieving dreams somewhere in
> the world…Maybe in the future I will establish an organization or company
> to achieve someone's dream. (Yoichi 6)

Most participants were making achievable plans for their future and revealed a perception that Japan would be the best country for them to realize these plans. Many participants initially dreamed of settling and working in New Zealand or outside Japan after finishing their studies, however, by the end of the research period all of them were adamant they would return to work in Japan as soon as they graduated. This change in attitude may have been a result of the students' increasingly Japanese-centric outlook and the limitations that the Dejima-like environment of the college imposed.

8.10. A working reality

Two and a half years after the research concluded I contacted the participants to enquire about their post-GFC life. Although some participants did not reply, apparently the entire cohort, apart from Harumi (who was in her final term of study), had graduated from GFC and returned to Japan. Some participants worked part-time while searching for a full-time job and/or doing more studies. Kami, for instance, worked in a coffee shop and Shihoko was employed part-time in a clothes store. Shihoko was the only participant who reported any problems working in Japan; she struggled with taking orders from her boss, who was a similar age and apparently rude to his employees: "Just shit and he does not know how to manage workers" (Shihoko Facebook message).

One of the reasons for studying at GFC was to get qualifications to provide for a stable future, and GFC proved to be supportive of the students after they had graduated. Some participants reported that they were assisted in their search for employment in Japan. Shihoko, was offered employment as a personal secretary for Mr. Suwa prior to

graduating, but turned it down. Kami, on the other hand, accepted GFC's assistance and started working in a Tokyo bank. This finding is interesting because, coupled with the apparent protection of the students' Japaneseness while they were attending the college, it also suggests that GFC may have been concerned about its Japanese students' successful repatriation and assisted this through arranging employment possibilities that countered the returnee Japanese employment issues reported in the literature (see 2.9.1).

Most of the participants who replied to my request were working full-time at the time of the enquiry: all in positions dealing with people, such as in hotels, offices, teaching, sales and nursing – which may be an indication of their interpersonal communicative confidence. Kayo, once very reserved, was enjoying her position as a Tokyo beauty company salesperson, which required her to communicate with a wide variety of people.

Some participants gained employment in roles for which their GFC majors and skills gained from study abroad prepared them. Yuka, for instance, believed that her GFC education had given her the skills to succeed in her banking job. Taka, who also studied business at GFC, was in the investment management section of a large life insurance company. Although Diploma was generally looked down on by the cohort, Ai used her qualification in tourism to land a job in the hotel industry. Yoichi settled for a career path that was more reasonable vis-à-vis the unattainable dreams he discussed in the previous section. He tapped into his experience of teaching in the TOEIC night class and the special class he taught for the Foundation students, and began teaching English at GFC feeder schools.

On a very happy note, Riki replied that he was working as a nurse's assistant in a hospital for the elderly and was also studying for his nurse's license: "Completely different

direction from what I've been doing in my life" (Riki Facebook message). However, the fun-loving approach that Riki developed during his time at GFC was no doubt a great asset to the ambience and demands of his workplace.

While all participants stated that they were enjoying their life in Japan outside of the workplace, interestingly, only Shihoko commented about trying to keep her English communication skills up and searching for opportunities to use English in her everyday life:

> Sometimes I meet people from overseas, like in Takashima station and big cities. And if they are looking at a map and conflicting with each other, like wife and husband, 'This is not the way! You must search it!' I hear that and I ask, 'Can I help you?' That couple was from Australia, it was cool.
> (Shihoko Japan meeting)

Perhaps the students perceived GFC and New Zealand as a finished chapter in their lives and many things that were associated with it were behind them now. However, judging by their Facebook posts when they meet old GFC friends, their experience at GFC will live in their memory for a very long time.

8.11. Conclusion

The students became more cognizant of their cultural background and Japanese identity after arriving in New Zealand. Many participants also developed GFC sides to themselves, which illustrated the contextual nature of identity. Satisfaction in the study abroad experience was generally high and emails received from participants after they had

repatriated to Japan revealed positive employment outcomes. In the next chapter these

findings, and those of the previous findings chapters, will be discussed.

Chapter Nine: Discussion

9.1. Introduction

In order to answer the research questions, the key research findings need to be analyzed and discussed, which is the role of this chapter. This chapter's first section looks at the students' decision to study at GFC and the pre-arrival expectations they had of the institution. Within this section there is a discussion on how bold the students' decision was to attend GFC. This is followed by an analysis of the students' pre-arrival preparation for their study abroad experience and the things that they wished to gain from their time at GFC. The next section in Chapter Nine focuses on the Dejima-like environment present at the college. The first part of this section presents the physical and social Japanese-influenced elements at GFC. This discussion then moves on to analyze the reasons for the presence of GFC's Dejima outpost, the outpost's effect on the research participants and some of the students' responses to the college's overt Japaneseness. The section concludes with a look at some affordances that this Japaneseness provided the students and how the students' resistance to the Dejima nature of the institution changed over time. The discussion then shifts to a focus on the importance of belonging and the participants'

connections with international, local and co-national students at the college. This is followed by a short discussion on the extent to which peer support replaced official student support provided at GFC. The next section in this chapter looks at the role of Japan-based support given to the participants via the internet. The five sections that follow, 9.7 to 9.11, discus different aspects of the participants' identities during their study abroad. Chapter Nine concludes with a discussion on whether the Dejima outpost at GFC was an affordance or a limitation for the Japanese students.

9.2. Student expectations and the decision to attend GFC

9.2.1. Who were the students?

The participants were young people with limited life experience breaking away from the parental home and country, and setting out on a trajectory towards learning and independence. This actually was not the first time most of the participants had ventured outside of Japan because many had attended a GFC open campus. However, it would be accurate to state that this was the first time many of them had been away from home for an extended period that took them past the euphoric, honeymoon stage of culture shock. While the open campus showed the participants that GFC existed, there are indications that the taster that it provided was of how study at GFC might be:

> I came to here a few years ago as a open campus. I had a very good time. At
>
> then I thought I wanted to come here and study here. (Kayo 1)

9.2.2. A bold decision?

For some of those who attended a GFC feeder school in Japan, it seemed that the route to the college was a default pathway that did not need much contemplation. Along with this thought is the fact that most of the participants would have struggled to enter a reputable tertiary institution in Japan because of their academic record. Generally speaking, the Japanese students at GFC tend to be lower achieving students (referred to by Ken in 5.4.5). So GFC may have appeared to be an easy option in gaining a tertiary degree; by comparison, the nearby New Zealand public Vessar University did seem to be much more difficult to gain entrance to, much less graduate with a degree from.

Considering these facts, choosing to study at GFC may not have been as bold a decision for many participants as it first appeared. Furthermore, since the college was known to be Japanese owned and operated, it is likely that some participants had the expectation that it would replicate Japan to some degree. In addition to this, there may have been an expectation that Foundation would, in itself, provide a perfectly adequate preparation for the new challenges of life in New Zealand: While the students would be physically situated in New Zealand, the change to their lifestyle would be limited, allowing them to continue living as they had in Japan. This seems to be the case for Kami who stated in Interview One that important aspects in her choice to attend GFC was that the college was Japanese owned and managed, had many Japanese staff and provided strong support for Japanese students. Another indication of this is found in a participant's comment written in the pre-arrival questionnaire that suggested Japanese students could live comfortably at GFC without using English. Once the students arrived at GFC and tried to move beyond the Foundation program they found that this was not necessarily true – at least in the academic

realm; however, it seems that for some students, the expectation of survival without English was an important part of the decision-making process to attend GFC.

This environment appears to be ideal for the formation of colonial students who stay within a cultural bubble (Ogden, 2007). Other reasons that suggest the decision to study at GFC was not necessarily a bold one is that all the travel and accommodation particulars were taken care of by GFC management and the students all travelled and arrived at the college together as a group. Considering the points above, it appears that rather than bold, choosing to attend GFC was located somewhere between an adventure and a safe pathway; the best description of their experience, then, would be 'a safe adventure'.

9.2.3. How adequate were participant preparations?

None of the participants appeared to have prepared in a way that may have been expected. Taka's recollection in Interview Six of his time in the Foundation program commenting that he had to "study, study, study" (6), indicates that he arrived at GFC with no comprehension of what lay ahead of him and that he only realized the challenges that he faced after arriving. It may have been expected that at least some participants would have studied in a *juku* (cram school) or taken private English lessons to prepare for their New Zealand experience, but this was not the case. Perhaps they did not have access to resources that they saw as relevant for their upcoming experience, or they did not know where or how to prepare for it. The last point seems most feasible considering comments suggesting that singing songs in English and playing English TV games were considered a form of preparation by some participants. Even those participants who had experienced the GFC open-campus seemed not to have taken full cognizance of what lay in store for them.

Perhaps, these students were protected from the realities of everyday college life while on the open campus experience, which may have led them to believe that academic life would be easy at GFC and not require any special preparation.

As supported by one student's comment presented in 5.1.1, it is quite possible that the participants thought that GFC's Foundation program would provide them with the English skills to enter the Degree program and expected the teachers to somehow instill in them the required skills. This theory is supported by the high expectations they had of GFC teachers shown in the pre-arrival questionnaire and the fact that 75% of the pre-arrival cohort stated that their English level was elementary or beginner.

The role of Japanese high school English classes is not to provide students with practical English skills, but rather to focus on the specific knowledge the students require to pass the university entrance examinations. The final year of Japanese high school is renowned for being extremely busy and tiring for students. Because most of the students in this study were still attending high school a month before arriving in New Zealand, it is understandable that many of them may have been more focused on their school work than on preparing for study abroad at GFC. However, had the participants taken proactive steps to prepare for their studies before leaving Japan, they may have entered GFC with a higher level of English language skills, a greater confidence in their abilities and more motivation. In turn, these attributes may have decreased the stress generated by the gatekeeping test and also enabled participants to enter the Degree program earlier than they did.

9.2.4. Student desires

The pre-arrival questionnaire revealed that the students had numerous social and academic expectations when they arrived at GFC. Further expectations were stated during the longitudinal phase, the most prominent of which were the following:

- to acquire and use English skills in an L1 environment
- to gain a form of academic redemption from a mediocre study record
- to obtain a tertiary qualification
- to grow as an individual
- to be treated as an adult
- to become international
- to make non-co-national friends
- to be able to eat Japanese food

It seems that many students arrived with the notion that they would be in a true English-speaking environment and this would be enough to provide them with the level of language skills that they desired; however, they soon discovered that the college was a quasi-English-speaking environment and that it would take hard work and dedication to achieve any increase in proficiency. That stated, many participants did make large gains in their English proficiency because of their *ganbaru* attitude towards learning the language and the direction of their teachers. Although it was often difficult for the students, most of the participants did manage to get some opportunities to use their English skills more practically outside the college with the families of their romantic partners, during club performance/games off campus, when shopping and holidaying, and in part-time

employment in the city.

As indicated in 5.1, there was no mention of academic outcomes given as a reason to attend GFC in any of the completed pre-arrival questionnaires. However, most participants indicated in their interviews that they were at the college to gain a tertiary qualification. With the exception of Jun and Riki, most participants succeeded in earning a degree at GFC, which is testimony to the students' hard work. Although it appeared that Ai did not achieve at the level she desired initially and Kayo dropped down a program, both seemed happy to be studying in Diploma. Kayo's self-realization on what she wanted to do in the future and subsequent decision to transfer to Diploma should be seen as a positive shift and a sign of growth and maturity.

Some students revealed a desire for academic redemption. Yoichi and Ken were the two participants who most openly sought redemption, and the findings indicated that they were very successful in achieving this. Yoichi gained good marks and his achievement in extracurricular activities, such as *taiko* and student politics, provided him with the sense that he had turned his life around. As a result of this he gained a lot of confidence. Ken was the only participant to state that he was completely satisfied with his life throughout the research period, which in large part was connected to the way he transformed his relationship with his parents, which shifted from a *oya-koko* relationship to one of *ninjo*, through his excellent academic record.

Many participants experienced personal growth, such as gaining a more balanced view of life and becoming more open-minded. The greatest growth demonstrated was in terms of overall maturity. Kami, for instance, began doing her own domestic chores, which indicates embracing personal responsibility and a move towards adulthood. However, these

changes perhaps would have occurred regardless of GFC and it seems that the college's management style and close monitoring of the Japanese students may have restricted the level of growth possible for many participants. Unquestionably, the restrictive college policies meant that none of the participants gained a sense of being considered adults at the college, which was a huge disappointment to the students and a source of frequent complaints.

In findings similar to Mikal et al.'s (2014) research, GFC management's method of 'protecting' the Japanese students in areas such as accommodation influenced the level to which the students in the research could consider themselves international because they found it extremely difficult to make non-co-national friends early in their GFC experience. The college did nothing to promote social opportunities with students from other countries, therefore, it should be acknowledged that opportunities to make non-Japanese friends and become international themselves were created through the students' own agency. There were indications that many of them were still able to take on international or local traits, such as taking a relaxed approach to life or speaking their mind in public, the latter of which is at odds with the principles of *tatemae*. Shihoko, for instance, developed a voice in the classroom that had been unavailable to her in the Japanese high school environment. She was then able to transfer that voice to her subsequent learning experiences after she returned to Japan. Similarly, Yuka gained the ability to say "no" to people, something she considered impossible before leaving Japan. Yuka also grew to love outdoor activities, in contrast to her friends in Japan, who preferred playing and socializing inside. She even discovered that her fashion sense was influenced by the GFC environment:

I felt like I was not Japanese while I was in Japan because many my

friends…have like cute clothes…everyone looks so cute and beautiful cos

everyone makes up and hairstyles are also so nice, looks like after went to

hair salon. But everyone is not like me, so I felt I was not Japanese. (Yuka

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An interesting popular expectation was the desire to eat Japanese food at GFC, which was

provided by the college. As will be demonstrated below, the presence of Japanese food

became a source of tension for the students.

9.3. A Dejima outpost in New Zealand

GFC's international student body provided the potential to connect with people from

numerous countries. There were also English-speaking teachers, who taught differently to

Japanese teachers, which was highlighted in the findings regarding student concerns over

having to be active in class and feeling lost without textbooks. However, the Japaneseness

of GFC was so pervasive that it was common to hear locals at GFC's host city call it the

Japanese College. Harumi commented in an interview that: "[GFC] was made for

Japanese, so there are Japanese staff, Japanese food, a lot of Japanese students" (2). It is

clear from other comments, such as Hiro's stating that GFC's mother-tongue was Japanese,

that the college was thought of by some students as at least an extension of Japan. In a

sense, the college surrounded the students with an instruction in Japanese society, teaching

Japanese students how to be Japanese. *Uchi* is important in understanding GFC and the

sense of togetherness that it promoted between the Japanese students. The college appeared

to be like a Japanese enclave and in the sections that follow, the factors that contributed to

this will be discussed.

9.3.1. The physical elements

GFC physically resembled Japan in numerous ways. However, it was the *sakura* (cherry) trees lining the campus access road that conjured the strongest vision of Japan and these trees, when in full bloom, served as the centerpiece of the college's annual festival. The campus was also known for its beautiful gardens and meticulous grounds, which were reminiscent of manicured park grounds in Japan. Although the buildings' general appearance was more Western than Japanese, the use of the word *dojo* for the recreation center was another reminder of GFC's Japanese connection. The considerable amount of Japanese language media found in the library, including its large manga collection, also demonstrated close links to Japan. The dining hall menu was another way in which GFC demonstrated its Japaneseness.

Approximately 40% of the students who answered the pre-arrival questionnaire expected the campus dining hall to provide Japanese food, so it was ironic that the Japanese-dominated menu became a source of discontent among the Japanese students. However, despite surface indications in the findings, the antipathy toward the college menu cannot have simply related to the presence of Japanese food in the college dining room and the sentiments of the menu's unfairness towards non-Japanese students that apparently created tension or embarrassment in the Japanese students. The fact that many of the participants were supplementing their Japanese-heavy dining room diet by cooking their own Japanese food in their dormitories, points to an issue with the campus food being prepared by non-Japanese cooks and tasting inauthentic, or in some cases unpalatable. Clearly, GFC had

thought of its Japanese students when it developed the lopsidedly Japanese menu of the college dining room; however, without the proper investment of bringing in authentic ingredients and chefs from Japan it was not entirely successful. Ironically, in this case, through preparing their own Japanese food with ingredients from home, the Japanese students contributed to the Dejima outpost at GFC that they often seemed opposed to.

9.3.2. The human elements

The human side of GFC Japaneseness was even more pervasive than the physical aspects. The primary position of the Japanese students at GFC was highlighted through the college's hiring of a monolingual (Japanese) student support manager, Nobu-sensei, at the same time as this research commenced. Nobu-sensei was further assisted by other Japanese staff in supporting the Japanese students. There were also academic throwbacks to Japan found at GFC. The most prominent one was the college's preoccupation with tests, which irritated the students immensely.

Ceremonies and festivals were Japanese-oriented despite the college's attempts to pay lip-service to its international students. For instance, in spite of the renaming of the annual college festival from the *Sakura* Festival to the International Festival and displaying the artefacts and activities of students from other nationalities in their own single rooms, the celebration continued to be dominated by Japanese cultural elements such as *taiko*, *yosakoi* Japanese dancing and origami classes. The public who visited the festival surely felt they were visiting Japan for a day.

The aspect that seemed to frustrate the students the most and was mentioned frequently

during interviews was the inconsistency of rules between the Japanese and the non-Japanese students. There can be no argument that official segregation operated at GFC, and it was clearly visible through factors such as restricting the Japanese to living on campus and only in their own set dormitories rather than mixed with other international students. Other signs of special treatment and bias were the Japanese-only meetings, the Japanese-only TOEIC preparation classes and the official GFC documents that listed the student body as being comprised of three independent groups: Local, International, and Japanese.

9.3.3. Reasons for establishing a Dejima outpost

Establishing a Dejima outpost appears to have been a conscious mission of GFC management and although the findings indicated that students initially wanted a more internationally integrated environment, it seems that Mr. Suwa believed he knew the students better than they knew themselves: A Dejima-like environment was not what they wanted, but what they needed. In a metaphorical sense, Mr. Suwa played a similar role to the *sakoku* period *shogun*, keeping the Japanese safe, but allowing the enclave where his minions could go and have carefully controlled contact with the world beyond on his terms.

The large proportion of office staff and teachers working at GFC that were either Japanese or had experience in Japan indicated a management preference to hire people that would contribute to a Dejima-like setting for the Japanese students to live in. One reason for creating a Dejima outpost at GFC appears to be the promotion of rapid settling in by the Japanese students. Mr. Suwa openly stated that while he did not want to reject non-Japanese students, the college was built for Japanese and his priority was in allowing them

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to study abroad while protecting them from the trauma of doing so. With the Japanese nature of GFC reducing the changes that students had to make in their everyday life, they were free to concentrate more on increasing their English skills and building their confidence. This appears to have been successful because only Kayo spoke of being homesick and initially having to *gaman* [persevere] to stay at GFC.

Another reason for the establishment of a Dejima outpost at GFC appears to be based on the doctrines of *nihonjinron* and a fear that perhaps the Japanese students would be unable to maintain their culture in the face of Western influences if they were not protected in some way. It seems that cultural maintenance was high in management's agenda in regard to Japanese students, so that they could ease back into their home society with few issues following their graduation from the college. It may also have been that because the students were living in a protected, Japan-like enclave, employers in Japan might be more receptive in hiring them in the knowledge that they had not become overly Westernized.

9.3.4. The effects of GFC's Japan-like enclave

There is no doubt that Japanese students were provided disproportionate levels of support compared to other students at GFC. In spite of the intentions behind this, Japanese students were not always appreciative. Most were frustrated by this because one of the most prominent expectations in the pre-arrival questionnaire was to be treated as an adult. Many focal students envied the freedom that the non-Japanese students enjoyed, in things such as not having to attend meetings or special classes and being able to leave as soon as their final course examinations were complete – rather than having to stay on at GFC to attend graduation and support their *senpai*. However, the aspect that generated the most envy in

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the participants was the non-Japanese students' freedom in regard to accommodation. The fact that all Japanese students had to reside in set dormitories on campus inhibited their ability to make non-Japanese friends and thus decreased the internationalism of the study abroad. It also meant that the off-campus experiences of many of the research cohort were limited and one could question how many participants got a truly New Zealand experience. In Interview Six, Yoichi stated that if he was living in town he would be able to "get in touch with Kiwi culture" naturally, because he would be able to find aspects of the culture easily "in daily life"; however, he stressed that: "At GFC, I have to try to touch in the culture". This indicates that he had to make a concerted effort while living at the college.

The effects of GFC's Japaneseness and management's focus on the Japanese students created an ill feeling in general in many non-Japanese students, which seemed to act as a wedge between the two groups – making it even harder for the Japanese students to establish meaningful connections with non-Japanese students.

9.3.5. Participant responses to the Dejima-like environment

The Japanese students were unquestionably treated differently to the other GFC students; however, it is important to understand how this was perceived. The attention that the participants received was often viewed as over-protection and a bias, particularly in things such as accommodation restrictions to residing on campus only and only in set dormitories. At other times, the attention received was considered a bias, but from a viewpoint of embarrassment or shame over their position vis-à-vis the other students, indicated by Yoichi's comment in Interview Four:

Nobu-sensei is always here twenty-four hours and three-hundred and sixty-five days. We always really rely on him, even if it is midnight…we appreciate it, but you know I feel kind of unfair because you know students from Thai, students from Vietnam don't get support from Nobu-sensei cos he can't speak Thai, Vietnamese and English as well…Even Kiwis must be supported like Japanese. (Yoichi 4)

A third way that management's focus was perceived was as special treatment and being looked after, as was the case with the special TOEIC night classes. However, even in the realms of special attention tension could be found, such as with Shihoko's complaints of having to attend the class and later teach it.

In early interviews, it was popular for participants to complain about the Japaneseness of GFC, and dismiss the support that came with it. One possible reason for giving the impression of rejecting official support was bravado and wanting to be perceived as mature and independent. However, the admissions of two of the most independent-appearing participants in later interviews showed that the negative feelings regarding GFC's Japaneseness were not universal and examples of *amae* towards GFC management could be found. Kami stated that without Nobu-sensei's support she "couldn't stay in New Zealand" (4). Riki appeared to be mentally strong and relaxed, so it was also surprising to hear him state in Interview Four that without Nobu-sensei's help and guidance "I'm definitely not here". Interestingly, after spending some time at GFC, Riki began talking openly of the Japaneseness being a positive aspect of the college. It seems that he came with dreams of independent engagement at GFC, but retrospectively re-evaluated and recognized the support that made living at GFC possible for him.

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In general, there was a sense that the participants viewed the Dejima outpost as restricting their opportunities to become more international and get a true sense of being in New Zealand, and this prompted some participants to question the college's claim of being international. This does not mean that the participants disliked living at GFC; there are numerous indications that they thoroughly enjoyed it and even began considering it their home. However, the restrictions under the banner of student support and safety were sometimes viewed as limiting the overseas experience and led to instances of resistance. Yuka stated that she felt that GFC was, "like I am in Japanese college and then the student who come from another country came to our university" (5). However, it seems that the students' trajectory was moving towards a greater acceptance of GFC's Dejima-like environment.

9.3.6. Limitations of the Dejima outpost and signs of resistance

One environment where the Japanese students were not cushioned was in the Degree program classrooms. It was there that they most frequently encountered non-Japanese speakers, and were most exposed to English. In Degree, the Japanese were treated no differently from other students and everyone, without exception, was expected to reach set levels of achievement. This came as a shock to many participants (see 9.8.2). That stated, there were numerous Dejima-like aspects in the GFC environment which limited the internationalism of the students' experience. The findings showed that the students were aware of these aspects and tried to resist them on numerous occasions.

The students' arrival at GFC with dreams of making non-Japanese friends and becoming international (thereby, less Japanese) could be considered the first sign of resistance to the

Dejima-like environment. The findings show that many participants tried to do this at the start of their first academic year at the college through attending frequent college parties with non-Japanese students. Other early examples of resistance were Yui's attempt at making international friends by becoming a member of the college smoking scene and Harumi's joining of the Vessar University handball club. Through joining an outside club, it seems evident that Harumi sought exposure to native-speaker English, more independence and possibly a break-out from the Dejima outpost at GFC. However, somewhat paradoxically, she was the participant who appeared to rely most on Nobu-sensei – an indication that some aspects of GFC's Dejima outpost were indispensable for her survival.

Yuka's friendship and subsequent membership in the GFC Thai group was unique in the cohort and was one of the clearest examples of defiance toward the Japaneseness of the college, and her request to be housed in their dormitory so she could live out her desire to be more international and practice English must have surprised management. However, the response to Yuka's bold request was a clear signal to the Japanese students that management had no interest in breaking down the walls of the Dejima outpost at GFC; a similar response and signal was given with Riki's request to live in a shared room also being denied.

Romances with non-Japanese students, particularly with locals, could also be considered a refusal to completely conform to the Japaneseness of GFC. Ken and Ai were the prominent participants in this regard and both enjoyed long-term relationships with local GFC students. Ken even went on holiday with his girlfriend's family for long periods of time, perhaps defying one reason why the Dejima outpost was established at GFC; he stated in

his final interview that the New Zealand way of life was his best fit.

It seems that Kayo and Shihoko defied the image of Dejima when they rejected management's request, or demand as Shihoko perceived it, to teach their TOEIC night class for a second term. The arrangement of having senior students teach their juniors TOEIC was a perfect example of a traditional *senpai-kohai* relationship and a clear extension of Japan in New Zealand. Shihoko was one of the most openly obstinate against the restrictions of the Japanese enclave-like setting and her attitude can be seen through her solo shopping trips to Wellington and thumbing her nose at management's demands for her not to leave GFC for Japan at certain times. There were signs, however, amongst the cohort of an attrition and diminishing resistance to the Japan-like environment at GFC.

9.3.7. Affordances in the Dejima outpost

There were obvious appealing aspects of the Dejima outpost. Perhaps the most important aspect was the safe surroundings it provided the Japanese students, allowing them to study and mature in a home-away-from-home environment. Maturity increases may have also been assisted by the close peer relationships that participants formed, which were a by-product of the Japan-like enclave. The findings suggest that through these relationships the participants may have learned how to care more for other people and developed the empathic qualities that the peer support system at GFC relied on. The familiarity that the Japaneseness of GFC provided may have encouraged some students to stretch their limits further than they otherwise would have and it is probable that through the strong Japanese presence some participants felt more confident to take on roles of responsibility within their chosen extracurricular activity. The Japanese influence at the college and the high

number of Japanese students present afforded leadership roles to the participants, such as TOEIC teaching opportunities (see 5.4.3), hall leader responsibilities (see 7.4.1) and important positions in student politics (see 7.2.3). Therefore, while the predominance of Japanese students attending GFC was often perceived, at least initially, as a negative, it is essential to also acknowledge the benefits it provided.

9.3.8. Diminishing resistance

Living in a Japan-like enclave made life easier and the students appeared to accept it as they discovered the comforting elements it afforded. An acceptance of the Dejima outpost in the academic context can be seen through students' asking their peers for a Japanese explanation to a teacher's instructions:

> Recently I can't enjoy my class because I can't understand what the teacher said. I couldn't understand what should I do and every time I asked to my friends 'now what should I do? Please tell me'…and they explain it in Japanese. (Kayo 1)

Interestingly, even Yuka, who was one of the strongest opponents to the Dejima-like environment at GFC, indicated that she liked this aspect of Japanese influence through her comment in 5.4.4 where she bemoaned the lack of Japanese students in her Degree class to translate for her.

There was also a decreasing resistance to the Japaneseness of the college in the social realm. Despite wanting non-Japanese friends initially and feeling unsatisfied because of the high number of Japanese students at GFC, all participants made friends almost exclusively

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with other Japanese. Numerous participants stated that their Japanese GFC friends were the best aspect of their study abroad experience, which is a strong indication that the negative perceptions of GFC's large Japanese student body decreased markedly. Japanese friendships may have become increasingly popular because they required less effort to establish and less work to maintain than non-Japanese friendships did. It seems that coming from a place of familiarity and shared understanding, habits and humor was a key ingredient in the formation of close bonds and a sense of being *uchi*, which may have initially been a surprising revelation to the participants. Another factor that promoted co-national friendships was the feeling of incompatibility with local students.

Most participants' romantic relationships were also exclusively with Japanese students. Shihoko's romantic experiences, for instance, suggest a diminishing resistance to the Dejima-like environment at GFC. Although a prominent motivator for her to study in New Zealand was to get a Kiwi boyfriend, after a brief romance with a local GFC student she reverted to dating Japanese apparently because she found it far less frustrating due to shared language and customs.

Arguably one of the strongest indications of a diminishing resistance was seen in one of the students who was initially most resistant: Yuka. It appears that Yuka often had *soto* moments in the Thai group and never felt completely *uchi*. Her return to the Japanese group after being accepted by the Thai group, again because of the familiarity and ease of communication that being with other Japanese provided, pointed to a growing acceptance of living in a Japan-like enclave.

9.3.9. Supporting the image of Dejima

An analysis of the findings indicates that perhaps the participants were never entirely at odds with the Dejima-like environment from the outset. The pre-arrival questionnaire results revealed a relatively high number of responses expecting GFC to provide Japanese food, organize Japanese events and show an interest in Japan, indicating that at least some students wanted a Dejima outpost at GFC and were not interested in living in a truly foreign environment. The expectation of student support to arrange social opportunities with New Zealand students may also point to a belief by Japanese students that they might be grouped together. Once at GFC, despite complaints indicating the contrary, the actions of many participants reinforced the image of Dejima at the college. Many participants established safe zones, most of which resembled Japanese environments, where they could escape English and speak Japanese with their peers. Prizing Japanese friends above non-Japanese also abetted the Dejima-like system, as did the cooking of Japanese food together in dormitories.

Hiro indicated that the Japanese students also established a familiar environment for themselves in their dormitories (also mentioned briefly in 6.3.3):

> Inside the dormitory is like Japan. Once when I went to library or dining
>
> hall there is many international students, but in the dormitory, there is
>
> Japanese society can be created. (Hiro 5)

The findings indicate that friction resulted between students when New Zealand students did not abide by the Japanese notion of correct behavior towards others, such as keeping areas tidy and refraining from playing loud music that may disturb other residents.

GFC clubs, particularly *taiko* and Shotz, which embraced a Japanese ideology, encouraged the existence of a Dejima-like setting. Johnson (2011) found in a study on a Japanese drum team in New Zealand that it possessed a spirit, soul, mind and will, and additionally the Japanese cultural ideals of persistence and self-sacrifice. These qualities were found in GFC's drum team and provided some of its Japanese members with stability while studying at the college. Ai's comments also suggest that Shotz created an environment that was comfortable for its Japanese members, but was very foreign to local students, and Japanese cultural expectations that existed in the club's way of doing things lay behind the conflicts that arose between the Japanese and local members.

9.3.10. A question to ponder

Many questions arise from the existence of a Japan-like enclave at GFC, most prominent being whether it was an affordance or a limitation to the students' experience. This key point will be addressed in the final section of this chapter.

9.4. The self and others

9.4.1. The importance of belonging

Forging a sense of connection with others revealed itself as critical. Not belonging to a group or an inability to connect closely with others often led to withdrawal. The participants who suffered the most from low connectedness among the cohort were Yui and Harumi, and their experiences highlighted the importance of belonging. They both

displayed low levels of self-esteem, high anxiety and talked in interviews about being depressed. They also possessed low levels of interpersonal trust and often retreated from social opportunities; all of which are negative traits said to be typical of people with poor connectedness (Lee & Robbins, 1998). Forming friendships in the dormitories was extremely important for survival because it was these friendships that became the foundations of the very effective peer support system that operated at GFC. *Taiko* was another environment where members were provided a sense of close connection, and Kayo's transformation via the *taiko* club is testimony to how belonging provided opportunities for positive change. Kayo's internal struggle over leaving the club points to the sense of *uchi* in the club.

9.4.1.1. *Taiko*

The *taiko* club was an immense source of pride for GFC and very visible in the wider community. GFC's *taiko* club should be considered remarkable because it is comprised exclusively of students, meaning that membership is completely renewed within every four years due to its members graduating and leaving the college. The findings reveal that to be a member of the *taiko* team took a *ganbaru* spirit, but the support from other members that students received was invaluable. The value of *taiko*'s support can be seen through the opportunities and affordances for personal development that it provided the participants who became members. Creighton (2008) wrote in relation to a Japanese drum club that she researched that *taiko* "incorporates the Japanese concept of *minarai*, meaning to see and learn from others performing" (p. 44). All focal students in GFC's club had no prior experience of *taiko*. However, the club provided legitimate peripheral practice and

experienced members scaffolded prospective members towards full membership by teaching them playing skills and the club ways. After becoming established, members of the club took on responsibility and continued the club cycle with the scaffolding of prospective members to full membership and teaching the same things, in the same way that they had learned. These aspects gave the *taiko* club a community of practice-like feel (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and it is particularly noteworthy because, even though the club had a short, four-year cycle, it seemed to be the one place at GFC where the process of experienced students connecting with and supporting new arrivals operated.

9.4.1.2. The restrictiveness of belonging

Wenger (1998) cautioned that while communities have the potential to bring meaningfulness into peoples' lives, they can also be difficult to break away from. This was what Kayo appeared to be experiencing as she deliberated on how to withdraw from the group without negatively affecting her relationships with its members. Yuka's withdrawal from the comforts of the Japanese community to enter the Thai group is another excellent example of a student exercising agency to break away from the restrictions of a comfortable and potentially supportive community in order to be more independent and practice English. Taka's choice to close his Facebook account was also a form of withdrawal from comfort towards something more constructive. It could be that these decisions to withdraw from the comfortable were an indication that the focal students were looking for ways to embrace the adventure that study abroad seems to offer.

9.4.2. International connections

A prominent motivator for the participants in choosing to study in New Zealand was an opportunity to gain English skills and the findings displayed a common thought that connecting with local, native speakers was the best way to acquire them. This may have been one of the main reasons that most of the Japanese students initially appeared more motivated in developing local friendships than friendships with international students. Other possible reasons why friendships between non-local and Japanese students were rare may have been the following:

- Limited contact with international students in the Foundation program because the English proficiency levels of the international students often allowed them to enter the Degree program directly.

- The establishment of close co-national relationships prior to Degree program entry may have led to diminished motivation levels to make new friends once in Degree.

- Few opportunities to interact with other students in Degree classes.

- GFC management accommodation policies: International students were accommodated over the road from the campus, far from the Japanese students.

- International students formed exclusive groups which were hard for outsiders to break into.

Yuka's experience as a member of the Thai group demonstrated that it was not impossible to enter another cultural circle and that doing so could be rewarding. However, her eventual withdrawal from the group after 18 months provides another clue as to why close bonds between Japanese and international students were rare; cultural incompatibilities and

mismatched priorities are difficult to overcome.

9.4.3. Local connections

Another possible reason for the rarity of non-local international friendships amongst the cohort initially may have been the apparent monopolization of the Japanese students' attention by local students from New Zealand, allowing the Japanese few opportunities to pursue international friendships. As suggested above, the participants initially fancied local friendships with New Zealanders because they appeared to provide more benefits than international friendships did. These included providing models of 'proper' English, helping with written assignments and opportunities to stay with New Zealanders at their homes during holidays and experience authentic Kiwi life. Yoichi commented: "There's a big difference between Kiwi students speaking English and internationals speaking English. Even if the international students are perfect with their English, how they speak is different" (6).

The findings show that the fascination between local students and Japanese cooled, and close friendships between Japanese and locals did not develop. There may have been numerous reasons for this. Firstly, many participants appeared to become put off by the local students' obsession with Japan and perhaps found that the local students' understanding was not deep enough in some situations to comprehend the intricacies of appropriate Japanese behavior. Another reason may have been a general incompatibility between local students and Japanese in regard to their approach to life. Some participants perceived the locals' habits as strange and selfish, such as an apparent obsession with alcohol and playing loud music at night in the dormitories. Ken (1) observed that even the

things that the Kiwi students laughed at were different to the Japanese.

9.4.4. Co-national connections

All participants arrived with a desire to make non-Japanese friends; however, their contact with other students was limited and co-national friendships became the norm. This result reinforces Cammish's (1997, p. 148) assertion that housing students from the same country together may be supportive, but inhibits integration and the establishment of non-co-national friendships. Along with management's other group-promoting policies, such as meetings and TOEIC classes delivered to Japanese only, further reasons for the predominance of co-national friendships may have been:

- Prolonged time together in the Foundation program, which, comprising eight hours a day for five days a week, sometimes lasted three terms.
- The need to establish close friendships early on in the study abroad for the students' own wellbeing and the initial, natural gravitation to the familiarity of other Japanese who they resided with in the college dormitories.
- The comparative ease of making co-national friendships.

The first point in the list above indicates that friendships were mostly confined to within intake groups and this was supported by participant comments indicating that there was very little cross-fertilization and scaffolding from experienced Japanese students and friendships with them generally began after the participants entered the Degree program. In general, the predominance of and eventual preference for co-national friends contributed to the Japanese feeling of GFC for the students in the research.

The importance of co-national friendships was evident in the way participants rarely talked about academic subjects in interviews, often being unable to recall their grades, but able to detail their social experiences with their Japanese friends at length. James Coleman (2013, p. 28) points out the value of this more nuanced enquiry into the study abroad experience:

> The generic objectivity of study abroad research reports has too often erased the most significant elements of the sojourn. Ask any applied linguist confidentially, in the corner of a bar, about their own time abroad as a student, and the emphasis will never be on enhanced TL lexis and mean length of utterance, but rather on romance, on discovery of self and others, on people and places.

Although the literature has portrayed local friendships as an important ingredient for satisfaction, it also indicates that friendships with locals are difficult to attain. In this research, local friendships were rare; however, in contrast to the literature, the lack of local friendships does not seem to have negatively influenced the long-term satisfaction of the participants. It seems that once the participants recognized the challenge of establishing friendships outside their own culture and language, and the need to counter loneliness and isolation, they appreciated the value of their co-national friendships. Moreover, after analyzing the participants' high satisfaction levels, it appears that co-national friends actually became the main ingredient in their satisfaction because they could communicate without stress and misunderstanding. There is an indication in the findings that where friendships or relationships with locals did occur it was with participants who had either a higher proficiency in English, such as Ken, and/or a strong willingness to communicate and personal agency to overcome the barriers, such as Ai. This finding shows that

expectations were subject to attrition by their experience and that the participants became more realistic about what opportunities were available to them, which resulted in an alteration of the aspirations. This is an impact of the Japaneseness of GFC; one can imagine that had the students been attending a different kind of institution in New Zealand, one with much less Japanese influence, the aspiration would have been molded in a more New Zealand direction.

The literature also presents academic success as crucial for high satisfaction levels; however, this research has found that social aspects were more important. An excellent example can be seen in how Ai and Kayo's satisfaction levels were at their zenith in Interview Six, which was also the period when they were struggling the most academically. The way in which Kayo's life was transformed through her *taiko* club membership is a reminder of the important nature of co-national connections. The level to which some co-national friendships developed was impressive. Kami's comment in 6.7.2 about her friends sensing when she was feeling down and checking on her indicates that her friendship circle was so connected that they could instinctively sense each other's feelings and knew how to provide appropriate support according to the situation. This level of intimacy suggests that in Hall One (accommodating the Japanese female students) in particular, a strong sense of *uchi* developed amongst its occupants.

9.5. Did peer support replace official support?

As co-national friendships grew closer, they became the main source of support and in some cases, appeared to completely replace GFC's official student support. One of the

main reasons for this, it seems, was a wariness of sharing sensitive or personal information, such as romantic details, with student support staff. The frustration of being subject to what were perceived as draconian rules treating GFC Japanese students like children was another reason often identified by participants in their interviews. While both Riki and Kami credited Nobu-sensei's support as being responsible for them staying on at GFC, most participants grew frustrated by being micro-managed.

Without the over-protection of official student support, the participants may have been more motivated to develop internationally diverse friendship circles and rely on local students more to navigate their New Zealand experience. It is likely that management considered the vulnerability and social issues faced by some of the Japanese students when they were in Japan and believed that without strong support none of the Japanese students would be able to fit in, mature and grow. However, it was not the strong official support that allowed participants to venture beyond their comfort zone to take on challenges. Rather, it was peer support. Examples of this are seen repeatedly in the data, with experiences such as the *Kawaii* dance team receiving no official support whatsoever and members relying on each other to achieve unforgettable experiences, or Yoichi's student politics career that was made possible by the support of his peers.

After considering the findings, it seems clear that peer support largely replaced official GFC support. While official support formed a solid foundation that was always present at GFC, and which the students were aware of, most participants had little use for official support once they had established strong co-national friendships.

9.6. Support from afar

The Internet was an important source of support throughout the research period and allowed students to receive advice and affirmation from loved ones in Japan and to remain connected to old, Japan-based friends. The importance of contacting home can be comprehended through the actions of some participants such as Shihoko, who fixed contact schedules so that family members could gather together and communicate with her at one time. It should be acknowledged that the support that travelled between GFC and Japan was not one-way; family members also sought assurances that their child was in good health and doing well at college. The issue of family members, particularly older females, experiencing a loss of voice due to a lack of computer skills was revealed in the findings. The cases of Shihoko and Kami, for instance, concur with Kang's (2012) findings, where participants' mothers and grandmothers initially relied on the males' or younger family members' computer knowledge to initiate contact.

The findings in this research also echo those of Sandel (2014) who comments that Skype was used more with family members and Facebook was the chosen domain for contacting friends. The reason for this dichotomy it seems was because students used Facebook to routinely post photos of what their parents may have considered to be the less desirable aspects of studying abroad, such as drinking alcohol. The Internet created some negatively perceived issues for the participants, such as unsolicited parental attention and monitoring of their lives in New Zealand. A further trade-off of social media is that it may have distracted some participants from using English and, in a sense, watered down their ability to have an international experience on their study abroad. Mikal, Yang and Lewis (2014) state that Internet use on a study abroad is linked to "the eventual abandonment of cultural

and language development goals" (p. 13). However, at GFC, with so many Japanese students present at the college and the formation of co-national groups, it is debatable how influential the Internet was in this regard. This, by extension, suggests that the environment in which the students found themselves was atypical for a study abroad because of its particular configurations and did not match the study abroad environments found in the literature. That said, Taka obviously felt social media impinging on his ability to focus on his studies when he cancelled his Facebook account for a short period, in what appeared to be an interplay between ideal self, pride and *oya-koko*.

Interestingly, the open link with Japan that the Internet provided may have helped the students resettle after their study abroad; it allowed them to maintain friendships in Japan and it seems, also enabled cultural maintenance through regular contact with Japan-based friends and family.

9.7. Identity as English speakers

All participants arrived with a goal of achieving high levels of English proficiency, but there is little evidence to indicate that any participant other than Ai had an English speaking or international identity when they arrived. In her first interview, Ai projected a worldly persona and appeared to be supremely confident in her English ability, positioning herself above her GFC peers who had ventured outside of Japan for the first time:

> People who came here for the first time were saying 'what do I do? I don't
>
> know what to do! Please help me'... It was like a high school trip and they
>
> were noisy. They always gathered in the room next to mine and said 'What

do I do? What are you doing? I am scared'. (Ai, 1).

Her attitude may have originated from living in a cosmopolitan region where she apparently had "a lot of American or British friends" (Ai 3). However, Ai's English-language identity vanished as her peers, whom she had originally mocked and perceived as below her English ability, posted higher TOEIC scores than her and became Degree students – while she stayed in Diploma. Shihoko seemed to be at the other end of the spectrum and her early comments reveal that she was initially intimidated by the international experience of her peers and their exposure to authentic English overseas, and worried about her ability to keep up with them at GFC.

Taka was the participant who developed an identity most strongly linked to academia combined with English proficiency. He seemed to be the one most dedicated to his studies and despite taking longer than many of his peers to post a Degree qualifying score in TOEIC, he had a very positive attitude to his English proficiency. During his interviews, Taka routinely downplayed TOEIC's importance and its ability to effectively measure language skill, which may have been an effort to convince himself and others that his English was better than the tests indicated. On the other hand, it could have been that he valued the key element that TOEIC did not measure, speaking ability. However, the way in which he became upset when his Japan-based friend got a high TOEIC score on his first attempt suggests that Taka did attach some capital to TOEIC success.

A general observation suggests that the participants fell short of their lofty English proficiency level targets and scaled down their expectations once they comprehended the challenges that lay ahead and the Japaneseness of GFC. That said, as indicated by their progressing TOEIC scores and their greater fluency and expanding vocabulary observed in

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interviews, the English proficiency of all participants rose due to their study abroad

experience at GFC. Without question, the focal students became English speakers to a

certain degree and inevitably had an identity associated with that. However, it seems

erroneous to suggest that any participant took on an identity of a New Zealand English

speaker: rather, they took on an international identity, in line with that proposed by

Yashima (2009). For instance, in Interview Four, Yoichi proudly exclaimed that he had

become "more Kiwi"; however, in Interview Six he made a special point to correct his

earlier declaration and insisted that he was "more GFC, more international". Yoichi's

belief that he was not actually more Kiwi, it seems, stemmed from the way he used

English: "I'm using English in Japanese way and the Kiwis are using their way" (6).

Instead of taking on a New Zealand identity per se, the participants took on aspects of

Western culture that they perceived as attractive and formed patchwork-like identities that

included elements of both the Japanese and Western cultures. These identities were fluid

and the participants seemed to shift between them as necessitated by changes in the context

and environment, which is probably why friends and family back in Japan rarely

recognized identity shifts in the participants. A good example was Shihoko, whose father

during a Skype interview at the conclusion of the research, stated that his daughter had not

changed since leaving Japan for New Zealand. Shihoko later confided that she never spoke

English in front of him. Riki is also an interesting example. There were times when Riki

took on a very relaxed persona at GFC that was influenced by his new experiences and

based on how he generally perceived New Zealanders as being, but he never left behind his

staunch Japanese identity, which he moved back into when necessary.

The level of international identity development appears to have differed between

participants. Hiro indicated that the Japanese of GFC influenced his desire to take on changes; he felt compelled to change neither out of will nor necessity because at GFC's social environment he felt very comfortable operating as a Japanese, in Japanese. Shihoko arguably took on the most Western traits of the participants, such as developing a voice in the classroom and becoming strongly independent. While most participants seemed to shift almost effortlessly between identities, it seems that despite her father insisting that she had not changed, Shihoko struggled to leave her New Zealand identity behind: her repatriation struggles indicate that she was reluctant to fully move back to her old Japanese persona.

Identities were fluid and inhabited by participants when the situation or context called for change, so in a sense, we can consider them as a way of surviving, of being interculturally competent and fitting in socially. Identities were not only important in the social realm, it seems that classroom identities were also an important aspect of academic life.

9.8. Academic identities

9.8.1. Foundation identities

The Foundation program was a site of tension and complexity. Complaints of tedious lessons lacking a sense of challenge were stated in interviews: "Class is boring for me because grammar is easy because I already know the grammar, but teacher teach the easy grammar…last term I was taught present simple; teacher take six hours" (Yuka 2). However, in the same interview Yuka stated that the teachers were pushing her too hard to be active in the classroom and gave her too much homework. Some participants

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complained of Japanese-dominated classrooms and questioned the college's claim of being

international and even questioned their own wisdom in attending GFC instead of college in

Japan. However, these statements were sometimes followed with comments that revealed a

sense of comfort in having other Japanese peers present in their classes, as Yuka found out

when she had no one to translate for her in Degree. Some students claimed that they

wanted a context in which they could use their English skills practically, but they were too

scared to use their English in front of others and wished to become invisible in class.

However, other participants, such as Shihoko, clearly reveled in having a voice after

having to be submissive in Japanese high school.

An example of ambivalence can be seen with the students expecting dynamic, exciting

Western-based lessons, yet complaining of feeling adrift without familiar classroom

aspects, such as textbooks. This frustration may be linked to Geert Hofstede's (1980)

theory of uncertainty avoidance, of which Japan reportedly had one of the highest levels in

the world. Although Hofstede published his theory of cultural dimensions almost 40 years

ago, his website[25] indicates that he still stands by his theories on Japan. Another instance of

ambivalence regarded the TOEIC night classes, which were aimed at getting Japanese

students into the Degree program as soon as possible, yet were seen by some participants

as a form of punishment. The complexity of this situation is revealed when one considers

that a major part of the participants' dissatisfaction with the Foundation program appears

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[25] https://geert-hofstede.com/japan.html

to have been based on an awareness of the higher esteem Degree students enjoyed and the shame that some of them felt for still being in Foundation.

Although Foundation was often considered a holding station for Degree, its reputation differed markedly from the Diploma program – even though Diploma also served this function for a few participants until they qualified for full-time Degree study. The Diploma program was dominated by Japanese students, the Japanese language and the academic level of the courses was far easier than Degree. In general, participant comments indicated a perception that Diploma was a waste of time and money, and something that could have been done in Japan. This perception raises the debate over whether Kayo's transfer from Degree, from which she could have graduated with the generally desired full university level qualification, down to Diploma, where she would achieve a much less prestigious qualification, was positive or negative. Kayo had passed 10 Degree courses and never failed any up to the data collection conclusion, clearly demonstrating that she could have succeeded in Degree, so her transfer must be based on a self-acceptance of the topics she wanted to study, with an eye toward the employment she wanted to seek following her graduation. Following her desire and transfer to Diploma took more strength than continuing to persevere in Degree; Skyrme (2009, p. 9) suggests that it takes greater courage to withdraw from a course than continue studying when it does not meet one's interests. Therefore, Kayo's choice may be interpreted as a sign of strength, self-agency and independence.

9.8.2. Degree identities

Most students soon viewed gaining over 630 in the TOEIC test as the main initial goal

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because it allowed them a foothold in Degree as a part-time student. Once they became full-time Degree students, the findings indicate that many of them gave up studying for the TOEIC test per se, and concentrated on their Degree subjects instead, for which there are two main reasons:

1. They saw TOEIC simply as the gate-keeper to Degree studies. Once full-time Degree status had been achieved they saw little further need for the TOEIC test.

2. The Degree courses were difficult and time consuming for the students, and left them with neither time nor energy to devote to studying for the TOEIC test.

This is not to suggest that the students' English levels decreased after entering the Degree program full-time. On the contrary, the participants became more skilled at writing academic assignments in English, reading English academic texts and also learned new English vocabulary around their discipline. Listening to lectures also promoted their English proficiency.

The Degree program was the least Dejima-like aspect of the participants' life at GFC. Although Degree courses at GFC appeared to be less demanding than those of a full university, such as Vessar University nearby, it seems clear from the participants' comments that the courses were not designed specifically for Japanese students, as the Foundation and Diploma programs seemed to be. In the Degree program, for instance, students were frequently called on to be more active and contribute to the class. They were also expected to read academic books and articles, write academic essays and make presentations in front of their peers. The participants indicated that in the Degree program they had to call on all their Japanese *ganbaru* (persistence) and spend long hours studying.

It seems that this extra pressure had a good spin-off effect on some students:

> Obviously, since I have become a degree student I need to study a lot and I
> need to read every day and I need to concentrate on the lesson. The big
> changes are since I become degree student every day I wake up at 7.30am
> and try to eat breakfast. Healthy life. (Ken 4)

The participants' urgency seemed to be due to the realization that they would have to work hard for their marks and that failure was possible if they were not serious about their studies – which is what transpired in Riki's case.

Similar to the Foundation, the Degree program also appeared to have elements of tension. Some participants' comments in the findings alluded to how much fun it was to learn subjects in English and that the program was serving their English purposes simultaneously. However, highlighting the complexity of the situation, Riki longed to return to the Foundation program and stressed that he was studying at GFC to learn English and not learn in English. It seems that Riki's desire to return to Foundation was more a desire to return to an environment reminiscent of his high school days because, unlike Kayo, he gave no indication of studying subjects that did not interest him. A second aspect of tension was found in the expectation of making international friends in Degree program classes due to the large representation of international students in the program. However, many lecturers allowed for little student-to-student interaction during lessons and when they did, it seems that the Japanese students were often either too shy or unmotivated to interact with non-Japanese students.

After all their struggles, stress and hard work in their studies, it is interesting to note that

most participants wanted to be remembered as kind, friendly, humorous, and loyal – rather than anything linked to academic success. This reinforces the idea that the social aspects of study abroad at GFC were more important to the students than academic aspects.

9.9. Developing other identities

When the participants arrived at GFC, their identities seemed to be tightly bound to Japan because of their low English proficiency, their limited international experience and GFC's context. Phinney (1990, p. 501) states that an "ethnic identity is meaningful only in situations in which two or more ethnic groups are in contact over a period of time. In an ethnically or racially homogeneous society, ethnic identity is a virtually meaningless concept". In the case at hand, most participants had had little contact with non-Japanese people to compare themselves to while living in Japan, and they seemed unaware of how influenced their world view and engagements with the world were by their life experience in Japan.

GFC, and the students attending the college, positioned Japanese students vis-à-vis non-Japanese students, which was a new experience for the research participants. Because most of the participants had never ventured outside of Japan for more than a few weeks, the initial time at GFC may have been a watershed moment because they came to realize for the first time what it was to be Japanese. This situation appears to have allowed them to eventually understand, acknowledge and appreciate their Japaneseness. Newton (2009, p. 9) appeared to succinctly sum up their position when he wrote "we are often unaware of the cultural values which allow us to communicate within our own culture, let alone those

that underpin behavior in another culture with which we come in contact".

The Dejima outpost at GFC must have confused the participants at times because here they were outside Japan, but in a sense, they had never left it. The students arrived with the aspiration of becoming international and yet the large presence of Japanese students at the college created a strong temptation to not move beyond their Japanese identity – an identity which was imposed on them after arriving at GFC. Those who were not so interested in developing identities beyond their Japanese one found changes difficult and slow to make, due to the influence of Japanese peers, management policies and the Japaneseness of the college.

Newton (2009, p. 8) suggests that learning a language positions students in a third space between languages and also cultures, which can confuse and disorientate learners. It is possible that the very Japanese clubs, such as Shotz and *taiko*, helped ground some Japanese students, give them direction and learn about where they had come from. Creighton's (2008, p. 43) research suggests that *taiko* is a way to connect with 'old Japan' and a way for Japanese players to channel their national pride and concludes that, "*taiko* serves well as an emblem – and performance – of Japanese identity" (p. 61). These points may have been recognized by Mr. Suwa, who positioned *taiko* as the premier club of GFC, and provided it with much more monetary support than any other club. It is also likely that the value of the college's Spring Festival was recognized and the way that the festival brought the Japanese culture sharply into focus for many students. During the festival many of the participants seemed to take on expected or cliché cultural roles, wearing *Kimonos*, playing Japanese music and doing Japanese cultural dances.

Most participants initially made comments that cast life in Japan in a negative light

compared to New Zealand's quality of life. However, it seems that these comments were influenced by what is termed in the literature as the honeymoon phase as they were all made in the initial interviews. An indication of how strong this feeling could be was demonstrated by Yoichi, who in Interview One described bursting into tears while drinking with Kiwi students; in Interview Five he recalled the event:

> It was a kind of dream to come to GFC and talking to international friends, I mean native English speakers and that was the first time I drink with natives. It was really impressive. I was really impressed…Maybe that's the reason why I'd been emotional. (Yoichi 5)

In later interviews, as they settled into GFC, the participants' subjective observations on both New Zealand and Japan became more objective and balanced. This may have been connected to the fact that at that stage they had embraced the Japaneseness of their identities.

9.10. Life history and developmental identities

One of the biggest changes that participants underwent was an increase in maturity. Naturally, this would have occurred regardless of their coming to GFC. However, the study abroad experience arguably provided many of the participants with a need for a mental toughness and a level of self-confidence that was the direct result of having left home and survived overseas life. Some participants took on responsibilities as they matured, seen particularly in those who gained part-time employment in the city to ease the financial burden of studying in New Zealand. New identities appeared to spring from new roles, and

the findings support the idea that gains in academia are not the only important gains to consider in study abroad.

Riki was so deeply involved in the drum team that it ultimately led to his leaving the college without a qualification. On the surface level, he appeared to be wasting time and lacked the desire to study seriously. However, when Riki's experience is analyzed on a deeper level one can see the considerable personal growth that he experienced outside the classroom and considering that he was suffering from a serious health issue, Riki's primary goal at GFC may have been to experience a normal life away from the attention of his parents and doctors. His comment about just wanting to enjoy life in 5.2.4 indicates that he was in pursuit of things other than academic achievement, and some of the things that he gained from his extracurricular roles were people-management skills, organization skills, confidence and authentic contact with people outside GFC. It seems that these aspects, along with others, contributed to his belief that he had become a completely different person to the one who arrived at GFC.

Ken was another participant who was aware of changes in his identity; he was the only participant to indicate in every interview that he was 100% satisfied with his experience, suggesting perhaps that he believed that these changes put him on a positive trajectory that met his academic and social goals. In the Degree program, Ken was studying subjects that interested him and he enjoyed himself. He appears to be a perfect fit for Taylor's (2008) description of students exercising second chances by studying abroad and trying to redeem themselves (see 3.4). It was predominantly his academic success that allowed Ken self-forgiveness over the guilt of past failures and to feel comfortable being in the presence of his parents. It seems that gaining the acceptance and forgiveness of his father through

academic success was Ken's primary motivator while at GFC and rather than possessing an ideal academic self, he had an ought-to self (Dornyei, 2009) based on his father's expectations. It seems that after finding enjoyment in studying and re-inventing himself, Ken assumed this ought-to self for himself and made plans for the future based upon it. He indicated in Interview Four that he thought he should work for two or three years in his father's business after graduating from GFC and then attend a business school. However, in his final interview he indicated that his father had "strongly recommended" that he attend a post-graduate course in Japan following his graduation from GFC and he had reluctantly given in to his father – so, in a sense, Ken was once again living out an ought-to self based on his father's expectations.

Another participant who enjoyed big changes to his life was Yoichi. The findings suggest that Yoichi's past embarrassed him and he desired a new start. Being financially poor appeared to exasperate Yoichi and his feelings may have been stronger because most of his peers came from well-off families. His feelings on this issue may have been behind his materialistic goals that he stated in 8.6.2. The way in which Yoichi wanted to be remembered, as the "greatest person in the graduated students" (Yoichi 6), indicated that he had undergone a substantial rise in confidence around the time of the conclusion of this research, perhaps due to his various successes at GFC. This was especially striking because up until that time, he had been very humble in interviews and his declaration seemed out of character.

Studying at GFC brought some Japanese qualities in the students to the fore. Many of them seemed to develop a strong sense of *giri* (obligation/indebtedness)/*oya-koko* (filial piety) towards their parents. This was seen through the comments of participants, such as Kami

and Shihoko, who suggested that the only way of paying their parents back at that time was through dedication to their studies. Even Kayo, who commented frequently about the broken connection with her parents, revealed a sense of rising *giri* in her final interview. It also seems that *giri* towards GFC friends played a major role in Harumi's return to GFC after a year off. This is rather ironic since she indicated in her first two interviews that she had no friends at the college nor any intention of making any.

9.11. Repatriation and identity

Repatriation may not have been at the forefront of the participants' minds, but it is possible that it influenced GFC management policies. The conditions which led to the participants' greater sense of Japaneseness seemed to facilitate the rationale behind separate rules for Japanese, management's close focus on the Japanese students and also how the school year followed a Japanese academic calendar, rather than a New Zealand one. The college management appears to have been trying to preserve the Japaneseness of the students true to the spirit of *nihonjinron*, and one logical reason for this would be so that they could fit back into Japanese society with minimal disruption.

However, despite the rules and extra focus, some participants reportedly struggled after they returned to Japan. Shihoko appeared to be one of the most affected and seemed reluctant to let go of her New Zealand experience. Her interaction with the Australian couple at a Japanese train station, seemingly so she could speak English with native speakers, echoes Sussman's (2000, p. 366) experience of seeking out and helping Japanese tourists in New York to gain Japanese speaking opportunities. Shihoko's social experience

in New Zealand may be at the root of her struggles with her boss at her clothing store job in Japan and her responding actively to her cram school teachers' questions may be linked to the classrooms of GFC where she had developed a voice and become an active contributor. Because Shihoko came from a conservative, rural part of Japan this may have added to her struggles to fit back into her home society. Perhaps Shihoko's hometown was not ready to accept someone internationally influenced, whereas in a cosmopolitan environment, such as Tokyo, she would probably have been readily accepted.

9.12. The Dejima outpost: An affordance or limitation?

The Dejima outpost appears to have been a limitation in some areas, such as in inhibiting opportunities to interact with native speakers and international students in English. The Japaneseness of GFC and the management policies that perpetuated it also limited the independence that Japanese students were able to enjoy in New Zealand, and likely impeded the level of personal growth that they were able to achieve. In some ways Dejima is an excellent metaphor for GFC. In regard to the original Dejima, the Japanese hosts gained bits and pieces of knowledge from the Dutch visitors, while the visiting GFC Japanese students received the bits and pieces of knowledge that they want from their New Zealand hosts; the ability to gain greater insights was consciously limited by the powers-that-be in both cases. Granted, this may not have been what the students had in mind when they first arrived at the college, but it seems that this is the extent of interaction with New Zealand that GFC's management had in mind. In some ways, it does not seem extreme to compare GFC management to the *Tokugawa shogunate* and view the college's Japanese students as the *Tokugawa* subjects.

That said, when considering this particular group of students, it appears that the comfortable nature of the Dejima-like environment could be considered an affordance in many aspects because these were not typical study abroad students; by their own admission they were lower academic, socially-struggling young adults in search of direction. In some cases the gains that they made at GFC were enormous. One of the most important things that they gained through getting out of Japan and making contact with non-Japanese people at GFC was a self-realization about who they themselves were and where they came from. This in turn may have helped them build their self-confidence and pride. Rather than shy away from their Japaneseness, at GFC's Dejima outpost, many participants appeared to embrace their culture, and recognize and accept their cultural idiosyncrasies. Naturally, the comfort of the Japan-like atmosphere also allowed the students an easier environment to settle into, which ultimately may have contributed to most participants being able to focus on their studies quickly. Furthermore, as indicated earlier, through the Japaneseness of GFC, some participants also excelled in their extracurricular roles – particularly *taiko* and the Japanese-dominated student association politics.

Wong (2015), states that "a fruitful place to look for the effect of study abroad experiences is in the experiences students have after the program", and further suggests that it is important to understand that the full impact of a student's experience may be delayed (p. 124). From the participants who kept in touch following the research conclusion I was privy to their continued progress and success, and also received information regarding other research participants. It appears that the gains and personal changes that the participants made through their GFC experiences put most of them on a road to success that they most likely would never have travelled had they stayed in Japan.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

10.1. Revisiting research questions

This study is based on the data which aimed to answer three specific research questions and was grounded entirely in the participants' words. To avoid any gender-based bias in perceptions, the longitudinal cohort was balanced between female and male participants by design. I will begin this final chapter by briefly addressing each of these questions. The chapter will then move on to consider the various implications that arise from the findings. The research limitations will then be examined before the final departing message.

10.1.1. Research question one

What are the expectations, aspirations and interests of the Japanese international students undertaking study abroad in a tertiary college in New Zealand?

10.1.1.1. Academic aspects

For most of the participants, GFC provided opportunities that were largely out of reach for

them in Japan. In response to the initial questionnaire they filled in, the most prominent

reasons stated by the participants for deciding to study at the college were the following:

- To grow as an individual

- To gain English language skills

- To become more international

- Because they had enjoyed a GFC open-campus

- Because they had attended a GFC feeder school in Japan.

Despite the absence of academic outcomes in the stated reasons, there can be no doubt that

all participants attended the college with earning a tertiary qualification in mind, preferably

at the degree level. Given their academic records back home, earning a tertiary degree at a

university in Japan was most likely something out of reach for the participants.

The pre-arrival questionnaire indicated that student expectations of GFC teachers were

sometimes unrealistic. Expecting teachers to spend as much time with students as the

students demanded of them, presumably even into the teacher's own time, was a good

example of this. This particular expectation appeared to be derived from the Japanese

cultural aspect of *ganbaru*, which proposes that any problem can be solved with time and

hard work. From analyzing the findings, it was clear that none of the stated expectations of

GFC teachers were met (5.1.1). However, this does not seem to have influenced the

participants' overall satisfaction of their study abroad experience.

A good reason for this may have been that new, more grounded expectations emerged

through experience at the college. Many of these were in relation to entering the Degree

program, and the excitement and anxiety that that move generated (5.4.2). For many of the

students studying in English, rather than simply English language skills, was a very exciting development (5.4.4), which gave them the sense of being 'real' college students. Many participants arrived at GFC with unrealistically lofty expectations of achieving high academic grades; however, once they comprehended the gravity of the challenges that they faced, such as studying topics at the tertiary level in English, they revised their expectations of achievement to where 'B' marks were to be celebrated (5.4.3). Participant attitudes to English also transformed over time. Some participants initially believed that they could become fluent in English through studying at GFC; however, they soon realized that this was too high of an expectation, particularly while in a Dejima outpost. They subsequently altered their expectations in the acknowledgement that fluency was not necessary for their future and a working ability in English became their more realistic and attainable goal.

Interestingly, the TOEIC night classes for Japanese students, which could be considered akin to having a study tutor/mentor, a popular initial expectation, became a source of frustration for some participants and a symbol of the perceived extra demands placed on Japanese students. This became an even bigger issue when more capable participants were asked to volunteer to teach TOEIC night classes. This appeared to be an attempt by management to establish a *senpai-kohai* (senior-junior) study relationship, which is still part of the Japanese psyche today (Taylor, 2008). Many students who took on this role appeared to have done so out of *giri* [indebtedness]; perhaps stemming from the support that Nobu-sensei had given them in the past.

One aspect that surprised and disappointed the students upon arrival at GFC was the number of Japanese students present, which was much higher than they were led to

believe. Complaints about the number of Japanese decreased over time, especially with the participants' progression into Degree, which had a large international presence.

10.1.1.2. Pastoral support

Similar to the academic aspects, the participants entered the college with high expectations for institutional management and student support; however, unlike the academic expectations, the findings revealed that the majority of the social expectations were met.

Expectations of GFC and its pastoral care staff which were met included:

- Giving advice on personal issues

- Showing an interest in Japan

- Providing help with visas

- Providing Japanese food in the college dining room

- Assisting in dealing with academic staff

Expectations which were not met were:

- Treating students as adults

- Arranging social opportunities with local students

- Organizing Japanese events

The aspirations of the students were fluid. At times, as reflected in some responses to the pre-arrival questionnaire, an apprehension and desire for a safety net prevailed; on other occasions, they were left grasping for a greater sense of independence by the perceived over-protection of management (see 6.7.1). The findings showed that the popular

expectation of the provision of Japanese food at the college became a source of tension and embarrassment for many participants. That said, without question, although being treated as an adult was not the most prominent student expectation in the pre-arrival questionnaire data, perceptions of being babied by management and the application of special rules that curtailed the freedom and independence of Japanese students became the biggest source of protest for most participants. These findings are indicative of their position on the threshold between youth and independent adulthood in a new and exciting international destination. In regard to organizing Japanese events, staff and faculty did assist the students in organizing the annual Spring Festival; however, despite appearances to the contrary, the Spring Festival was considered an international festival, rather than a Japanese one. The findings indicated that the students desired an adventure, but one with a clear safety net. However, as they settled into life at GFC and tasted the possibility of more independence, the excessive official support challenged their developing adulthood. This feeling escalated as the participants became more aware of the freedoms that non-Japanese students enjoyed.

One of the primary desires found in the pre-arrival questionnaire was the hope to become more international. This became a significant challenge for the focal students because the large Japanese student population, combined with the group-promoting policies of management, inhibited opportunities for the participants to form non-Japanese friendships, which was also one of the main pre-arrival desires. However, this was a prime example of initial expectations being subject to attrition through experience: the participants' concerns disappeared when they recognized the difficulties of making and maintaining non-Japanese friendships.

10.1.2. Research question two

How do the students negotiate their experiences, and how does their sense of identity and belonging evolve over time?

When the participants arrived at GFC, they walked into a displaced Japanese cultural enclave. This Japan-like atmosphere created a sense of stasis, allowing some participants to maintain their identity from home. That stated, some degree of evolution should be expected from any study abroad experience, and in the current research, the first changes felt were a sense of self-discovery and an elevated cultural awareness. The awareness of being strongly influenced by their Japanese culture was a revelation for many students. Although many of them arrived with visions of becoming international people, they were positioned vis-à-vis other nationalities/cultures and subsequently had a Japanese identity imposed on them. This was followed by a deep cultural reflection and introspection for many participants. What resulted from this process was the participants' deeper understanding of themselves and in some, the development of a 'Japanese representative' persona and a desire to teach non-Japanese about Japan. Participants indicated that they had never considered their cultural identity very deeply before leaving Japan because they simply felt like one of the crowd. In this way, the big identity shift experienced by the participants early in their time at GFC was, rather than the construction of a new international persona, an adoption of an explicit Japanese identity, an increased interest in their own culture and a rise in national pride. Another discovery which surprised some participants was that Japanese people were not homogeneous.

10.1.2.1. Navigating the struggles and maintaining identities

When the students first arrived at GFC they relied heavily on official student support and loved ones back in Japan via social media on the Internet, which acted like a figurative umbilical cord. Over the research period, their relationships with their parents tended to change as a result of a deepening maturity; the students generally began relying on their parents less over time, while their sense of *giri* towards them grew. As well as these online links with the mother country, their actions at GFC also helped the students maintain their Japanese persona.

Many participants expressed concern and embarrassment over the unfairness of the college dining hall's lopsidedly Japanese menu towards non-Japanese students. However, in reality, it seems that the dining hall's Japanese food's unpalatability and inauthenticity was the bigger issue because the findings showed that the Japanese students frequently supplemented their diet with Japanese food that they cooked together in their dormitories. Actions, such as the cooking of Japanese food (6.5, 6.6.1), helped reaffirm who the students were to others and to themselves. Another example was Yoichi designing and teaching a course for Foundation students, which appears to be the epitome of the *senpai-kohai* relationship that is prominent in Japanese culture.

Successful Degree entry provided participants with pride and an identity as legitimate students, but it also produced stress and pressure because of the range of new experiences in which they found themselves. The shift into the Degree program saw participants struggle due to the foreign culture of education, the pace of lessons and the volume of homework, which sometimes threatened to overwhelm them. Participants navigated

through the pressure of Degree by developing time management skills and by no longer studying TOEIC test English but rather focusing on their Degree courses. The students' English vocabulary continued to develop, albeit around the subjects they were studying.

In addition to their studies, some participants challenged themselves by undertaking responsibilities and seeking out new experiences on and off campus. These students were able to develop added aspects to their personas, such as organizational and leadership skills. A small number of participants took on part-time employment (7.4.2), which provided them with increases in pride, confidence and independence, and an identity as a legitimate adult acting in the real world.

10.1.2.2. The central aspect

Co-national friendships became central to most participants' experience after the benefits of these relationships became more evident (6.6.1, 6.7.2). In some instances, co-national friendships took on a family-like closeness, which provided exceptional levels of support and influenced the participants' perception of the college as their home. The peer support system caused a large decrease in the dependence on both official student support and support from loved ones in Japan.

There were numerous reasons for the predominance of co-national friendships despite initial desires for international and local friends. One of the main reasons was GFC's segregation-like accommodation policies, which confined the Japanese students to living on campus grouped together in allocated dormitories. Other reasons were perceived incompatibilities with non-Japanese students, such as the New Zealand students' apparent

obsession with drinking alcohol. The pervasiveness of sharing Japanese as a common language and cultural traits with co-national students was also a huge factor.

10.1.2.3. Slipping between identities

Despite perceived incompatibilities with New Zealand students, many participants embraced aspects they saw in New Zealanders, such as the relaxed, laidback attitude to life, and took on elements that they thought were in line with the Kiwi or GFC 'way'. From adopting new identity characteristics influenced by their experiences in New Zealand, many participants believed that their old, Japan-based friends would be surprised and some focal students even wondered if they would still be compatible with their old friends. However, following their return from their initial holiday in Japan, many expressed disappointment that their Japan-based friends had not acknowledged their new persona and some participants even remarked that they, themselves, felt no different in Japan than they did before leaving to study in New Zealand. However, while they had developed additional identities at GFC, the students had, in a sense, shelved rather than replaced their old Japanese identities. Identities are context/environment specific (see 2.2.2, Kanno, 2003; Lee, 2016) and there is a great deal of literature that links identity to language. Shihoko's admission that she never spoke English in front of her father when she was home from New Zealand, after he stated she had not changed, is a reminder of this link. By operating in Japanese, Shihoko was, in effect, operating within her 'old' Japanese identity that her father was familiar with. From such findings as this, it is clear that when the participants were in New Zealand, their New Zealand identities were prominent, but their old Japanese identity became salient for some contexts at GFC and when they

returned to Japan – i.e. they assumed their Japanese identity in the Japanese context.

10.1.3. Research question three

How do they evaluate their experience?

Student evaluations of GFC were interesting because while the college was perceived as very Japanese the findings show that satisfaction amongst the cohort generally became higher as time progressed. Despite the perception of not being treated as adults by official student support, GFC afforded participants with numerous opportunities, both academically and socially. There is evidence that even under GFC's management's strong focus, the participants enjoyed more independence and freedom to express themselves than they had in Japan. The aspect that had the greatest influence on satisfaction was co-national friendship. Friendships within the participants' intimate social circles developed into an extremely effective peer support system that allowed the students to overcome/overlook any perceived negative aspects of the college.

Academically, the participants downgraded their achievement expectations after their initial struggles to adapt to the academic culture of the college. This alteration meant that rather than feeling disappointed with a 'B' mark, the students were generally very content with their achievement. This finding is in contrast with Patterson et al.'s (1998) claim (see 2.7.1) that downgrading the initial learning expectations will cause satisfaction levels to decrease.

Studying at GFC provided the participants with a unique, albeit very Japanese, experience. The interplay between the affordances and restrictions for the Japanese students studying

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in the college created a complex environment. Figure 10.1 is a diagrammatic presentation of the students' situation.

10.1. Implications

10.1.1. Implications for students

Past research has shown us that students tend not to prepare thoroughly for study abroad (Skyrme, 2008; Taylor, 2008). The findings here showed that out of 37 students, only three undertook any extra English tuition, while others believed activities, such as singing and playing computer games in English was sufficient (5.1.1). The struggles that the participants experienced and their drive to increase their language skills after their arrival (5.2) suggests that they could have reduced the stress after arrival at GFC and perhaps enhanced their initial experience if they had prepared before departing Japan.

The findings in the current research show that the participants chose to attend GFC for a variety of reasons, but the aspect that convinced them was GFC's open-campus program, which most longitudinal participants attended. It could be seen as surprising that while on their open-campus, they did not use it as an opportunity to find out as much about the college as they could, gleaning information from teachers, administration staff and current students. That stated, even those students who did not have an opportunity to attend an open-campus event had ready access to a wealth of information that is very accessible via the Internet. It seems that while the wisdom of preparation prior to embarking for study abroad may appear self-evident to those on the outside looking in, that message appears

difficult to get across.

Figure 10.1 The GFC study abroad experience
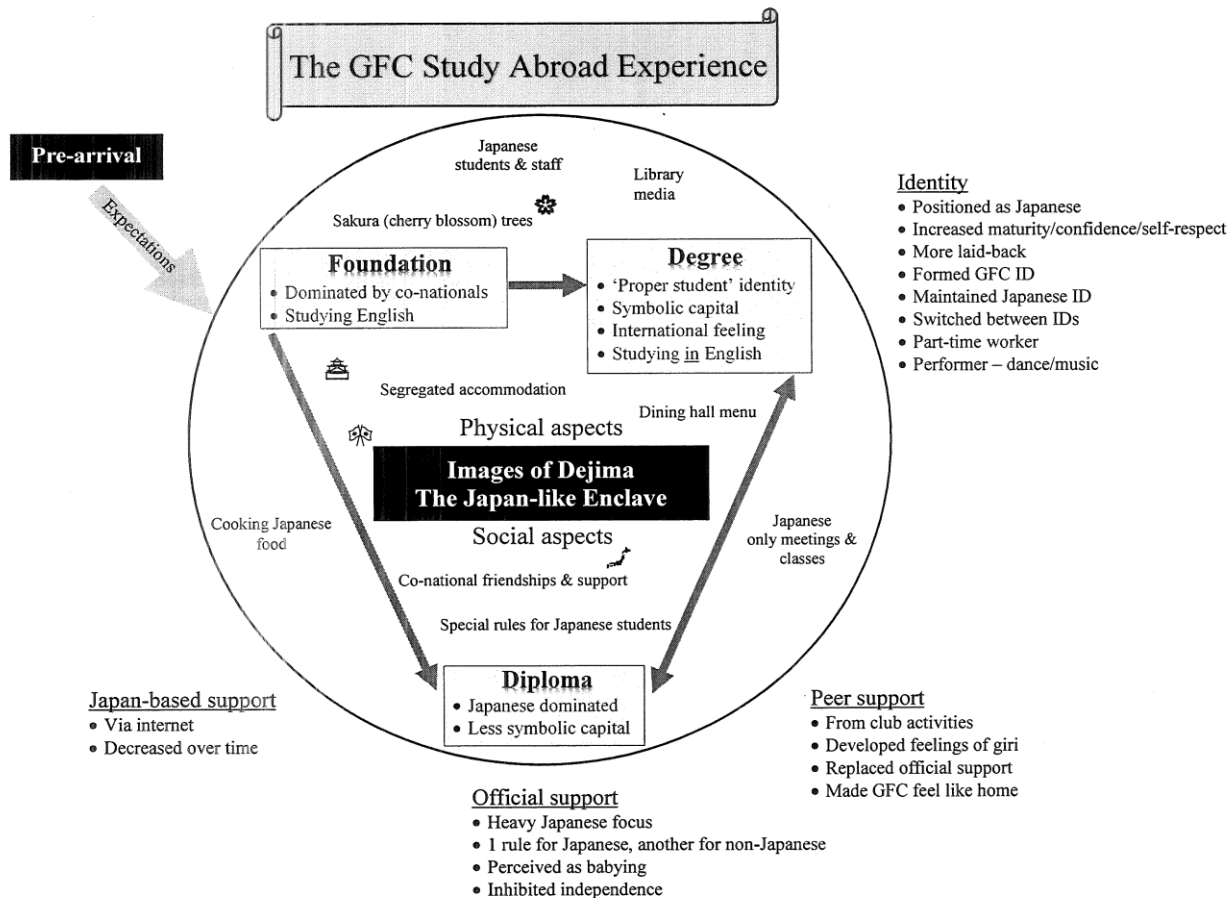
10.1.2. Implications for study abroad providers

10.1.2.1. Management & support

The fact that the participants who had open-campus experience arrived at GFC without

realistic expectations, indicates that GFC did not replicate college life accurately enough

for the students to develop an awareness of the challenges that lay ahead of them. This may

have been because the open-campus is one of the college's recruitment methods and

therefore, understandably, it would have wanted to focus predominantly on the positive

aspects of campus life. It may have also been that the open-campus students never left the honeymoon, euphoric stage of culture shock during their short experience and were blinkered by their excitement.

There are numerous methods that could be used during open-campus experiences to provide an honest awareness of college life without causing unwarranted fear in prospective students. For example, senior students studying at different levels could be invited to present their experiences and discuss them with the open-campus students. In the case of GFC, where the open-campus students are Japanese, using Japanese senior students and getting them to speak in their first language would promote comprehension. The visiting students could also sit in on some classes at different levels to witness how the culture of education operates in the classroom. The open-campus attendees could also be given activities, such as a treasure hunt in the city, that would require them to interact with local people, making them more aware of the English level needed for a study abroad. During the open-campus, it might also be sage for the institution to inform the students about the importance of having a balance while on study abroad: that is, the social aspects of studying abroad are as important for the students' overall success and satisfaction as the academic aspects are.

During the research period, all GFC Foundation students attended a camp during the mid-term break in the first term that included team-building activities; however, it was dominated by Japanese students and appears to have promoted groupism amongst the students. It may be wiser to have a camp earlier, such as during the orientation week before classes commence, because in the initial stages the nationality-based groups found in this research may not have had time to form and settle on campus, and could therefore be more

open to others. This event could also include senior students to assist with the running of the camp, which would allow the new students to get to know the senior students and possibly develop a rapport with them so that when the new students face issues they can seek out help.

The findings indicated that a balance of nationalities in an institution is something to be considered, but achieving a balance is no easy task. During the research, GFC did a lot of marketing throughout Southeast Asia, as well as within New Zealand, to attract new students. However, Japanese students remained by far the most numerous at the college. That said, the issues created by the imbalance would not have been so prominent at GFC if not for the management's policies of segregation, which worked against the Japanese students becoming international and reduced the opportunities open to them to make non-co-national friends.

Some literature states that a very effective way to promote connections between students of different nationalities is through accommodating them in mixed-nationality dormitories (Beech, 2016; Campbell, 2016). Institutions could also provide accommodation in the form of mixed-nationality flats for those students who wish to live off campus. This could coincide with a decrease in the amount of support that the institution appears to offer students. If there are safety concerns from parents or college management regarding student welfare, the flats could be supervised from a distance by student support and a flat leader could be given the responsibility to look after the tenants, in much the same way as hall leaders did in the GFC dormitories during the data collection.

Along with providing a semi-independent life, institutions could also encourage maturity and responsibility by arranging part-time work opportunities in the community. Such an

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undertaking should only be offered to those students who have settled into life in the new environment and demonstrated that their studies would not suffer with the extra burden of employment. The value of work experience was demonstrated in this study with those engaged in employment being able to step away from Ogden's (2007) safe veranda and gain numerous opportunities to interact with local people and use the target language in the 'real' world (see 7.4.2). Like Skyrme's (2016) research participants, the students engaged in part-time work in this study also enjoyed increases in their English proficiency and gained a higher understanding of the host community.

The participants' education prior to their arrival at GFC did little to prepare them for their experience at GFC, as Shihoko's comment that English study is grammar in Japan indicates. Yet, the fact that almost all participants could enter the Degree program within a year highlights the successful nature of GFC's Foundation program and demonstrates the benefit of having a preparatory program attached to institutions with large numbers of international students. That said, Yoichi's perceived need to design and teach a course to further prepare GFC Foundation students for study in Degree highlights the fact that the Foundation program could have been improved. The main areas that Yoichi concentrated on were academic reading, academic writing and presenting. This suggests that institutions with Foundation programs preparing students for tertiary level study need to incorporate aspects of tertiary level education in their classes or have classes that are specifically dedicated to gaining study skills relevant to Degree rather than just focused on getting the students past the Degree gatekeeping examination. Preparatory programs could host weekly guest lectures that replicate Degree classes, for their more advanced students.

There may be arguments that by increasing gatekeeping test requirements for Degree entry,

students would struggle less once studying at that level. However, this does not appear to be an effective approach. Undertaking the directed academic preparation discussed in the paragraph above would be far more effective than increasing the English proficiency gatekeeping level because it is likely that more study in TOEIC would not change anything. Hirsh (2007) concludes, entry tests "are not sensitive enough to indicate language preparedness for specialized uses. In some courses, specific language criteria may need to be developed against which prospective students could be assessed" (p. 206). Skyrme (2008) also suggests that raising qualifying scores alone will not produce students with a higher understanding of how to undertake self-directed learning. Rather than relying solely on gatekeeping tests, institutions could also offer classes at the preparatory level that provide students with content and skills that are more specialized toward Degree study and allow Degree program entry based on the students' demonstration of their skills across a range of academic tasks. It could also be advisable for colleges to have tutorial programs to assist study abroad students with their struggles in level one Degree courses. Senior students who have studied the courses could act as tutors and receive credit or remuneration for their work. Another method that may work is by setting a mentor/buddy system where local students are assigned a small number of international students to assist with their studies. At the conclusion of their service, the local students could receive a certificate or an official letter detailing their work. In the case of GFC, these certificate/letters could be invaluable, considering many local students have hopes of working in Japan as language teachers in education programs, such as the JET scheme, and in private language schools.

10.1.3. Implications for teachers

During the research period, GFC showed itself to be proactive in trying to minimize issues related to disparate cultures of education by hiring an international/internationalized teaching staff. Despite this, many of the participants still struggled, particularly when they entered the Degree program. Therefore, it would be helpful if lecturers also consciously worked towards minimizing the issues of transition faced by international students. In level one Degree courses it would be helpful if teachers scaffolded international students towards full functionality in the new culture of education because the students will be expected to engage in more naturalistic conversation with their lecturers and other students at the more advanced levels. Other ways that teachers can help is by monitoring their own delivery (5.4.4) pace and ensuring that they speak clearly and avoid using colloquial language. In level one Degree courses it may be prudent to follow up verbal instructions by writing brief versions of them on the whiteboard.

One major issue identified by the participants in this study was the inability to preview lessons due to a lack of information on future topics in class. This can be very important for L2 students because they can familiarize themselves with the vocabulary and the focal topic of the class. This issue could be resolved if lecturers provided students with detailed course schedules, which include a list of topics to be covered in specific classes, along with reference lists and key vocabulary for each lesson. Management could also make office hours mandatory for teaching staff as part of their timetable, which would make them more accessible to students; however, caution must be exercised so that lecturers do not become overextended.

Western teachers frequently face a difficult challenge teaching Japanese students in particular because these students are often reserved, do not like being singled out and are reluctant to speak in front of their peers (5.4.5). However, in many Western classrooms, students are required to take an active role. To encourage international mixing, target language use and help international students comprehend different cultural viewpoints, lecturers could use interactive activities in class (5.4.5) and give students the opportunity to discuss first in small groups before being asked to share their thoughts with the whole class. They could also, at times, mix up seating plans and handpick members of in-class activity groups. Employing a buddy system may also be useful, pairing lower level students with higher achieving students. This would not only help the lower students with their studies in class, but also provide additional opportunities for the higher achieving students to develop more responsibility and confidence.

10.2. Limitations of the research

The aim of this research was to present the lived experiences of a group of Japanese study abroad students, studying in a private New Zealand tertiary institution. While the participants were all from Japan and studying in a Dejima outpost at GFC, there is some crossover with other study abroad students in tertiary institutions in New Zealand: the participants were not high achievers in their home country and they had ventured overseas for opportunities that they were not afforded back home. To understand their experiences meant collecting data from the source, i.e. the students themselves. Taking onboard Johnson and Onwuegbuzie's (2004) suggestion that data collection methods should be designed to provide the best possible opportunity to get meaningful answers, I decided on a

longitudinal approach. This method allowed me to construct clear pictures of the participants' experiences and their perceptions of those experiences grounded in the data of multiple interviews. The longitudinal phase began with a cohort of 14 students. Although this might be considered small, I considered being able to give appropriate attention to collecting rich, deep data from a small group of participants as more important than having a large number of participants.

One criticism coming from those entrenched in quantitative research is that qualitative research is biased, and lacking in objectivity and validity (Cohen et al., 2011). However, I was not seeking a measurable objective reality, but rather the participants' personal understandings of their experiences in their own world (Crotty, 1998). I conclude that there was no more valid method than the longitudinal, interview-based approach of this research which enabled the presentation of the participants' words without alteration – breathing life and humanity into the text, and giving it colour. That said, this research should actually be considered a mixed methods approach due to the addition of the pre-arrival questionnaire survey administered to Japanese students before they left Japan for GFC. Questionnaires are sometimes considered a snapshot of surface data and limited to the constructs that the creator of the questionnaire thought to include. However, my questionnaire was ideal in gaining a simple gauge of the students' expectations and preparations before they left home and provided a greater sense of triangulation.

The reliability and validity of the data in the longitudinal phase was high due to two methods that I undertook. After every interview, I personally transcribed the discussion verbatim and sent each participant a full unedited transcript within 48 hours of their interview to check for discrepancies or oddities. Although some students may not have

taken the time to read these, Shihoko's email message after the research had concluded showed me that some did: "Thank you for transcript. I'm always excited to read it". Furthermore, based on my analysis of data from Interviews One to Four, I drew numerous sketches to make individual posters for each participant that showed my interpretation of their data and presented them in Interview Five so that we could go over the data together, giving the students an opportunity to correct any issues.

The participants represented a large pool of volunteers, from which I personally selected fourteen students based on their initial TOEIC scores. This created a potential bias because the cohort consisted of the Foundation students most capable of English communication, which could have meant that they struggled less with issues such as culture shock and homesickness than students with poorer L2 skills. However, the logic behind my choice was to promote communication and understanding, and I believe that ensuring that the students' English was sufficient for us to talk extensively and at some depth made the findings more reliable than if participants had had less nuanced grasps of English. Granted, the cohort in this research will not have captured every experience of all Japanese students studying at GFC, however, there are likely to have been numerous commonalities of experience reported in this study. Further arguments could be made that students with low proficiency levels had less potential to establish non-Japanese relationships; however, the findings show that such friendships were very rare even for students with much better English skills. In hindsight, I conclude that the benefits in selecting the best English communicators of the GFC intake outweighed having a cohort from a broad spectrum of English language abilities – some of whom would surely struggle to articulate their thoughts in interviews, leading to frustration and possibly attrition.

In my interviews, which were best described as semi-structured, I avoided Charmaz's (2002) method of interviewing without a guide because I sought answers to specific questions that would allow me to develop a full picture of my participants' experiences. Consequently, I did not want the interview to deviate far from the points raised in the previous interviews. I was mindful of McGrath and Butcher's (2009) warning that voluntary research participants are likely to report positive things, rather than be negative; however, even in the first interview of this research, honest comments were made (6.3.4). As the relationship between the participants and me became more *uchi*, comments in interviews became even more *honne* and candid in the sense of revealing experiences, both negative and positive, that were very self-reflective. Paper-based artefacts, such as the decision correctness graph, were used in all interviews and acted as a stimulus for discussion while also reducing language stress and refreshing the approach to eliciting data. These techniques were also found to be invaluable for presenting the participants' experiences in a very holistic way.

Seidman (2006) cautioned against remuneration in a research relationship over concerns that it could bias cohort motivation to participate in a study. There was never talk of remuneration with my cohort and the participants were unaware that they would receive anything other than a non-judgmental conversation. However, based on my knowledge of the Japanese culture, I considered it appropriate to pay back the participants in some way. The remuneration was in small gifts, such as chocolate, after each interview and a $20 voucher from the local supermarket after the final interview. Participants' emailed replies to my messages of thanks regarding participation in the study also indicating that they considered the exchange within interviews as a form of remuneration:

I'd like to say thank to you as well. I was able to improve my English a lot

and feel my improvement through talking with you. Thank you very much.

I'm so glad that my boring story at GFC helps your research!! You always

listen to me and agree with me, so it made me feel relax, because I don't

talk about myself much. Once again, Thank you, Doug ☺

(Yuka, post-research email)

I could also have a very good time to speak English and have fun time. That

was my big experience and I could practice speaking English as well. Thank

you so much. If we have any opportunity, please talk to me again. (Hiro,

post-research email)

Through the data collection process of successive interviews, it is natural for an element of

attachment to develop between the interviewer-interviewee. I believed that cutting my

relationship with the participants abruptly after the data collection concluded, as Cotterill

(1992) suggests, would have been unnatural, coldly objective and fundamentally at odds

with the nature of this project. Although I gradually lost touch with most of the cohort after

the data collection, I stayed in contact with a small number of them, which allowed me to

follow up with them and learn about their further experiences at GFC, and their

repatriation back to Japan. This provided me with a very full picture of their study abroad

experience.

From my research, I have identified three further areas of study that I believe would be

fascinating. Considering my findings on how connected to home people living abroad can

be these days, a future investigation could look at how valid the commentaries on Japanese

repatriation difficulties by White (1988) and Kanno (2003) are in the contemporary world.

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Another area of research that plays off the first one could incorporate the perceptions of families and friends in Japan, and provide a very holistic picture of identity transformations in Japanese people living abroad. A third area of study that would be captivating is an analysis of the end results of study abroad, focusing on aspects such as identity, independence and employment outcomes. This could be done through, in the case of Japanese students, a comparison of the post-graduation experiences of students that were originally peers in Japan-based classes before they divided into a 'study abroad' group and a 'stayed in Japan' group.

10.3. A final word

This research was about a group of Japanese study abroad students attending a tertiary college in New Zealand and the experiences, both educational and social, that they went through. It contributes to a nuanced view of study abroad as a complex process influenced by a range of contextual factors, including students' academic attainment in the country of origin, the presence of large numbers of co-national peers, the evolution of students' aspirations in response to the unfolding experience and the nature of the receiving institution.

The main focus of the data was on the participants' social experiences because that was what was brought up most by the participants in their interviews. The paramount importance of the social realm of study abroad was further evident in the way they wanted to be remembered for their social achievements, rather than their academic ones.

My interest in GFC as a place of study arose because it appeared that the students had

stepped from one Japan to another. The college's claims of being an international college need to be judged in the light of the strong focus on Japanese students and the application of different rules depending on nationality. However, despite being a Dejima outpost, GFC was instrumental in giving students an educational opportunity and social experience that was not afforded to them in Japan. It was an experience that allowed the Japanese students to dip their toes in an ocean in which they could see glimpses of life beyond, but always with the life raft of Japanese support ready to rescue them if they ventured too far out. Most of the participants in this research made the most of what was afforded to them and it is difficult to imagine any group of students generally enjoying a fuller experience during a study abroad while under the restrictive policies of the college. Even though GFC could have promoted more growth in the students and afforded them more opportunities to make international connections, it did provide them a safe environment and a steady road on which to travel, and for that the participants appeared to be grateful.

Appendix 1: Key to features of the presentation of information

1. Identifying participants' voices

Data from two sources are quoted in this thesis, information written in the questionnaire by the pre-arrival cohort and statements made in interviews by participants in the longitudinal phase of the study. The name of the tertiary institution where the research was conducted, the name of the neighboring university and the town in which they are situated in are all pseudonyms. All names of people that appear in the thesis are also pseudonyms. The participants in the longitudinal study are identified with given names. The numbers that accompany the participants' names in the text appear in parentheses, indicate which interview the data is drawn from. Below are examples of the two ways that interview information is presented in the text:

1. Kami believed she had let down her TOEIC night class teacher with a "terrible" score because her teacher had work so hard to help her (3).
2. She stated that during her time in the Foundation program she constantly thought, "I have to study for TOEIC test, TOEIC test, TOEIC test" (Kami 5).

The first example indicates that Kami provided this information in Interview Three, while example two shows that the information comes from her fifth interview.

2. Expressing the cohort's words

The data has been edited for normal non-fluency, such as brief repetitions, false starts and fillers, to aid with the fluency of reading. More substantial editing is indicated by three dots (…). Occasionally, square brackets are used to provide additional information, explanations or translation to aid comprehension for the reader.

3. Acronyms used in the thesis

CHC	Confucian-heritage culture, an umbrella term to refer to people from a range of East and Southeast Asian countries
DVD	Digital video disk
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
GFC	Global Family College
HEC	Global Family College Human Ethics Committee
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
L1	First language
L2	Second language
MUHEC	Massey University Human Ethics Committee
NZ	New Zealand
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TOEIC	Test of English for International Communication
SA	Student Association
U.K.	The United Kingdom
U.S.	The United States of America

Appendix 2: Data collection details

DATA COLLECTION DETAILS

YEAR 1	Data Collection 1	Data Collection 2	Data Collection 3	Data Collection 4
	When: February *What:* Paper questionnaire *Who:* Japanese GFC Orientation Cohort *Why: To ascertain:* expectations, motivation & preparation for coming to GFC.	*When: April – May* *What: Participant recruitment &* Interview round 1 *Who: Longitudinal Cohort* *Why: To discuss:* Expectations of GFC & NZ Experiences had & sought Feelings on being at GFC & in NZ	*When: August – September* *What: Interview round 2* *Who: Longitudinal Cohort* *Why: To discuss:* Issues & support Perceptions of studies, social life, identity & identity change in NZ Membership & communities Individualised questions	*When: November – December* *What: Interview round 3* *Who: Longitudinal Cohort* *Why: To discuss:* GFC festival participation Perceptions of language & culture Individualised questions

YEAR 2	Data Collection 5	Data Collection 6	Data Collection 7	
	When: April – May *What: Interview round 4* *Who: Longitudinal Cohort* *Why: To discuss:* Summer break experience Identity The internet & ties to Japan Looking to the past & future Individualised questions	*When: August – September* *What: Interview round 5* *Who: Longitudinal Cohort* *Why: To discuss:* Academic perceptions & progress Internet use Individualised questions Individual poster review	*When: November – January* *What: Interview round 6* *Who: Longitudinal Cohort* *Why: To discuss:* Perceptions of life in GFC & NZ Friendship (revisiting *Relationship map*) Ethnicity Goals (revisiting *Future timeline*) Individualised questions	

Appendix 3: Q-sort process documents sent to judges (round one only)

1. Letter to Q-sort process judges

Dear

The papers you have with this letter are for a validity and reliability test on the questionnaire I have designed to be administered to GFC bound students before they leave Japan to come to New Zealand to study. The questionnaire will provide me with some idea of the expectations and perceptions the students have of their future life at GFC and preparation they are undertaking to that end. The information gathered will be used in my doctorate thesis. I hope that you can find time in your busy schedule to compete this test for me.

Thank you very much in advance for your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Douglas Rapley

2. Q-sort process judges' instructions

1. Please ensure that there are 2 sets of papers in front of you;
    a. Pre-arrival questionnaire items for q-sort (3 pages)
    b. Pre-arrival questionnaire constructs grid (1 page)

2. On the questionnaire items pages, there is a list of statements/questions. These statements/questions, depending on the test results, will be in my final questionnaire sent to the students before they leave Japan. On the constructs grid, there are headings within separate boxes.

3. Please write only the statement/question numbers from the questionnaire items pages in the boxes containing the relevant headings on the constructs grid page. If a statement/question does not fit into any particular box, write the number in the **'Ambiguous statements'** box at the bottom left of the constructs grid page. The statements/questions in this box will either be reworded or deleted from the final questionnaire question pool. If you have any helpful suggestions, please write them at the bottom of the constructs page.

4. Please send the constructs grid page back to me (the questionnaire items pages can be discarded). Other people will also be completing this test. Upon receiving all tests, I will compile and statistically analyze them, delete ambiguous statements/questions and act upon your suggestions.

❋   Please note that students in Japan often join groups or clubs as a means of support. By joining clubs the students can develop supportive friendships and have ready access to guidance (academic or general) from the more senior students in their club.

Thank you for your kind support.

Sincerely,

Douglas Rapley

3. Pre-arrival questionnaire items for Q-sort

Have you lived in an English-speaking country for longer than 3 months? If "yes", where?
Do you have any concerns about living in New Zealand? If "yes", what are they?
What gender are you?
What things do you want in your life at GFC?
Did you belong to a club in high school? If "yes" why did you join it?
Are you preparing for your studies at GFC in any other way than through the orientation? If "yes", what are you doing?
What is your name?
What kind of student were you generally in Japan?
Poor / below average / average / above average / excellent
Do you have any concerns about studying at GFC? If "yes", what are they?
International students should approach me for friendship – I shouldn't have to approach them.
Strongly disagree / disagree / don't know / agree / strongly agree
Do you plan to join a club in GFC? If "yes' why do you want to join it?
Did your teachers in Japan: (circle "Y" for yes, or "N" for no)
Help you with your study outside class
Spend as much time with you as needed with your studies
Introduce you to someone who helped you with your studies
Show sympathy to you because English is not your first language
Treat you like an adult
How old are you?
Have any of your family or close friends studied in an English-speaking country? If "yes", where?
I want to make New Zealand friends while studying at GFC.
Strongly disagree / disagree / don't know / agree / strongly agree
New Zealand people will be friendly to Japanese international tertiary students?
Strongly disagree / disagree / don't know / agree / strongly agree
What things do you expect GFC support staff to do? (circle "Y" for yes, or "N" for no)
Arrange chances for you and New Zealand students to socialize
Give you advice on personal problems
Show an interest in Japan
Give you all the support you ask for
Treat you as an adult
Clean my room
Provide security for me and my belongings
Help me with my visa
Provide a Japanese variety of food in the dining hall
Assist me in dealing with academic staff
Organize Japanese social events for students
How do you spend your free time in Japan?
New Zealand people should approach me for friendship – I shouldn't have to approach them.
Strongly disagree / disagree / don't know / agree / strongly agree
Where did you last study English?
Japanese high school / ekaiwa in Japan / English language school in Japan / other
Who made the decision for you to study at GFC?
What is your English level?
beginner / elementary / low intermediate / high intermediate / advanced
How do you feel about coming to GFC to study?
Have you looked for any information about GFC? If "yes", what did you find?
How do you plan to spend your free time in New Zealand?
Do you expect teachers at GFC to: (circle "Y" for yes, or "N" for no)
Help you with your study outside class

Spend as much time with you as needed with your studies
Introduce you to someone who helped you with your studies
Show sympathy to you because English is not your first language
Treat you like an adult
Show an interest in Japan
I want to make international friends while studying at GFC.
Strongly disagree / disagree / don't know / agree / strongly agree
Why was GFC chosen as your place of study?

4. Q-sort Pre-arrival questionnaire items construct grid

Pre-arrival Questionnaire constructs grid

(1) Biographic details	(2) Education till now	(3) College choice

(4) Preparation	(5) Expectations	(6) Support

(7) Ambiguous items		

If you have some helpful suggestions, please write them on the lines below:

_____

_____

_____

Appendix 4: Approval and confirmation

1. MUHEC Approval

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

21 March 2012

Douglas Rapley
2 Luton Street
Hokowhitu
PALMERSTON NORTH 4410

Dear Douglas

Re: **HEC: Southern B Application – 12/06**
        The expectations and experiences of a group of Japanese international students studying at a New Zealand private tertiary institution

Thank you for your letter dated 8 March 2012.

On behalf of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application are now approved. Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair
Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B

cc   Dr Peter Petrucci   Dr Gillian Skyrme
     School of Linguistics &   School of Linguistics &
       International Languages   International Languages
     PN231   **PN231**

     Prof Cynthia White, HoS
     School of Linguistics &
       International Languages
     PN231

2. Massey University research committee confirmation report

DRC 13.3

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL

Doctoral Research Committee

CONFIRMATION REPORT FOR PhD & DClinPsych CANDIDATES

You are requested to arrange the confirmation event for the candidate below. It is the responsibility of the confirmation committee convenor to ensure that this proforma (DRC 13/3) is complete. The DRC 13/1 has been forwarded to the candidate to complete and DRC 13/2 has been forwarded to the candidate's supervisor to complete.

When you receive this proforma please bring it to the attention of the candidate and their supervisor and discuss the requirements for confirmation in your academic unit and work together towards confirmation. This form should be returned to the Graduate Research School separately from proformas DRC 13/1 and DRC 13/2. If for any reason confirmation cannot be completed by the due date, please advise the doctoral secretariat (doctoral.office@massey.ac.nz or ext 7922/7738/2909).

Please refer to the Handbook for Doctoral Study for the confirmation process or view on the web at http://students.massey.ac.nz/doctoralhandbook.htm
Thank you!

Candidate Name: Douglas Rapley   **Academic Unit:** Humanities
Confirmation Due Date: 18 March 2013   (2nd language teaching)

CONFIRMATION REPORT CHECKLIST
To be completed by the candidate and the supervisor (or co-supervisor if the supervisor is away) following the confirmation event.

We have discussed the following issues (candidates and supervisors should each retain a copy of this checklist for future reference at follow up meetings). If options **3** or **4** from below are recommended, this section should not be completed.

Items	Have these issues been discussed? Please comment.
Supervisory Meetings: Time/frequency	Regular meetings are scheduled every 2 - 3 weeks
Weekly time commitments expected: Annual leave arrangements (4 weeks/year)	Time commitments have been discussed and continue to be in consideration.
Thesis outline/research plan/ timelines	A plan - outline for the project has been completed - the candidate is on schedule.
What is needed to complete an adequate thesis	yes.
Facilities/resources available, e.g. for field trips, lab work, library, conferences, scholarships	yes.
Requirements for successful, timely completion e.g.: library skills; computer skills; writing; presentation; statistical analysis; English language skills	yes.

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Presentation of work in formal academic unit meetings or external forums, e.g. seminars; conferences	Yes. The candidate presented at the recent CLESOL conference (Oct 2012)
Intellectual property issues	Yes, discussion is ongoing.
The nature of plagiarism and the proper attribution of sources	Yes.
Authorship of manuscripts including work in preparation or submitted for publication	The norms of this discipline will be followed
Ethical issues, including: code of conduct for research: human/animal ethics/genetic technology clearances obtained	Ethical procedures have been completed.
Occupational health & safety	N/A
Career planning including short courses	N/A
Involvement in academic unit activities, e.g. student groups, seminars, committees	Yes.

CONFIRMATION COMMITTEE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION
To be completed by the Convenor of the Confirmation Committee

1. The written report on the research program has been received and approved. It meets both DRC and academic unit requirements. **Yes** ☑ **No** ☐

2. The candidate has made a presentation on their proposed research at a postgraduate seminar or similar academic unit forum. **Yes** ☑ **No** ☐

3. The candidate has met the requirements in the Statement of Expectations. **Yes** ☑ **No** ☐
   Including any course work requirements achieving a B+ grade or better
   N/A ☐ **Yes** ☑ **No** ☐

4. A Confirmation Committee meeting with the student was held and the candidate's progress has been reviewed and feedback given on the research proposal, supervisory arrangements and resource availability confirmed. **Yes** ☑ **No** ☐

If you have ticked No to any of the above please elaborate as Confirmation of Registration cannot proceed

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Recommendation:

1. **Registration to be confirmed** ☑

2. **Registration deferred for 6 months** ☐

Please outline reasons for deferral: _____

_____

_____

_____

3. **Candidate be recommended to transfer to a Masters degree** ☐

   Supervisor to discuss with College Graduate Studies Office or equivalent.
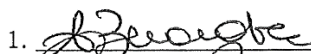
   Withdraw candidate from PhD candidature effective _____

4. **Candidature be terminated** ☐
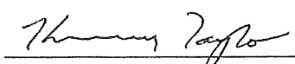
   Please explain if recommendation 3 or 4 has been made. Attach additional information if necessary.

   _____

   _____

   _____

SIGNATURES

Please send a copy of this confirmation report to all supervisors, prior to forwarding completed proforma to the Graduate Research School.

CONFIRMATION COMMITTEE	SIGNATURES	DATE
(Please print names in full)		
1. A. Berardi-Wiltshire	1. *[signature]*	18/3/13
2. Gillian Skyrme	2. *[signature]*	18/3/13
3. PETER PETRUCCI	3. *[signature]*	18-3-13
4. David Shall	4. *[signature]*	18-3-13
5. _____	5. _____	_____
6. _____	6. _____	_____

Endorsement of Confirmation Committee Recommendation

HEAD OF ACADEMIC
UNIT SIGNATURE   *[signature]*   DATE 18/3/13

I confirm that I have complied with the University's Code of Conduct for Research (see Handbook for Doctoral Study: http://students.massey.ac.nz/doctoralhandbook.htm). I give my approval for the release of information about my progress to my sponsor (if applicable).

Do not sign this proforma until after your confirmation committee meeting.

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE   *[signature]*   DATE 18/03/2013

Acknowledgement: This Confirmation Report form is based upon that used for Doctoral Candidates at the University of Melbourne, Australia.

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1. The pre-arrival questionnaire information sheet (administered)

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGA TANGATA

ニュージーランドの私立大学で学ぶ日本人留学生の期待と経験

アンケート調査へのご協力のお願い

学生の皆様,
私の名前はダグラス・ラプリーです。私は 14 年日本に滞在した後、この度日本人の家族と
共にニュージーランドに戻ってきました。そして現在、博士課程の研究として GFC で学んで
いる日本人留学生の体験について調べています。私は岡山で大学講師をしていたので、
皆さんのような学生にとても興味を持っています。

この研究をしている理由について
このアンケートは、ニュージーランドでのあなたの生活で何を必要としているかを調べていき
ます。これを調べることによって、あなたがニュージーランドに留学中により良い経験ができ
るようにすることができます。このアンケートをあなたが答えることによって、より意味のあるも
のになるので、是非協力していただきたいと思っています。アンケートへの参加は自由です。
もし参加されることを決心された場合は、終日までに回答を終了して頂けますようお願いしま
す。あなたが書いたことが、私の博士論文やその他の論文に記載されることもあります。しか
し、名前が記載されることは決してありませんし、誰もあなたを特定することはないように細心
の注意を払います。すべてのアンケートは私のオフィスの鍵の掛かるキャビネットで保管され、
博士論文が完成してから5年後に破棄します。

このアンケートでのあなたの権利について

- アンケートに参加するのを取りやめることができます。
- いつでも参加することを辞めることができます
- 答えたくない質問があった場合、答える必要はありません。
- いつでも研究についての質問ができます。
- 名前を記載することはないので、何を書いていただいても構いません。
- アンケート結果を希望する場合、終了後に差し上げることができます。

質問について
私の研究についてご質問がある場合、以下の者までメールまたは電話にてご連絡ください。
ダグラス・ラプリー　drapley@GFC.ac.nz　(06)354-0922（内線815）
マッセイ大学　言語教育講師
　　　ピーター・ペトルッチ　p.r.petrucci@massey.ac.nz　（06) 3569099（内線7403)
マッセイ大学　言語教育講師
　　　ジリアン・スカイム（g.r.skyrme@massey.ac.nz）　（06) 3569099,（内線7754)

ご協力ありがとうございます

Douglas Rapley

このプロジェクトはマッセイ大学倫理委員会（南ブロックB、申請番号12/06）によって審査
の上承認されました。
この研究についてご不明な点がある場合は、マッセイ大学倫理委員会会長代行　ネイサン・
マシューズ博士までご連絡ください。
場所：南ブロックB　電話：06 350 5799（内線8729）Eメール：
humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

2. **The pre-arrival questionnaire information sheet (English translation)**

The expectations and experiences of a group of Japanese international students studying at a New Zealand private tertiary institution

Dear student,

My name is Douglas Rapley. I have just come back to New Zealand with my Japanese family after 14 years in Japan and I am doing research for my PhD on the experiences of Japanese students studying in GFC. I am very interested in students like you because I was a university teacher in Okayama.

Why am I doing this research?

My questionnaire will look at what you want in your life in New Zealand. By understanding this we can make the best possible experience for you while you study in New Zealand. This information has more meaning if it comes from you, so I am inviting you to answer my questionnaire about what you want in your New Zealand study experience. Taking part is completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate you have until the end of the day to complete the questionnaire.

Some things you write might be in my PhD thesis and some articles. However, your name will be secret and I will make sure that nobody can identify anyone in my research. I will keep all of the completed questionnaires in a locked filing cabinet in my work office and destroyed them five years after I have finished my doctoral thesis.

In this research you have the right to:

- Decline to take part;
- Stop taking part at any time;
- Not to answer any question you don't want to;
- Ask any questions about the study at any time;
- Write anything you wish knowing that your name will be kept secret;
- Be given notes on the research findings once finished.

Questions?

If you have any questions about the research you can contact me by email at drapley@GFC.ac.nz or telephone me at (06)354-0922 (extn 815). Or my supervisors, Dr Petrucci, (06) 3569099 (extn 7403), (p.r.petrucci@massey.ac.nz), or Dr Skyrme, (06) 3569099, (extn 7754, (g.r.skyrme@massey.ac.nz) – both from School of Language Studies, Massey University, NZ.

Thank you,

Douglas Rapley

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 12/06. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Acting Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8729, email humanethicssouthb@massey.ac.nz.

3. The Pre-arrival questionnaire (administered)

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PUKENGA TANGATA

留学事前アンケート

ニュージーランドの私立大学で学ぶ日本人留学生の期待と経験

このアンケート結果は、ニュージーランド Massey 大学における博士論文に用いる予定となっております。以下の点を考慮しご回答ください。

- アンケートに回答することで、この調査に参加する同意を得たとみなされます。
- 回答終了には約 10 分程度要します。
- アンケートの質問に正直にお答えください。(否定的な意見でもかまいません)
- アンケートを記入する際は鉛筆やシャープペンシルではなく、ペンを使用してください。
- アンケート内容に関してさらに詳しく説明を要する場合は、各質問の下に自由に記入してください。日本語でかまいません。

アンケートが終了しましたら、小嶋先生に提出をしてください。

ご協力よろしくお願い致します。

Douglas Rapley

このプロジェクトはマッセイ大学倫理委員会(南ブロック B、申請番号 12/06)によって審査の上承認されました。
この研究についてご不明な点がある場合は、マッセイ大学倫理委員会会長代行　ネイサン・マシューズ博士までご連絡ください。
場所:南ブロック B　電話:06 350 5799(内線 8729)E メール:
humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

1. 男・女

2. 年齢

3. あなたの日本での学力はどの程度でしたか　一つに〇をつけてください

劣っている	平均以下	平均的	平均以上	優れている

4. あなたが最後に英語の勉強をしたのはどこですか　一つに〇をつけてください
   a. 日本の高校
   b. 日本の英会話スクール
   c. その他（　　　　　　　　　　　　）

5. あなたの英語のレベルはどれくらいですか　一つに〇をつけてください

全くできない	初級	中級	中上級	上級

6. 日本で、あなたの先生は（「はい」の場合Ｙに、「いいえ」場合Ｎに〇をつけてください）

   授業以外であなたに勉強を教えてくれた　　　　　　　　　　　　　Y　N
   あなたの勉強のために必要な時間を十分に割いてくれた　　　　　　Y　N
   あなたの勉強を手助けする人を紹介してくれた　　　　　　　　　　Y　N
   英語があなたの母国語でないということに理解を示し接してくれた　Y　N
   あなたを大人として扱ってくれた　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Y　N

7. GFCが進学先になった理由は何ですか

   ....
   ....

8. 誰が、あなたがGFCで勉強することを決めましたか

   ....
   ....

9. GFCはあなたに適した大学だと思いますか　一つに〇をつけてください

全くそう思わない	そう思わない	分からない	そう思う	すごくそう思う

10. あなたは GFC について何か情報を調べたことがありますか
    はい/いいえ　　「はい」の場合、どんな情報を得られましたか
    ....
    ....

11. あなたは、オリエンテーション以外に GFC で勉強するための準備を
    していますか
    はい/いいえ　　「はい」の場合、どんなことをしていますか
    ....
    ....

12. あなたは GFC で学生生活を過ごすことで、何を得たいと思いますか
    ....
    ....

13. あなたは GFC で部活動に参加する予定ですか
    はい/いいえ　　「はい」の場合、なぜ参加したいと思っていますか
    ....
    ....

14. あなたは GFC 在学中に多国籍の友人を作りたいですか
    一つに〇をつけてください

全くそう思わない	そう思わない	分からない	そう思う	すごくそう思う

15. ニュージーランド人は、日本からの学生に友好的であると想像しますか
    一つに〇をつけてください

全くそう思わない	そう思わない	分からない	そう思う	すごくそう思う

16. あなたは GFC 在学中にニュージーランド人の友人をつくりたいと思いますか
    一つに〇をつけてください

全くそう思わない	そう思わない	分からない	そう思う	すごくそう思う

17. ニュージーランド人の方から友好的にあなたに接してくるべきだと思いますか
（あなたの方から近づくのではなく）一つに〇をつけてください

全くそう思わない	そう思わない	分からない	そう思う	すごくそう思う

18. GFC の先生に期待すること（「はい」に場合 Y に、「いいえ」の場合 N に〇を
つけてください）

授業以外であなたに勉強を教えてくれる　　　　　　　　　　　　Y　N
あなたの勉強のために必要な時間を十分に割いてくれる　　　　　Y　N
あなたの勉強を手助けする人を紹介してくれる　　　　　　　　　Y　N
英語があなたの母国語でないということに同情を示してくれる　Y・N
あなたを大人として扱ってくれる　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Y　N
日本に興味を示してくれる　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Y　N

19. あなたは GFC のサポートスタッフにどんなことをしてもらいたいですか
（「はい」の場合 Y に、「いいえ」の場合 N に〇をつけてください）

あなたとニュージーランド人生徒の交流の機会を設けること　　　Y　N
あなたの個人的な問題の相談にのること　　　　　　　　　　　　Y　N
日本に興味を示すこと　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Y　N
あなたがしてほしいことすべてを手助けすること　　　　　　　　Y　N
あなたを大人として扱うこと　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Y　N
あなたの部屋を掃除すること　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Y　N
あなた自身とあなたの持ち物の管理をすること　　　　　　　　　Y　N
ビザ取得のための手助けをすること　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Y　N
食堂でいろいろな日本料理を提供すること　　　　　　　　　　　Y　N
あなたと先生の仲介役になること　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Y　N
生徒のために日本のイベント（お茶会、日本映画の上映など）を行うこと Y　N

20. あなたは GFC で学ぶことについて、何か心配なことはありますか
はい/いいえ　　「はい」の場合、どんなことが心配ですか
....
....

21. あなたはニュージーランドに住むことについて、何か心配はありますか
はい/いいえ　　「はい」の場合、どんなことが心配ですか
....
....

4. The pre-arrival questionnaire (English translation)

> **The expectations and experiences of a group of Japanese**
>
> **international students studying at a New Zealand private**

Dear student, thank you for your time and effort in answering this questionnaire.

This questionnaire will provide information to be used in a doctoral thesis submitted to Massey University, New Zealand.

Instructions

- Consent will be considered given through the completion of this questionnaire.
- This questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.
- Please answer honestly - what may be considered a negative answer is just as valuable to this study as what might be considered a positive answer.
- Please use a pen to answer the questions.
- If you would like to supplement your answers by adding comments, please write them below each question.

After completing the questionnaire please give it to Mr. Watanabe.

Thank you in advance,

Douglas Rapley

1. *Male   Female*

2. Age ....

3. What kind of student were you in Japan? Please circle one answer.

Poor	Below average	Average	Above average	Excellent

4. Where did you last study English? Please circle one answer.
    a. Japanese high school
    b. An ekaiwa in Japan
    c. Other (please explain) ……………………………………………………………

5. What is your English level? Please circle one answer.

Beginner	Elementary	Low intermediate	High intermediate	Advanced

6. My teacher in Japan: (Please circle "*Y*" for **Yes**, or "*N*" for **No**)
    Helped me with my studies outside of class time   *Y   N*
    Spent as much time with me as I needed with my studies   *Y   N*
    Introduced me to someone who helped me with my studies   *Y   N*
    Treated me with sympathy because English is not my first language   *Y   N*
    Treated me like an adult   *Y   N*

7. Why was GFC chosen as your place of study? ....…

8. Who made the decision for you to study at GFC? …………………………………….

9. GFC is the right college for me. Please circle one answer.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't know	Agree	Strongly agree

10. Have you looked for any information about GFC? Please circle one answer. **Yes   No**
    If "**Yes**", what did you find? …………………………………………………………

11. Are you preparing for your studies at GFC in any other way than through the orientation? Please
    circle one answer. **Yes   No**
    If "**Yes**", what are you doing? …………………………………………………………

12. What things do you want in your life at GFC? ………………………………………….

13. Do you plan to join a club in GFC? Please circle one answer. **Yes   No**
    If "**Yes**", why do you want to join it? …………………………………………………

14. I want to make international friends while studying at GFC. Please circle one answer.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't know	Agree	Strongly agree

15. Do you imagine that New Zealand people are friendly to students from Japan?
    Please circle one answer.

Absolutely not	Probably not	Don't know	Probably	Absolutely

16. I want to make New Zealand friends while studying at GFC. Please circle one answer.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't know	Agree	Strongly agree

17. New Zealand people should approach me for friendship – I shouldn't have to approach them. Please circle one answer.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't know	Agree	Strongly agree

18. Things you expect GFC teachers to do: (Please circle "*Y*" for **Yes**, or "*N*" for **No**)

Help me with my studies outside of class time	*Y N*
Spend as much time with me as needed with my studies	*Y N*
Introduce me to someone who can help me with my studies	*Y N*
Show me sympathy because English is not my first language	*Y N*
Treat me like an adult	*Y N*
Show an interest in Japan	*Y N*

19. GFC support staff should: (Please circle "*Y*" for **Yes**, or "*N*" for **No**)

Arrange chances for me and New Zealand students to socialize	*Y N*
Give me advice on personal problems	*Y N*
Show an interest in Japan	*Y N*
Give me all the support I ask for	*Y N*
Treat me as an adult	*Y N*
Clean my room	*Y N*
Provide security for me and my belongings	*Y N*
Help me with my visa	*Y N*
Provide a variety of Japanese food in the dining hall	*Y N*
Assist me in dealing with academic staff	*Y N*
Organize Japanese social events for me	*Y N*

20. Do you have any concerns about studying at GFC?
Please circle one answer. ***Yes   No***
If "***Yes***", what are they? …………………………………………………………………….

21. Do you have any concerns about living in New Zealand?
Please circle one answer. ***Yes   No***
If "***Yes***", what are they? …………………….………………………………………………

Appendix 6: Longitudinal recruitment information page

1. Longitudinal recruitment information page (administered)

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PUKENGA TANGATA

ニュージーランドの私立高等教育機関で学習している日本人留学生グループが抱く
期待と経験

この縦断研究にご協力してくださる方へのお案内

学生各位

私はダグラス・ラプリーです。現在、博士号取得のために GFC で学習している日本人留学生の経験について研究しています。日本に１４年間滞在しておりましたが、この度家族と共にニュージーランドに帰って来ました。私は日本人留学生について関心がありますが、それは岡山県にある大学で教鞭をとっていたことに起因します。

この研究の目的
この研究は、なぜ学習するためにニュージーランドに来たのか、そして時間の経過とともに経験を積み重ねていく上で、学生がどのように進歩するのか、また順化するのかを調査するものです。それらを知る事で、将来 GFC に来る留学生の学習経験を改善させることが出来るかもしれません。参加して頂く方には数回にわたって面接をお願いすることになります。面接ではニュージーランドでの学習経験について皆様に直接お話をお伺いします。この研究では、そうして得られる情報に大いなる意味があるからです。参加していただけるのは、過去１ヶ月以内に GFC の基礎コースで学習するためにニュージーランドに来られた方です。なお、この研究への参加は全く自主的なものです。

この研究に参加してくださる場合
- GFC キャンパス内の一室で一対一の面接方式により、今後２年間にわたり７回を上限として、留学について感じていること、経験したこと、上手くいかないこと、上手くいっていることなどを約４０分の間、お話を伺います。
- 面接中は必要に応じて、いつでも日本語で話すことができます。その場合、内容を英語に翻訳します。
- 参加希望者が多数の場合、選考しますので、その場合は結果をお知らせします。

面接中の会話はすべて録音され文書にして記録いたしますが、途中で録音をやめることを要請することができます。録音とその記述内容は、パスワードによる厳重な管理のもとにコンピュータファイルとして保管されます。発言内容の一部が論文に掲載、または引用されることがあるかも知れませんが、個人が特定されるようなことはありません。氏名等の個人情報は機密事項として決して外部に漏洩しないことを誓約します。

参加者の権利
- いつでも不参加、あるいは参加を取り消すことができます。
- 回答したくない質問に回答する必要はありません。
- インタビューの最中に、いつでも録音をやめるように要請できます。
- この研究内容について、いつでも質問ができます。
- 氏名等の秘密は厳守されますので、発言したいことを言えます。
- この研究に関するウェブサイトを閲覧し、自分の発言に関する内容で変更してほしいことがあればその要請ができます。
- この研究に関するウェブサイトで研究結果を閲覧できます。

お問い合わせについて

この研究についてお問い合わせがある場合、以下の連絡先にメールまたは電話にてご連絡ください。
ダグラス・ラプリー　drapley@GFC.ac.nz　（06）354-0922（内線815）
マッセイ大学　言語教育講師
　　ピーター・ペトルッチ　p.r.petrucci@massey.ac.nz　　（06）3569099（内線7403）
マッセイ大学　言語教育講師
　　ジリアン・スカイム　g.r.skyrme@massey.ac.nz　　（06）3569099，（内線7754）

ご協力ありがとうございます。

Douglas Rapley

ダグラス　ラプリー

このプロジェクトはマッセイ大学倫理委員会（南ブロック B、申請番号 12/06）によって審査の上承認されました。この研究についてご不明な点がある場合は、マッセイ大学倫理委員会会長代行　ネイサン・マシューズ博士までご連絡ください。場所：南ブロック B　電話：06 350 5799（内線 8729）E メール：humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

2. Longitudinal recruitment information page (English translation)

Dear student,

My name is Douglas Rapley. I have just come back to New Zealand with my Japanese family after 14 years in Japan and I am doing research for my PhD on the experiences of Japanese students studying at GFC. I am very interested in students like you because I was a university teacher in Okayama.

Why am I doing this research?

This research will look at why you came to New Zealand to study, and how you develop or change with time and experience. By understanding these things we may be able to improve the experiences of future international students who come to study at GFC. This information has more meaning if it comes from you, so I am inviting you to take part in some interviews to tell me about your New Zealand study experience. The selection criteria for potential participants are students from Japan who have come to New Zealand within the last month to study at GFC at the foundation level. Taking part is completely voluntary.

If you agree to participate, the researcher will:

- Talk with you one-on-one, up to seven times over a two year period about your feelings and experiences, what you are finding difficult, and what is going well for you – we meet each time in a room on the GFC campus and talk for about 40 minutes;
- You can use Japanese if you want to at any time and I will translate it into English later;
- If too many people volunteer, I will make a selection and tell you whether you have been selected or not.

I will record our talks and write them out, but you can tell me to stop recording at any time. The sound files and notes will be securely stored in password protected computer files. Some things you tell me might be in my PhD thesis and some articles. However, your name will be secret and I will make sure that nobody can identify anyone in my research.

In this research you have the right to:

- Not to take part or to stop taking part if you want to at any time;
- Not to answer any question you don't want to;
- Ask me to stop taping at any time in our talks;
- Ask me questions about the study at any time;
- Tell me anything you wish knowing that your name will be kept secret;
- Review the transcript on the project website and request changes to your personal contribution**;**
- View the research findings on a project website.

Questions?

If you have any questions about the research you can contact me by email at drapley@GFC.ac.nz or telephone me at (06)354-0922 (extn 815). Or my supervisors, Dr Petrucci, (06) 3569099 (extn 7403), (p.r.petrucci@massey.ac.nz), or Dr Skyrme, (06) 3569099, (extn 7754, (g.r.skyrme@massey.ac.nz) – both from School of Language Studies, Massey University, NZ.

Thank you,

Douglas Rapley

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 12/06. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Acting Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8729, email humanethicssouthb@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix 7: Implementing the interviews

1. Indication of intent

Circle "Yes" if you want to become a member of the special study group.
Please circle one option:

1. Yes, I want to be a member of the special study group.
   (Please write your name & email address below so I can contact you.

2. No, I do not want to be a member of the special study group.

If you decide later that you want to become a member of the special study group please contact me (Douglas Rapley) or Kojima-sensei

この調査に参加の場合は「はい」に、不参加の場合は「いいえ」に〇をつけてください。

1.「はい」この調査に参加します。
　「はい」の場合、名前とEメールアドレスを下に記入してください。後日こちらから連絡いたします。

2.「いいえ」この調査に参加しません。

今後、この調査への参加を希望する場合、私（ダグラス・ラプリー）または小嶋先生までご連絡ください。

2. Interview scheduling email

Hi everyone, thank you so much for all of your help and support – you have given me a lot of data, and so in our next talk I want to focus on our past talks and remember a few things (sort of wrap up the past).

I think the talk will be shorter than 1 hour.

After this talk there is only 1 left (scheduled for November/December), so please come!!
I have put a link on the internet for you to choose a day and time that suits you best to come and talk to me.

I have moved offices; my office is now upstairs in the admin building, so this is where we will talk.

To choose the time you want, use your computer and do each of the things below:

1. Click on the link: http://doodle.com/fd96qg5y2qer39qf

   or copy the link and paste it into the address bar at the top of an internet web page

2. Click on "Show all 26 options"

3.Type your name in where it says "your name"

4. Look for the day & time that you want to meet me and click the box under that time.

5. Scroll from left to the right edge of the screen and click "save". When you have clicked "save" you have finished.

Thanks,
Doug

3. Longitudinal participant consent form (administered)

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PUKENGA TANGATA

ニュージーランドの私立大学で学ぶ日本人留学生の期待と経験

インタビュー調査参加同意書

私は「インタビュー調査へのご協力のお願い」を読み、この調査の詳細について説明を受けました。また、もし疑問がある場合、私は今後いつでも調査者に対して、この調査に関して質問ができるものとします。

● 私とのインタビューはテープに録音されます。

私は「調査へのご協力のお願い」で示された条件が遵守されることを前提に、この調査に協力することに同意します。

署名：

氏名：

年月日：

（このデータはこの調査について書かれた博士論文やその他の論文でのみ使用されます。）

調査者は研究が完了した後5年間、このフォームを維持します

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4. Longitudinal participant consent form (English translation)

The expectations and experiences of a group of Japanese international students studying at a New Zealand private tertiary institution

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded

I agree to participate in this project under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Full name - printed:………………………………………………………………………………….

Signature:…………………………………………………………………………………………..

Date:………………….

The researcher will keep this form for 5 years after the research has been completed

Appendix 8: Interview guides

1. Shihoko: Interview One guide

Shihoko Interview 1 sections & focuses   *May yr 1*

Ask where participant is from in Japan, make participant comfortable

Consent forms!   **Block 1**

| How has GFC experience been so far? |

Wanted to go to NZ.

- Staying in touch with Japan   *Wants strong mind +*
- Clubs   *skills for the future*
- Friendships — *felt she could approach people*
- Impression of Apiata   *Wants friends from many places*
- Impression of NZers

Get participant to plot their first few weeks at GFC on graph

Block 2

| How did you find out about GFC? |

- Personalize *....Interested in GFC's events...* *searched ss events for GFC on Internet*
- Pre-arrival image of GFC
- Importance of Japanese background of GFC *＊Ask about 'Safe Zone'*
- GFC classes — *In Japan-did vocab, listening, eikaiwas*
- Advice for friends before they do SA

Participant to draw in the "correctness of decision" graph

Any questions from the participant?

No concerns

2. Shihoko: Interview Two guide

Shihoko Interview 2 sections & focuses _Sept yr 1_

Get participant to plot on decision correctness graph
2 good things & 2 bad things that happened since we talked

Good = ·650 TOEIC
· New friends from new Class G2
Bad = · BF returned home
· Difficult Degree Paper

Describe your first 4 months in NZ

- Still think Japanese # too high? How do you deal with it?
- High TOEIC Score (congrats) – change your dream job?
- Difficulty in adjusting to NZ way of learning & studying?
- Still have difficulty with homework?
- Still have a safe-zone? (friend's room)

Identity & change

- Doing Japanese things in NZ? (Why?)
- Do you act & think the same in NZ as you did in Japan?
- Things you wanted to change when in NZ?
- Personal changes made?
- Doing things in NZ you wouldn't do in Japan?
- Doing things in NZ you wouldn't tell Japanese friends & family about?

Participant to draw in the "correctness of decision" graph

Membership & experience

– Live in hall, many people

- How's food committee? *– Dining room / hall food · No clubs*
- Member of other group(s) inside GFC or outside? Feeling it gives
- What is a NZ experience? Opportunity? Experience received & wanted?
- Where is BF from & how did you meet? *– In GFC*
- How did BF's family make you feel?

Participant to draw a relational map on the whiteboard

Contact with Japan

- Frequency & method of Japanese family & friends contact? (why?)

Participant tells about the photo they have brought with them

---

Questions from the participant?

3. Shihoko: Interview Three guide

Shihoko Interview 3 sections & focuses

Get participant to plot on decision correctness graph
Recent good things? / Recent bad things?

28th Nov yr 1

Spring Festival

- How was it?
- Info from Japanese staff before Spring Festival?
- Info from senpai before Spring Festival?
- Why does GFC have Spring Festival? (ask about name change from Sakura Festival -not directly. Find out if they believe whether the festival is meant to showcase GFC, Japan or Internationalism)

— Do you feel that GFC is like being in Japan? A Japanese island in Apiata?

Language Study

- Which is more useful for English skill development – class lessons or playing/talking with other students? Why?
- Study progress? Happy? Why have they progressed in this way?

— How was your TOEIC score? How did Degree papers go?

Attitudes to Languages

- Why does English seem attractive to Japanese people?
- Which languages best?
- Interested in learning other languages (other than English)?
- Why learn English?
- How do you imagine yourself post-graduation from GFC?

Culture

- All cultural groups treated same in GFC? What effect does this have?
- All cultural groups have same power in GFC? What effect does this have?

Personalized Participant Questions

· Have you managed to keep your set Skype time? (Wednesdays)

~~Questions from the participant?~~

· How are FD ss? — Heard they were depressed
· How's food committee?
· Made any outside ~~fired~~ friends (from NZ) to hang out with?

Questions from Shihoko?

4. Shihoko: Interview Four guide

Shihoko Interview 4 sections & focuses

Get participant to plot on decision correctness graph
Recent good things? / Recent bad things?

18 April yr 2

| Summary Break |

Study

- What did you do over summer? *if returned to Japan ask additional identity related questions *NZ. feels like home !*

| Identity (in general) |

- Who are you now? Have you changed since coming to NZ? *If 'Yes', how?
- Goal of who you want to become? *If 'Yes', how do you plan to become this person?
- Effects of GFC friendships on your personality

| Changing Roles & the Internet |

- Who were you close to in your family before coming to NZ? Has this changed? *If 'Yes', why?
- Frequency of contact with family in Japan, methods used, who do you talk to?
- Anyone in Japan influence your feelings? *If 'Yes', who?

| Japanese Concepts |

- Feelings about Japan now (been in NZ 1yr now)
- Responsibilities towards family in Japan while studying at GFC?
- Situations requiring gamman in NZ?

| Looking Back on Last Year, Looking Forward to This Year |

- Describe this year at GFC – highlights, lowlights & significant experiences
- Effectiveness of pre-arrival orientation in Japan?
- Important things for Japanese students to do to settle into GFC?
- Feelings towards GFC Student Support for Japanese students last year
- Achievements wanted in GFC this year

5. Shihoko: Interview Five guide

Shihoko Interview 5 sections & focuses

Get participant to plot on decision correctness graph
Recent good things? / Recent bad things?

15 August yr 2

Academics

- Current studies
- NZ lecturing pace – keeping up?
- NZ lecturing style – should be changed to suit Int Ss? (How & Why)
- Changes made since studying in Foundation? (How & Why)
- Changes made from past Japanese techniques? (How & Why)

Do you like?

Study Skills

- Experience & enjoyment of learning English in NZ
- Study Skills for success in NZ (not taught in Japan)
- Study skills acquired
- Students who dropped out & returned to Japan

Internet

- Internet use for English study
- Internet use to contact home (frequency changed from before?)
- Internet for entertainment (language?)
- Internet shopping (Japanese sites)

Going over & interpreting Interviews 1-4 Poster

Questions from the participant?

6. Shihoko: Interview Six guide

Shihoko Interview 6 sections & focuses   *Dec yr2*

1. *Opening by interviewee – talk about photo participant brought*
2. *Drawing on decision correctness graph*
3. *What's been good / bad recently*

GFC/NZ Life

- Settling in GFC/NZ – Yes/No? (time taken & assistances?)
- Best & Worst of NZ – NZer contact (perception, talking & equality?)
- Best & Worst of GFC – Reason to come? (worthwhile?) (food?)
- Most/Least comfortable English speaking situation
- Japan GFC students = international students?
- Living off campus – chance & desire

Changes

*Drawing on relationship map & comparing to map IV2 *ask about differences*

- Group/ethnicity most comfortable to be with
- Changes in Japanese GFC students (who [gender?], why & causes?)

Personalized Questions

- Boy Friend
- Hall leader
- Term 2 review
- Summer holiday plan?
- Term 3 plan?
- Graduation plan?

Goals & Dreams

Looking at/revisiting Future Timelines drawn in IV1

- Where to from here? Future employment?
- How do you want to be remembered as a GFC student?

Appendix 9: Paper-based instruments used in interviews
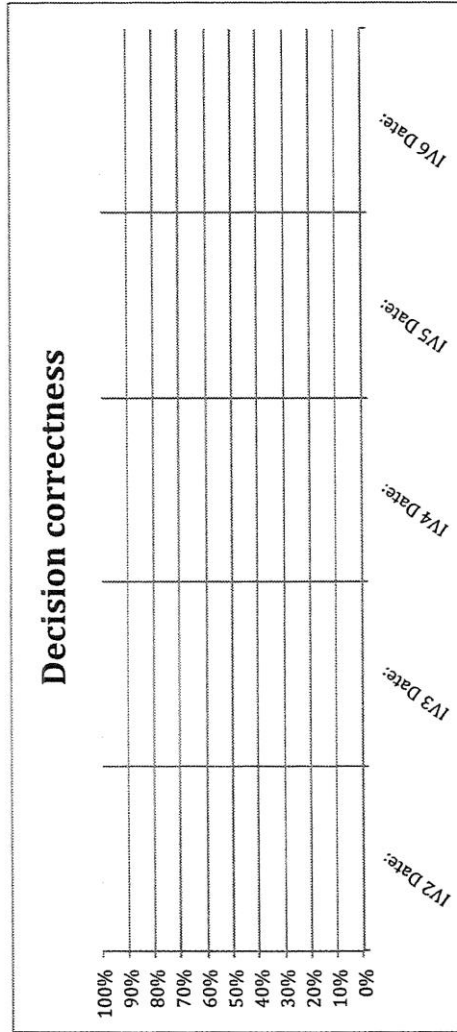
1. Decision correctness graph

<u>Your belief in the correctness of your decision to become an international tertiary student in NZ</u>

Name:

The graph below will show how correct you believe your decision was to become an international tertiary student in NZ. The graph ranges from 0% at the bottom of the vertical axis (this position means that your decision was extremely bad) to 100% at the top of the vertical axis (this position means that you decision was extremely good)

Please indicate two things on the graph:
  1. Draw an "**X**" at the percentage position in the graph to indicate your belief in the correctness of your decision
  2. Write today's date on the horizontal axis below the "**X**" you have drawn today

Decision correctness

100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

IV2 Date: IV3 Date: IV4 Date: IV5 Date: IV6 Date:

2. Future timeline (Ai)

Ai
(May 2012)

<u>Your Future Timeline - from now (2012) until the April 2017</u>

Please draw a timeline to show your goals & how you expect your future to be from now until April, 2017.

2012

ToEIC over 700

2013

I'll change Goal's number to studying better

I'll be degree student

2014

I will go to Thailand

ToEIC 790

Play the guitar and sing with my friend Miki

go back to Japan to attend 成人式

to TESOL

2015

go to Vietnam

go back to Japan

go to Australia with GFC friends.

find a job in Japan

2016

ToEIC over 880

graduation from GFC

Start job

2017

go to India

go to Vietnam

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Appendix 10: Member checking posters

1. Yuka's member checking poster

2. Hiro's member checking poster

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Appendix 11: Longitudinal cohort interview participation details

	Interview Rounds					
	Year One			Year Two		
	IV1	IV2	IV3	IV4	IV5	IV6
Participants	May	Aug/Sept	Nov/Dec	May/Apr	Aug/Sept	Nov/Dec
Ai	√	√	√	√	√	√
Harumi	√	√	--	--	--	√
Hiro	√	√	√	√	√	√
Jun	√	--	--	--	--	--
Kami	√	√	√	√	√	√
Kayo	√	√	√	√	√	√
Ken	√	√	√	--	√	√
Riki	√	√	√	√	√	√
Shihoko	√	√	√	√	√	√
Taka	√	√	√	√	√	√
Yuka	√	√	√	√	√	√
Yoichi	√	√	√	√	√	√
Yui	√	√	√	--	--	--
Yuta	√	√	√	√	√	√

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