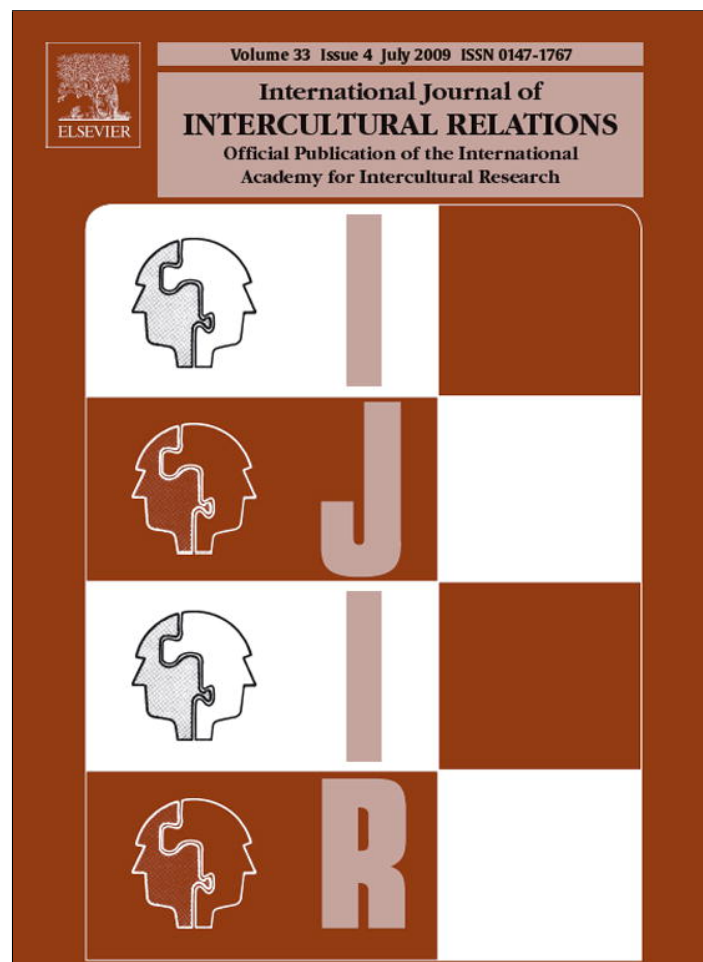


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## Contrasting experiences in Japanese returnee adjustment: Those who adjust easily and those who do not

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined *how* returnees who experienced more adjustment difficulties (Bumpies) differed from those who experienced fewer (Smoothies). Three open-ended items from 512 returnees<sup>1</sup> were analyzed. Ward et al.'s [Ward, C., Bochner, S., & Furnham, A. (2001). *The psychology of culture shock*. East Sussex: Routledge] adjustment model was used as the theoretical framework for this study.

Prior to examining the open-ended items, preliminary analyses were conducted to confirm that these two groups, in fact, differed from each other in their returnee experience. Results suggested that one function, which we named "Lack of Acceptance," differentiated the two groups; Smoothies felt more accepted by others compared to Bumpies.

In the next stage, the open-ended questions related to the items that loaded significantly on the function identified by the discriminant analysis were coded and analyzed. Results suggested that the two groups' experiences were similar in some respects (e.g., being stereotyped as a returnee, language-related problems) and different in others (e.g., Smoothies felt more accepted by others compared to Bumpies, Bumpies reported more incidents of discrimination and bullying). Results underscored Ward et al.'s [Ward, C., Bochner, S., & Furnham, A. (2001). *The psychology of culture shock*. East Sussex: Routledge] assertion that adjustment is a result of a two-way interaction between individual and societal variables.

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## 1. Introduction

With the internationalization of businesses has come the emergence of a new culture—individuals who grow up outside of their passport countries. These individuals have been called Third Culture Kids, because they do not "belong" to one culture or another but instead represent a unique "Third Culture" which exists in the interstices of cultures (Pollock & Van

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<sup>1</sup> By "returnees" we refer to Japanese who spent at least 2 years abroad between the ages of 5 and 18 accompanying their parents. In Japan, the term "returnees" or "kikokushijo" exclusively refers to individuals who lived abroad as children and does not include those who sojourned and returned as adults.

Reken, 2001; Useem, 1993). They have also been called “Global Nomads” to describe the transient nature of their lifestyle (Pascoe, 2006; Schaetti, 1999). In Japan, these individuals have most commonly been called *kikokushijo* or returnees. Although Japanese returnees’ experiences in many ways resonate with that of other TCKs or Global Nomads, what makes their experience unique is the pressure placed by Japanese society to conform (Sugimoto, 1997; Weiner, 1997) and its tendency to discriminate against anything or anyone that is different (Fukuoka, 2000).

### 1.1. Background

In the 1970s when Japanese companies first started sending large numbers of employees abroad, returnee “problems” surfaced (Japan Overseas Educational Services, 1991). Children who grew up outside of Japan would return only to find that they could not adapt to schools in Japan and could not get into high schools or universities (Japan Overseas Educational Services, 1991). As this would be a disincentive for Japanese business people going abroad (Japan Overseas Educational Services, 1989), various measures were taken by the government (Japan Overseas Educational Services, 1991). For example, between 1971 and 1990 the number of Japanese schools abroad more than tripled and the number of supplementary schools<sup>2</sup> abroad increased by more than sixfold (Japan Overseas Educational Services, 1991).

Another measure taken in the mid-1980s was for many prestigious universities to start giving preferential treatment to returnees by reserving a certain number of places for them. As entrance into a prestigious university basically guaranteed entrance into a prestigious company, returnees were no longer considered as having “problems” but were seen as those with (unfair) advantages (Goodman, 1990). Along with this trend came a decline in interest by the academic community in returnee issues—returnees were no longer considered a “problem.” Although a large number of studies on returnees were conducted in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g., Hoshino, 1983, 1986, 1988; Kobayashi et al., 1978; Kobayashi, 1981; Minoura, 1988; White, 1988), few have been conducted in the 2000s.

### 1.2. Theoretical framework

In this study, we will use Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) adjustment model as our theoretical framework. Ward et al. (2001) model posited that adjustment was an interaction between societal-level and individual-level variables. Societal-level variables included social, political, economic, and cultural factors of the society of origin and society of settlement. Individual-level variables included the characteristics of the person (i.e., personality, language fluency, training and experience, cultural identity, acculturation strategies, values, and reasons for migration) and the situation (i.e., length of cultural contact, amount of intra- and inter-group contact, quality of intra- and inter-group contact, cultural distance, amount of life changes, and social support). In other words, instead of solely focusing on the returnees themselves, this study would also like to examine society’s contribution to returnee adjustment.

### 1.3. Recent studies on returnees

To better understand how Japanese returnees negotiate between cultures, Kanno (2000, 2003) followed the lives of four Japanese high schoolers in Canada and continued to study them after their return to Japan. Although the four were very different in their personalities as well as experiences, Kanno (2000) argued that two factors in particular contributed to the returnees’ alienation: “(1) society’s emphasis on their shortcomings, and (2) their own dissociation” (p. 362). As people in both societies evaluated returnees based on their own cultural standards, returnees felt deficient in both cultures. This was made worse when returnees chose to dissociate themselves from either society.

Moriyoshi (2001) reported a multiple method study in which she conducted interviews (119 participants), administered surveys (71 cases), and executed 3-year longitudinal case studies (2 returnees and their families). Her study found four patterns of adjustment: (1) no major conflict, (2) pop-up/early conflict, (3) initial conflict-later settlement, and (4) initial settlement-later conflict. In other words, adjustment issues (i.e., conflict) surfaced at different times for her respondents—some earlier, some later, and for some never. She also found that nine factors in particular were significant in explaining adjustment of returnees, they were: (1) empathy, (2) cognitive shift, (3) attitude toward conflict, (4) coping strategies, (5) communicative competence, (6) pull-factors, (7) preparedness to return, (8) experience of visiting home, and (9) identity as a Japanese. The combination of personal (internal) and environmental (external) variables together determined the pattern (the degree and timing) of adjustment and whether the adjustment experience was positive or negative.

Yoshida et al. (2002) conducted a large-scale study examining factors that affected the “returnee experience.” Their study found nine factors that described the social and psychological outcomes of the returnee experience (i.e., Feeling Different, Self-Reflection/Expressiveness, Adjustment Difficulties, Acceptance, Advantage, Self-Affirmation, Negativity, Group Conformity, and Impact) and 10 demographic factors that explained those outcomes (i.e., Japanese School, International School, Extensive Stay, Communication with Parents, Special Provisions, Recency of Return, Older Sojourning Experience, International Community, Limited Resources, and Bilingual Male). Especially relevant was that those who communicated

<sup>2</sup> Supplementary schools provide Japanese language instruction on Saturdays for children who attend local schools.

often with their parents, those who returned recently, and those who attended a school with special provisions for returnees found it easier to adjust back to Japan.

Because most studies on returnees have relied mainly on returnees' self-reports, Yoshida et al. (2003) surveyed 486 non-returnees to understand how they viewed returnees. As "returnees" were defined as individuals who lived abroad for more than 2 years between the ages of 5 and 18 due to their parents' jobs, "non-returnees" included those who had overseas experience as long as their experience did not fall within the definition of "returnees." Results suggested that two factors described non-returnee perception of returnees: (1) Advantage, and (2) Difference/Disadvantage. It was found that those who had known many returnees and those who studied abroad scored high on both factors, suggesting that they had a well-balanced perspective of the returnee experience. Women saw more advantages while older respondents saw more differences/disadvantages. With more Japanese being exposed to returnees and many studying abroad themselves, this study brings hope that Japan today and in the future is becoming a more understanding and accepting environment for returnees.

#### 1.4. Overview of this study

Although a few recent studies on returnee adjustment exist (e.g., Kanno, 2000, 2003; Moriyoshi, 2001; Yoshida et al., 2002, 2003) it is clearly not enough. Returnees continue to face various adjustment issues, some unique to today's circumstances. Another limitation is that many of the past studies on returnees focused on young children. Further, although there were large-scale studies (e.g., Yoshida et al., 2002, 2003) they were quantitative in nature and did not provide the richness in description nor the flexibility in exploration and theory building that a qualitative study could provide (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Qualitative studies (e.g., Kanno, 2000, 2003), on the other hand, precluded generalization to a population due to their limited sample size and lack of external validity (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). This study seeks to fill the gap by analyzing open-ended items from a survey given to over 500 respondents.

Although there are clearly both positive as well as negative aspects to the returnee experience, adjustment difficulties are the most challenging and must therefore be better understood. By employing data from 512 respondents we hope to examine the difference between two groups: those who experienced more difficulty readjusting (*Note*: for ease of discussion, this group will be called Bumpies) and those who had less difficulty readjusting (*Note*: this group will be called Smoothies).

We know from Yoshida et al. (2002) that five demographic variables (i.e., communication with parents, special provisions at school, recency of return, older sojourning experience, and bilingual male) explain adjustment difficulties. What we do not know is whether and how Bumpies also differ from Smoothies in terms of their experiences upon return to Japan. Thus, in our preliminary analyses, we would like to test the following research question.

Research Question 1: What discriminant function differentiated Bumpies' and Smoothies' experiences upon return to Japan?

Once this is determined, we would like to proceed to the main analyses to examine *how* the two groups differed. For example, we will examine not only whether one group felt more "accepted" but also whether differences existed between the *types* of people who accepted them. Similarly, we will not only examine whether one group felt more shortchanged, but *how* they felt shortchanged. Through examining these items, we hope to capture what it is that differentiates Bumpies from Smoothies. A better understanding of qualitative differences between the two groups might help parents, teachers, and peers better assist returnees in their adjustment back to Japan.

Research Question 2: In what ways were Bumpies' and Smoothies' experiences returning to Japan different?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Subjects

We defined returnees as Japanese who had spent at least 2 years abroad between the ages of 5 and 18 due to their parents' occupation. 512 (male = 182; female = 315; unknown = 15) completed the questionnaire. Their ages ranged from 12 to 71 with the mean being 20.15 and the mode 17.

### 2.2. Procedure

Questionnaires were sent to high schools, universities, and returnee-related organizations between November 1997 and March 1998. For the high schools we first obtained permission from their principals and then sent the questionnaires to the principals asking them to distribute the questionnaires. For the universities, we approached professors directly and asked them to give out the questionnaires in class. For the returnee-related organizations, we sent out the questionnaires directly to the respondents.

Each packet included: (1) a cover letter that introduced the purpose of the study and ensured confidentiality, (2) the questionnaire, (3) a self-addressed stamped envelope, and (4) a small white envelope. Subjects were instructed to complete the questionnaires at their leisure and return them in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. They were also

instructed to write their name and address on the small white envelope and to send it back to us with the questionnaire. Upon receipt, a small token of appreciation (a 500 yen telephone card) was placed in the small white envelope and sent to the respondents.

### 2.3. Instrument

A seven-page, 74-item questionnaire was employed. The questionnaire contained both scalar (4-point Likert-type scale) as well as open-ended items. The scalar items were anchored (1) no (*iie*), (2) a little (*sukoshi*), (3) quite a bit (*kanari*), (4) very (*hijooni*). As Yoshida et al.'s (2002) study suggested that there were nine social and psychological outcomes of the returnee experience we began by recreating those nine variables.

Because the original study used a principal components analysis which assumes orthogonal factors, it may artificially remove possible correlations between the underlying factors. In cases where the correlations are removed artificially, a particular variable might look like it loads on two factors when in fact it should not if the correlations were taken into account (Marcoulides & Hershberger, 1997). For this reason, we conducted a Confirmatory Factor Analysis to ensure that the factor structure was accurate (Table 1 lists the nine factors and the corresponding items on the questionnaire). Results confirmed the nine factors (RMSEA = 0.012; SRMR = 0.068) suggesting that the model fit was sufficient (Marcoulides & Hershberger, 1997).

“Feeling Different” refers to the respondents feeling as though they are/were being treated differently by others or that they differ from other Japanese in their way of thinking. “Self-Reflection/Expressiveness” refers to the respondents listing many items regarding what they liked and did not like about their overseas experience, what they enjoyed and did not enjoy about being a returnee, and what activities they were involved in outside of school and work. “Adjustment Difficulties” refers to the respondents experiencing difficulty adjusting back to Japan. “Acceptance” refers to the respondents having someone (presently and immediately upon return to Japan) who accepts them for who they are. “Advantage” refers to the respondents feeling as though they are able to take advantage of their returnee experience. “Self-Affirmation” refers to the respondents being glad that they lived abroad when they were young. “Positive Outlook” refers to the respondents feeling happy about their life including their returnee experience. “Conformity” refers to the respondents feeling as though they had to try hard to conform to the people around them. Finally, “Impact” refers to the respondents feeling as though their returnee experience made a big impact on their lives.

### 2.4. Analyses of data

#### 2.4.1. Preliminary analyses

As the goal of this study was to analyze the open-ended items of a survey to examine how Bumpies' and Smoothies' experiences returning to Japan differed, we started out by confirming whether their experiences, in fact, differed. To determine whether enough variation existed among our respondents and that the data was normally distributed, descriptive statistics were examined. Next, correlation coefficients were computed between adjustment difficulties and the other eight variables. Finally, a discriminant analysis was computed to better understand what differentiated Smoothies from Bumpies. A discriminant analysis was necessary to deal with the redundancy in the univariate findings because of the intercorrelations among the variables. Once it was confirmed that Smoothies and Bumpies differed quantitatively we proceeded by analyzing their responses to related open-ended items.

#### 2.4.2. Main analysis

To analyze the open-ended questions, two of the researchers first read through the responses and formulated a list of codes. Then, one of the researchers trained two Japanese assistants<sup>3</sup> to do the coding. The two coders worked on the first 10% of the data together, revising and extending the code list until the inter-rater reliability was approximately 90%. The two assistants then coded the next 80% of the data separately. Once again, for the last 10% of the data, the assistants coded the data together to confirm that the inter-rater reliability was approximately 90%.

## 3. Results

Results of the descriptive statistics, correlation coefficients, and discriminant analysis will first be presented. Next, analyses of the open-ended items will be discussed.

### 3.1. Descriptive statistics

To examine whether enough variation existed in terms of adjustment difficulties descriptive statistics were computed. The results indicated that there was sufficient range (minimum = -1.846; maximum = 2.478; mean = 0; median = -.144; mode = .262; SD = .86) and it appeared to be relatively normally distributed (skewness < ±1; kurtosis < ±2). Adjustment

<sup>3</sup> As the questionnaire was in Japanese, we needed assistants who could read Japanese to do the coding.

**Table 1**  
Social and psychological outcomes.

	Estimate	S.E.	Est./S.E.	Two-tailed P-value
<b>Factor 1: Feeling Different</b>				
Presently feels that they are being treated differently or are being perceived differently because of being a returnee.	1.000	0.000		
Upon return to Japan, felt that they were treated differently or were being perceived differently because they were returnees.	0.471	0.041	11.574	0.000
Presently, senses a difference in the way of thinking between themselves and other Japanese.	0.299	0.040	7.442	0.000
Immediately upon return to Japan, sensed a difference in the way of thinking between themselves and other Japanese.	0.177	0.044	4.057	0.000
Glad that they were born Japanese.*	-0.183	0.043	-4.283	0.000
Had difficulty adjusting when they first returned to Japan.	0.128	0.052	2.442	0.015
<b>Factor 2: Self-Reflection/Expressiveness</b>				
Listed many things they liked about their overseas experience.*	1.000	0.000		
Listed many things they enjoyed about being a returnee.*	0.358	0.039	9.296	0.000
Listed many things they didn't like about their overseas experience.*	0.416	0.037	11.396	0.000
Listed many things they didn't enjoy about being a returnee.*	0.296	0.040	7.336	0.000
Listed many activities they were involved in (outside of school and work) after returning to Japan.*	0.247	0.040	6.105	0.000
<b>Factor 3: Adjustment Difficulties</b>				
Had difficulty adjusting when they first returned to Japan.	0.927	0.007	126.599	0.000
Felt that they were excluded from a group because of being a returnee.	0.374	0.039	9.546	0.000
Experienced uncertainty, depression or psychosomatic symptoms immediately upon return to Japan.	0.470	0.036	12.971	0.000
Enjoyed special privileges because of being a returnee.*	-0.058	0.045	-1.282	0.200
Has felt short-changed due to being treated like a returnee.*	0.292	0.043	6.851	0.000
Immediately upon return to Japan, felt that there was someone who was willing to accept them as they were.*	-0.323	0.035	-9.184	0.000
Immediately upon return to Japan, sensed a difference in the way of thinking between themselves and other Japanese.	0.365	0.035	10.354	0.000
Upon return to Japan, felt that they were treated differently or perceived as being different because they were returnees.	0.522	0.044	11.976	0.000
<b>Factor 4: Acceptance</b>				
Presently feels that there is someone who is willing to accept them as they are.*	1.000	0.000		
Immediately upon return to Japan, felt that there was someone who was willing to accept them as they were.*	0.472	0.032	14.666	0.000
Is presently trying to conform to the people around them.	-0.239	0.041	-5.838	0.000
<b>Factor 5: Advantage</b>				
Presently feels that they are able to take advantage of their returnee experience outside of school or work.*	1.000	0.000		
Presently feels that they are able to take advantage of their returnee experience at school or at work.*	0.345	0.039	8.872	0.000
Has enjoyed special privileges because of being a returnee.*	0.158	0.043	3.680	0.000
Listed many activities they were involved in (outside of school and work) after returning to Japan.*	0.219	0.041	5.383	0.000
Is content with present self.	0.104	0.043	2.425	0.015
<b>Factor 6: Self-Affirmation</b>				
Would like to take their children with them if they were to be assigned to go overseas.*	1.000	0.000		
Is happy to have lived abroad in their youth.	0.410	0.037	11.151	0.000
<b>Factor 7: Positive Outlook</b>				
Feels that they can live anywhere in the world.	1.000	0.000	999.000	999.000
Has felt short-changed due to being treated like a returnee.*	-0.103	0.042	-2.459	0.014
Is presently trying to conform to the people around them.	-0.178	0.042	-4.282	0.000
Is content with present self.	0.168	0.043	3.922	0.000
<b>Factor 8: Group Conformity</b>				
Tried to conform to the people around them when they first returned to Japan.	1.000	0.000		
Presently feels excluded from a group because of being a returnee.	0.000	0.044	-0.007	0.995
Has felt excluded from a group because of being a returnee.	-0.116	0.041	-2.790	0.005
Has felt short-changed due to being treated like a returnee.*	-0.070	0.043	-1.641	0.101

**Table 1** (Continued)

	Estimate	S.E.	Est./S.E.	Two-tailed P-value
Factor 9: Impact				
Has felt that their worldview has changed since returning to Japan.*	1.000	0.000		
Immediately upon return to Japan, sensed a difference in the way of thinking between themselves and other Japanese.	0.182	0.039	4.661	0.000
Presently, senses a difference in the way of thinking between themselves and other Japanese.	0.099	0.041	2.401	0.016

Note: The items have been transformed from their original question form into statements to ease interpretation. The original was also in Japanese. Items marked with asterisks (\*) had follow-up open-ended items.

difficulties was split at the median (−.144); those with scores from −1.846 to −.144 were recoded as 0 (Smoothies) and those with scores greater than −.144 recoded as 1 (Bumpies).

### 3.2. Correlation coefficients

To examine the differences between Smoothies and Bumpies, we computed the correlation coefficients between adjustment difficulties and the other eight variables. Bumpies felt less accepted (−.182;  $p < .01$ ), were less positive about their experiences (−.094,  $p < .05$ ), and were trying harder to conform (.124;  $p < .01$ ) (see Table 2).

### 3.3. Discriminant analysis

Finally, a discriminant analysis was conducted using the dichotomously coded adjustment difficulties (0 = Smoothies; 1 = Bumpies) as the outcome variable and the remaining eight variables as the predictor variables. This was done to better understand what characteristics differentiated Bumpies from Smoothies.

Results suggested that one function (which we named “Lack of Acceptance”—see Table 3) was effective in discriminating between Smoothies and Bumpies (Wilks’  $\Lambda = .934, X^2(8, N = 512) = 34.541, p = .000$ ). A cross validation revealed that 59.4% of the cases were correctly classified.

Based on the results of the discriminant analysis, we believed that the top three factors—Acceptance, Group Conformity, and Positive Outlook—defined this dimension. This was consistent with the results of the correlation analyses. As those who did not feel accepted, those who felt the need to conform to society, and those who did not feel positive about their experience, defined this function, we named this function “Lack of Acceptance.” To better understand how Smoothies

**Table 2**  
Correlation matrix of nine variables.

Variables	Bumpies	Feeling Different	Self-Reflection/ Expressiveness	Acceptance	Advantage	Self-Affirmation	Positive Outlook	Conformity	Impact
Bumpies	–								
Feeling Different	.055	–							
Self-Reflection/ Expressiveness	.019	.002	–						
Acceptance	−.182**	−.048	.054	–					
Advantage	.087	.039	.007	.045	–				
Self-Affirmation	−.028	.041	.071	.022	.250**	–			
Positive Outlook	−.094*	.015	−.031	.015	−.225**	.028	–		
Conformity	.124**	−.110*	−.041	−.118**	−.227**	−.067	−.122**	–	
Impact	−.028	−.021	.044	.016	.350**	.050	.079	−.062*	–

\*  $p < .05$ .  
\*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Table 3**  
Structure matrix.

	Function 1 (Acceptance)
Acceptance	−.696
Group Conformity	.469
Positive Outlook	−.354
Advantages	.327
Feeling Different	.206
Impact	−.107
Self-Affirmation	−.105
Self-Reflection/Expressiveness	.073

**Table 4**  
Number of responses to open-ended items.

	Smoothies	Bumpies
Acceptance—Q. 42. Immediately upon return to Japan, was there someone who was willing to accept you for who you were? Q. 43. (If so) what type of person (group) was he/she (the group)? Did that person (group) also have overseas experience?	206	191
Acceptance—Q. 44. Currently, is there someone who is willing to accept you for who you are? Q. 45 (If so) what type of person (group) was he/she (the group)? Did that person (group) also have overseas experience?	228	224
Group Conformity/Positivity—Q. 50. Have you ever felt short-changed because you were being treated as a returnee? Q. 51 If so, in what kinds of situations?	88	149

**Table 5**  
Who accepted them as they were when they first returned to Japan.

Smoothies (206 responses out of 256 Smoothies)	Bumpies (191 responses out of 256 Bumpies)
Friends ( <i>n</i> = 51)	People with overseas experience ( <i>n</i> = 43)
People with overseas experience ( <i>n</i> = 46)	Family ( <i>n</i> = 31)
School friends ( <i>n</i> = 34)	Friends ( <i>n</i> = 31)
Family ( <i>n</i> = 20)	People at school ( <i>n</i> = 29)
Other ( <i>n</i> = 20)	School friends ( <i>n</i> = 23)
People at school ( <i>n</i> = 11)	Other ( <i>n</i> = 16)
Group of friends ( <i>n</i> = 9)	Group of friends ( <i>n</i> = 7)
Friends they knew while abroad ( <i>n</i> = 3)	Friends they knew while abroad ( <i>n</i> = 5)
Boyfriend/girlfriend ( <i>n</i> = 3)	Foreigners ( <i>n</i> = 1)
Friends from work ( <i>n</i> = 2)	Uncodable ( <i>n</i> = 5)
Foreigners ( <i>n</i> = 1)	
Uncodable ( <i>n</i> = 6)	
Did these people have overseas experience? Yes (42%); No (27%); Don't know (31%)	Did these people have overseas experience? Yes (39%); No (25%); Don't know (36%)

differed from Bumpies, we examined the open-ended items from the variables that loaded on Function 1 (Lack of Acceptance) which contained open-ended items. This resulted in examining the open-ended questions in Table 4. As there were a sufficient number of responses to the open-ended questions given by the two groups (i.e., Smoothies and Bumpies) we examined the differences in the following section.

### 3.4. Analyses of the open-ended questions

#### 3.4.1. Question 43

The first open-ended item we analyzed was Question 43, which was a follow-up to Question 42 (Immediately upon return to Japan, was there someone who was willing to accept you for who you were?). Question 43 asked: (If so) what type of person (group) was he/she (the group)? Did that person (group) also have overseas experience? Table 5 lists the most common responses for both groups.

What stood out was that more Smoothies (206 out of 256) mentioned someone who accepted them for who they were compared to Bumpies (191 out of 256). Many respondents from both groups mentioned people with overseas experience, as they felt that because they shared similar experiences they understood them better.

I guess people who have also lived abroad have had similar experiences and backgrounds which help us understand each other. I wonder if that creates some sort of bond between us? (Female Smoothie; North America<sup>4</sup>; 10 years abroad from age 2 to 12; 4.5 years since return).

For some Bumpies, even though they felt someone accepted them for who they were, their responses showed more struggle. For example, the respondent below felt that she was not even sure if she, herself, knew who she was.

I am not sure what “my true self” is. I am not sure if I just have never been in a place where I could be myself or whether I just don't have a “true self” or whether I am always just trying to adjust to others. . . (Female Bumpie; North America; 10 years abroad from age 5 to 15; 1.5 years since return).

The following respondent felt that people were able accept her for the short-term but was afraid that if they knew her for longer, she would be rejected.

<sup>4</sup> This is where the returnee spent the greatest number of years abroad.

Because it was for a short time, they accepted me but if it had been for a longer period, they might have disliked me (Female Bumpie; North America; total of 6 years abroad between 5 and 12; 4 years since return).

The respondent below returned to Japan when she was 10 and again when she was 18. Although there was someone who accepted her for who she was, the second time, she struggled the first time around.

When I returned when I was 18, other returnee friends (accepted me for who I was). When I returned when I was 10, I had a very difficult time (Female Bumpie; Europe; total of 10 years abroad between 5 and 18; 9 years since return).

Family was mentioned more frequently by Bumpies. For example, the following respondent felt that she was not really showing her true self to people other than family.

My family (accepts me for who I am). I don't think my teachers or friends (I attended a regular public junior high school) knew me for who I was. Actually, I don't think I was really showing my true self to them (Female Bumpie; Europe; 6 years abroad from age 9 to 15; 2 years since return).

In contrast, many of the Smoothies felt that most people just accepted them for who they were. For many, it was because they went to a school with many returnees.

At my school about 80% of the students have overseas experience so most of my friends were returnees and it wasn't a big deal being a returnee (Male Smoothie, Europe; total of 7 years abroad between 3 and 15; 2 years since return).

Because most of the students are returnees, even those who are not tend to be very understanding and they don't treat me as though I am different (Female Smoothie; Europe; 5 years abroad from age 10 to 15; 1 year since return).

In sum, it appeared that more Smoothies had someone who accepted them for who they were when they first returned to Japan compared to Bumpies, and Bumpies tended to struggle more with their with acceptance and their identity more.

### 3.4.2. Question 45

The second open-ended item we analyzed was similar to the first but it asked about current conditions as opposed to when they first returned to Japan. Question 45 was a follow-up to Question 44 (Currently, is there someone who is willing to accept you for who you are?). Question 45 asked: (If so) what type of person (group) is he/she (the group)? Does that person (group) also have overseas experience? Table 6 lists the top ten or so responses for both groups.

Compared to when they first returned to Japan, more respondents from both groups mentioned being accepted by someone. It increased from 206 to 228 for Smoothies and from 191 to 224 for Bumpies. In fact, the number of Smoothies and Bumpies who mentioned someone who accepted them for who they were, became virtually the same suggesting that with time, the Bumpies also felt accepted by someone. The responses of the two groups (see Table 6) also became more similar with both groups mentioning “friends” and “school friends” most frequently. Similar to the responses to Question 43, however, “family” still seemed more important to Bumpies than Smoothies.

**Table 6**  
Who accepts them as they are now.

Smoothies (N = 228)	Bumpies (N = 224)
Friends (n = 61)	Friends (n = 57)
School friends (n = 45)	School friends (n = 40)
People with overseas experience (n = 35)	Family (n = 30)
People at school (n = 21)	People with overseas experience (n = 30)
Other (n = 21)	Other (n = 24)
Family (n = 20)	People at school (n = 15)
Group of friends (n = 7)	Boyfriend/girlfriend (n = 8)
Boyfriend/girlfriend (n = 5)	Friends they knew while abroad (n = 7)
Friends they knew while abroad (n = 4)	Friends from work (n = 5)
Friends from work (n = 3)	Uncodable (n = 3)
Uncodable (n = 6)	Foreigner (n = 1)
Did these people have overseas experience? Yes (39%); No (19%); Don't know (42%)	Did these people have overseas experience? Yes (46%); No (15%); Don't know (39%)

### 3.4.3. Question 51

The next item was a follow-up to Question 50 (Have you ever felt short-changed because you were being treated as a returnee?). Question 51 asked: if so, in what kinds of situations? Table 7 lists the most commonly cited themes for both groups.

**3.4.3.1. Similarities.** Many respondents from both groups mentioned being stereotyped as returnees. Many stereotypes seemed to exist about returnees. Some of the stereotypes were that returnees were rich, fluent in English, intelligent, could

**Table 7**  
Disadvantages to being a returnee.

Smoothies (N = 88)	Bumpies (N = 149)
Stereotyped as a returnee (n = 46)	Stereotyped as returnees (n = 45)
Being treated as special (n = 11)	Discriminated against (n = 35)
Language-related problems (n = 9)	Language-related problems (n = 15)
Discriminated against (n = 7)	Being treated as special (n = 14)
Different from others (n = 7)	Different from others (n = 14)
Negative feelings (n = 4)	Education-related problems (n = 8)
Education-related problems (n = 3)	Negative feelings (n = 7)
Uncodable (n = 1)	Other (n = 11)

not speak Japanese well, could not keep up with academics, and could get into college the “easy way.” As mentioned in the “background” section of this paper, when returnees were a new phenomenon they had difficulty getting into Japanese schools. To encourage businesspeople to go abroad many prestigious universities started saving places for returnees. This, in turn, has been perceived by others as the “easy way” to get into prestigious universities which serve as the gatekeepers to prestigious companies.

I hate that people think that “returnees” have it “easy.” I don’t know how many times I’ve had to deal with this (Female Bumpie; Oceania; 7 years abroad from age 4 to 15; 2 years since return).

Many felt that people did not see past the stereotype of the returnee. Those who did not live in English speaking countries felt even more pressured because they did not fit the existing stereotype. Some felt it was difficult to establish deep friendships because people did not see past the stereotypical image.

Instead of seeing me as ME, they see me as a “returnee” (a fictional image). They do not try to understand me as a unique human being. (They think they understand me based on their stereotypes.) (Female Smoothie; Central/South America; 4 years abroad from age 14 to 18; 2 years since return).

Because I lived in a non-English speaking country, I don’t fit the stereotype people have of returnees. I’ve had the experience where people have the nerve to impose this stereotype on me and then get really disappointed! (As if it was my fault.) I remember feeling really angry (Female Smoothie; Asia; 3 years abroad from age 11 to 14; 7 years since return).

Language-related problems were also commonly cited by both groups. Two types of language-related problems were cited most: expectation of fluency in English and their Japanese not being as good as their peers.

The expectation that they were fluent in English came with the assumption that returnees did not have to work hard to learn English. While many Japanese have the image that growing up abroad enables returnees to effortlessly become bilingual, many returnees struggle with the acquisition of at least one language and the retention of the other.

Even though I worked really hard to acquire my foreign language skill, people have often cynically said “It’s great having it easy, isn’t it.” (Female Smoothie; North America<sup>5</sup>; 3 years abroad from age 12 to 15; returned 2 years ago).

Even when I worked really hard at something related to English, people often said, “Well, you are a returnee after all!” (Gender Unknown Bumpie; North America; 5 years abroad from age 6 to 11; 5 years since return).

An assumption that accompanied this expectation was that English was the *only* thing in which they excelled. Some felt that no matter what they accomplished people attributed it to the fact that they could speak English. Even when they got into college or graduate school people thought they got in only because their English scores were good.

For example when I took the entrance examination for graduate school, people thought that I got in only because of my English scores. Even though it’s been years since I took my entrance exam, people still think that. (They think that I got in even though I didn’t do well in any of the other subjects.) (Female Bumpie; North America; 9 years abroad between the ages of 0 and 19<sup>6</sup>; 7 years since return).

When I entered a Japanese bank, English was always an issue. No matter how hard I tried at other things, people would not recognize them. They would just say “It’s because you can speak English.” (Female smoothie; North America; 7 years abroad from age 6 to 18; 12 years since return).

<sup>5</sup> This is where the returnee spent the greatest number of years abroad.

<sup>6</sup> This returnee spent a total of 9 years between birth and the age of 19 abroad.

3.4.3.2. *Differences*. A big difference between the two groups was that for Bumpies, being picked on and being discriminated against was more commonly cited. Some Bumpies claimed they were bullied for years for no reason except for the fact that they were returnees. The second quote below is particularly powerful in that it comes from a returnee who only lived abroad 1 year and although it has been 16 years since her return, she continues to be affected by her “returnee experience.” This underscores Japanese society’s tendency to discriminate against those who are different (Fukuoka, 2000).

When I first returned to Japan, being a returnee was considered “different” and difference was considered “bad.” From fifth grade to seventh grade I was picked on so much I thought about committing suicide. That’s how hard it was (Female Bumpie; North America; 11 years abroad from age 0 to 11; 6 years since return).

When I was in elementary school, people would tease me saying that I had a foreign accent when I spoke Japanese (this still happens occasionally), and pick on me. After a while I started avoiding school and could not keep up with classes (in elementary school). This habit still continues today (Female Bumpie, North America; 1 year abroad between the ages of 3 and 6; 16 years since return).

Being different meant they stood out. Some felt like they were always on display like a circus animal. Bad behavior tended to be easily noticed.

When I was in high school I was scolded by my teacher who said, “This is not America.” Other students were doing the same thing I was doing but the teacher said it only to me (Male Bumpie; North America; 5.5 years abroad from age 10 to 16; 7 years since return).

In some cases, teachers would make the returnee stand out, making the other classmates resentful. In other cases, it was the teachers themselves who discriminated against the returnees. Some respondents mentioned being ineligible to enter speech contests even though they returned to Japan at such a young age they no longer remembered any English.

When I first returned to Japan, my teacher asked me to speak English in front of the entire grade. After I spoke English fluently in front of them my classmates started avoiding me. . . as I were an alien. . . (Female Bumpie; North America; 2 years abroad from age 7 to 9; 10 years since return).

I was picked on. When I was little, even though I didn’t remember any English, they wouldn’t let me enter the English Speech Contest (Female Bumpie; North America; 2.5 years abroad from age 5 to 7; 14 years since return).

Some returnees felt discriminated against when looking for a job. Some interviewers had stereotypes of returnees as being hard to work with while others felt intimidated by their English skills.

When I was interviewing for jobs, the interviewers would see that I lived abroad for ten years and always ask me if I fit into Japanese society. I felt that my experience abroad was seen in a negative light. I’ve also heard that many companies don’t like hiring returnees because they are hard to deal with (Female Bumpie; North America; 10 years abroad from age 8 to 18; 3 years since return).

At job interviews they would ask me to speak English and when I did they would look at me and say, “If you’re so fluent, why don’t you just look for a job abroad?” I’ve also had companies tell me “Our Company is very Japanese so it wouldn’t be good for a returnee. . .” (This made me really angry but I also felt sorry for this interviewer.) (Female Bumpie; North America; 4 years abroad between the ages of 5 and 16; 8 years since return).

#### 4. Discussion and conclusion

The goal of this study was to examine what differentiated returnees who experienced more adjustment difficulties (i.e., Bumpies) from those who experienced fewer adjustment difficulties (i.e., Smoothies). In the preliminary analyses, quantitative methods were employed to determine whether these two groups were, in fact, different. In the main analysis, open-ended items were analyzed.

In the preliminary analyses, correlation coefficients suggested that Bumpies felt less accepted ( $-.182$ ;  $p < .01$ ), were less positive about their experiences ( $-.094$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and were trying harder to conform ( $.124$ ;  $p < .01$ ). A discriminant analysis also confirmed that these variables were key in differentiating between Bumpies and Smoothies.

Analyses of the open-ended items suggested that the two groups’ experiences were similar in some respects. For example, many respondents from both groups mentioned being stereotyped as a returnee in addition to language-related issues. What differentiated the two groups was that the Smoothies seemed to have more people who accepted them for who they were when they first returned to Japan. Bumpies seemed to have fewer people who accepted them when they first returned to Japan but this seemed to increase with time. The Bumpies not only had fewer people who accepted them for who they were when they first returned to Japan but more of them were overtly bullied or discriminated against. This section will discuss ramifications for theory, research, and practice.

Model for Returnee Adjustment

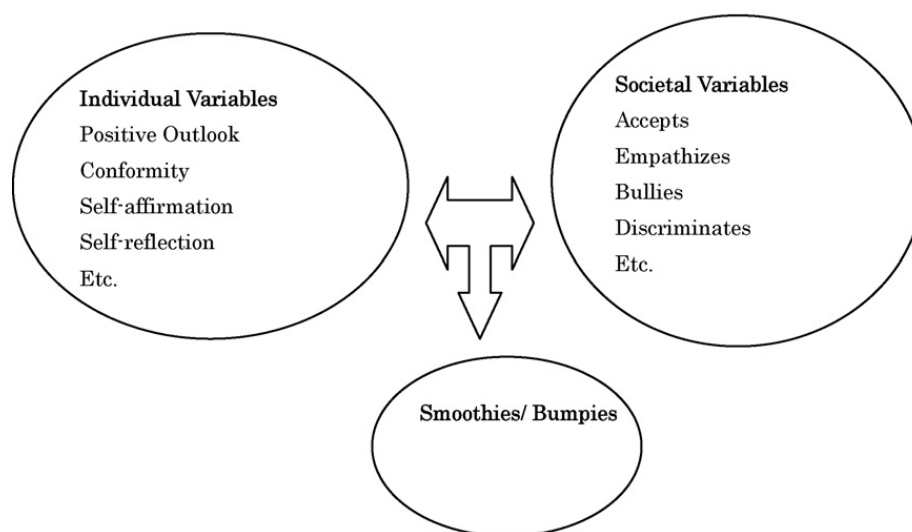


Fig. 1. Model for returnee adjustment.

#### 4.1. Ramifications for theory

##### 4.1.1. Adjustment

As Ward et al. (2001) adjustment model postulates, we found that returnees' adjustment seemed to be influenced both by personal as well as social variables. These results concur with both Kanno's (2000, 2003) study as well as Moriyoshi's (2001) study, which found that returnees' experiences adjusting to Japan come from a two-way interaction between returnees and society.

In other words, it appeared that when our respondents returned to Japan, society treated them similarly in some respects (e.g., treating them as though English was the only thing they were good at) and differently in others (e.g., discriminating or bullying; accepting or not accepting). The respondents also reacted to society in different ways leading to a more difficult adjustment process for Bumpies and an easier one for Smoothies (see Fig. 1).

#### 4.2. Ramifications for research

By analyzing the open-ended items from a large-scale study we were able to obtain qualitative data from a large number of respondents. This approach was successful in that it provided us with information that we could not have been obtained from quantitative analyses. The results also reflected the experiences of hundreds of returnees.

At the same time, although the open-ended items provided us with more detailed responses and stories than quantitative data could, the responses were often short and lacking in detail. A follow-up focus group would have enabled us to ask the respondents to expand more on each story. Respondents could have built on each other's stories, resulting in more and richer data. Future studies might want to pursue this. Separating focus groups into various segments based on age, gender, or difficulty of adjustment experiences might be helpful as well.

#### 4.3. Ramifications for practice

Overall, this study underscores the key role society plays in returnees' adjustment. When society does not accept them for who they are or bullies or discriminates against them, they experience more adjustment difficulties. When they do not, they experience less adjustment difficulties.

Teachers are especially important in that they can influence the way other students treat returnees. For example, one of the quotes introduced earlier illustrated how a teacher's well-meaning gesture (e.g., asking the student to speak English in front of the class) caused resentment from other students. Teachers need to be more aware of the dynamics of peer relationships. At the same time, for some, it was the teachers who accepted them for who they were. Others claimed that they were discriminated against by adults, especially teachers. Either way, it is clear that teachers have a very strong influence on returnees' experiences.

Parents, teachers, and peers can begin by seeing the returnees as individuals, as opposed to a stereotype, and accept them for who they are. As one of our respondents claimed, "being a returnee was considered different and difference was considered bad." Parents, teachers, and society need to educate themselves as well as the next generation that being "different" is not necessarily "bad"; to be able to openly accept new and different people as well as ways of thinking. In the same way that the returnees' experiences abroad helped many see the world from diverse perspectives, we hope that their presence in Japanese society will also help others expand their worldviews.

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