Study Abroad in Japan

A study on the psychological and sociocultural adjustment of international exchange students studying at Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan.

Master Thesis

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Abstract

This study investigated the psychological and sociocultural adjustment of 77 international exchange students studying at Kwansei Gakuin University in Japan. The present study suggested the use of alternative and additional variables to Searle and Ward's (1990) model of adjustment during cross-cultural transitions, on which this study was built. This study found that the multicultural personality traits cultural empathy, open mindedness and emotional stability were positively linked to psychological adjustment. In addition, English language use and quality of contact with locals were positively linked to sociocultural adjustment. Moreover, English language use and quality of contact with locals were found to positively correlate with academic adaptation, a subscale of sociocultural adjustment. Furthermore, Japanese language proficiency, English language use and quality of contact with locals were found to positively correlate with adaptation to daily life, another subscale of sociocultural adjustment. Finally, Japanese language use and quality of contact with locals were found to be a significant predictor interpersonal adaptation, the third subscale of sociocultural adjustment.

In general, the results of the present study were not in line with previous research. Therefore, limitations of the present study and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Keywords: intercultural adjustment, multicultural personality traits, foreign language proficiency, international students, study abroad, exchange

1. Introduction

In 2008 the Japanese government announced plans to increase the number of international students studying in Japan from 140,000 to 300,000 by 2020 (MEXT, 2008; Kakuchi, 2014). To attract international students, the Japanese government stimulated the development of English-taught short-term exchange programs, and promoted opportunities to study Japanese culture and language in Japan (Horie, 2002; Kudo, 2016; Lassegard, 2016). As a result, the number of international students studying in Japan swiftly increased (JASSO, 2016; OECD, 2016). Japan is currently number seven of the top ten destination countries that students choose for studying abroad, with a total of 208,379 international students studying in Japan (JASSO, 2016; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016).

For international students, studying abroad is said to lead to many advantages, such as cultural enrichment, acquisition of multicultural skills, improvement of language skills, and expansion of academic knowledge (Centraal Planbureau, 2012; OECD, 2013; Nuffic, 2015). Moreover, students with experience abroad often seem to be in advantage when they are searching for jobs, as employers increasingly search for employees who are able to work effectively amongst different cultures (Harrison, Chadwick & Scales, 1996). In spite of these supposed advantages, there also seem to be some less positive sides to studying abroad. During their sojourn, international students have been found to be concerned about their academic achievements and language proficiency (Li & Gasser, 2005; Lee & Ciftci, 2014) and are not always pleased with their social experience (Glass & Westmont, 2014). And whilst a study abroad experience should be marked by cultural exchange, international students "spend more time socializing and studying with members of their own cultural groups than people from other ethnic backgrounds" (Brown & Daly, 2004, p. 3). In fact, a study in New Zealand found that a quarter of the international students surveyed had never even socialized with locals (Butcher, 2002). It is thus not surprising that a shared opinion among educators is "that international students are insufficiently adjusted" (Rienties & Tempelaars, 2013, p. 188).

To a certain extent, however, it could be argued that insufficient adjustment might be caused by segregation at host universities. In Japan, for example, an exchange program is designed for international students to experience studying at a Japanese university rather than obtaining a diploma (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2016). Within the exchange program, universities offer a variety of English-taught classes (MEXT, 2010). Although the development of these classes is aimed at reducing language barriers, it also limits contact of exchange students with local students in class. In addition, host universities often provide housing to

exchange students in the form of a dorm for international students who are on a short-term exchange (MEXT, 2010), once again separating international exchange students and locals.

Thus far, studies investigating the adjustment of international students in Japan have mainly focused on students obtaining a full degree (e.g. Tanaka, Takai, Kohyama & Fujihara, 1994; Simic-Yamashita & Tanaka, 2010). However, as the number of international exchange students in Japan continues to increase, and the development of short-term exchange programs is "an important trend in Japanese higher education" (Lassegard, 2016, p. 53), research should focus on this particular group of international students. Surprisingly, limited studies have thus far focused on the adjustment of international students attending short-term exchange programs (Custer, 2016). The present study therefore investigated the adjustment of international exchange students in Japan.

1.1 Searle & Ward's Model of Adjustment

The present study builds on Searle and Ward's (1990) model of adjustment during cross-cultural transitions. Searle and Ward suggest that sojourner adjustment can be measured by psychological and sociocultural adjustment, two distinct aspects of intercultural adjustment (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen & Van Horn, 2002; Li & Gasser, 2005). Psychological adjustment encompasses a sojourners' general "well-being and satisfaction" (Searle & Ward, 1990, p. 450). Sociocultural adjustment encompasses "the ability to fit in and to negotiate interactive aspects of the new culture" (Searle & Ward, 1990, p. 450).

A series of studies by Ward and her colleagues further developed the model by showing that both types of adjustment are predicted by different variables (Zlobina, Basabe, Paez & Furnham, 2006). Variables such as personality and life changes were found to predict psychological adjustment (Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999; Leong, 2007), whereas variables such as length of residence in the host country, language proficiency, and quantity and satisfaction of contact with host nationals were found to be predictors of sociocultural adjustment (Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999; Zlobina, Basabe, Paez & Furnham, 2006).

Many scholars have successfully used Searle and Ward's model to predict the psychological and sociocultural adjustment of various target groups such as students (e.g. Masgoret, 2006), migrants (e.g. Zlobina, Basabe, Paez & Furnham, 2006) and expats (e.g. Van Oudenhoven, Mol, & Van der Zee, 2003). The model was even said to have "dominated acculturation research" (Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis & Sam, 2011, p. 324).

However, there is a need to further explore Searle and Ward's model with alternative and additional variables (Yang, Noels & Saumure, 2006). Therefore, the present study used Searle and Ward's model as a framework, and further explored alternative and additional variables in the sections below.

1.2 Psychological Adjustment

Searle and Ward define psychological adjustment as a sojourner's "well-being and satisfaction" (Searle & Ward, 1990, p. 450), and refer to the concept as psychological well-being. They have chosen to measure psychological well-being by "the amount of depressive symptomatology experienced in acculturation" (Leong, 2007, p. 548), arguing that higher amounts of depressive signs indicate a lower psychological well-being. Depression can thus be seen as a negative sign of a sojourners' psychological adjustment.

Many researchers have followed Searle and Ward's example in using a depression scale for measuring psychological well-being in a cross-cultural context (Zhang & Goodson, 2011; Tonsing, 2013; Hirai, Frazier & Syed, 2015). However, definitions of psychological well-being often include positive aspects that cannot be measured by depressive symptomology (Hirai, Frazier and & Syed, 2015). Using a depression scale is thus not always comprehensive enough for measuring psychological well-being as it "does not necessarily imply that the individual is satisfied or happy with life in the host society" (Tonsing, 2013, p. 240). The present study therefore proposes positive psychological well-being to be used as an alternative in Searle and Ward's model.

In a comparative study on the development of depression and positive psychological well-being among international students' first year of their sojourn in the United States, it was found that depression and positive psychological well-being each develop in a different way (Hirai, Frazier & Syed, 2015). Psychological distress was found to decrease over time and positive psychological well-being was found to stay rather constant. The two concepts thus not only differ in definition, but also in development.

In a series of studies, Ryff (1989) investigated the construct validity of scales measuring psychological well-being. She concluded that "they neglect critical components of positive functioning and they fail to define the essential underlying features of psychological well-being" (Ponterotto, Costa-Wofford, Brobst, Spelliscy, Kacanski, Scheinholtz & Martines, 2007, p. 122). As a result, Ryff constructed a new scale for positive psychological well-being: Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being (SPWB). The scale measures psychological well-being in

the sense of happiness and life satisfaction. Scholars have praised Ryff for the thorough construction and comprehensive theoretical foundation of this tool (Van Dierendonck, 2004; Ponterotto, Costa-Wofford, Brobst, Spelliscy, Kacanski, Scheinholtz, & Martines, 2007; Akhter, 2015) and have used the SPWB in various studies to measure psychological well-being (e.g. Akhter, 2015). However, the relationship between Searle and Ward's predictor variables of psychological adjustment, and psychological adjustment in the sense of positive psychological well-being has only been investigated by a few studies (Tonsing, 2013). Therefore, the present study measured psychological adjustment by Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being.

1.2.1 Multicultural Personality Traits
Personality traits have been the focus of many studies regarding intercultural encounters and cross-cultural adjustment (e.g. Mak & Tran, 2001; Ward, Leong & Low, 2004), and have been reported to be significant predictors of psychological adjustment (e.g. Ward, Leong & Low, 2004; Van Erp, Van der Zee, Giebels & Van Duijn, 2014). An often-used tool to describe and measure personality traits is The Five Factor Model (FFM), also referred to as the Big Five (McCrae & Costa, 1985). The model comprises five dimensions of personality: openness to experience (e.g. curiosity, need for variety), conscientiousness (reliable, well-organized), extraversion (outgoing), agreeableness (compassionate), and neuroticism (emotional instability). Even though the FFM has been proven to be a reliable measurement of personality traits, the traits are not always clearly distinguished and some traits, such as extraversion and agreeableness, are susceptible to influences of culture (Gurven, Von Rueden, Massenkoff, Kaplan & Lero Vie, 2013), making the FFM an unreliable tool in international settings. Moreover, the FFM has been criticized to be "too heterogeneous and incomplete" in order to properly predict the personality dimensions mentioned (Hough, 1992, p. 139). Therefore, the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) was developed as a tool for measuring personality characteristics in international settings (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2001).

The MPQ measures five personality traits that are indispensable for successfully operating in international settings: cultural empathy (showing sincere interest in people with another cultural background), open mindedness (open and unbiased attitude towards a different culture), social initiative (initiating and maintaining contact with locals), emotional stability (coping with stressful or difficult situations) and flexibility (adjusting behavior in new situations) (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2001). The MPQ has been found to be an important predictor

of an individual's capability to adapt to an intercultural situation (Van der Zee, Van Oudenhoven, Ponterotto & Fietzer, 2013). Research has shown that the predictive validity of the MPQ is higher than that of the Big Five when it comes to predicting successful adjustment of international students (Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002).

In past studies focusing on the relationship between international students' multicultural personality traits and psychological adjustment, psychological adjustment was often measured by depressive symptomology. In a study by Leong, for example, higher levels of all five multicultural personality traits were found to be related to lower psychological distress among Singaporean exchange students (Leong, 2007). In addition, higher levels of cultural empathy and open-mindedness were found to be related to less psychological stress and homesickness, in a study among exchange students in Russia (Suanet & Van de Vijver, 2009).

A few studies have researched the relationship between multicultural personality traits and positive psychological adjustment. For instance, the MPQ traits open mindedness, social initiative, and adaptation (combination of flexibility and emotional stability) were found to positively correlate with the SPWB in a study among university students in the United States (Ponterotto, Costa-Wofford, Brobst, Spelliscy, Kacanski, Scheinholtz & Martinez, 2007). In addition, the MPQ traits were found to significantly predict satisfaction of life, physical health and psychological well-being among expatriates in the United States and Japan (Sharma, 2012).

Despite of these results, researchers stress that further research is necessary as patterns of correlation vary between populations (Ponterotto, Costa-Wofford, Brobst, Spelliscy, Kacanski, Scheinholtz & Martines, 2007). To the researcher's knowledge, no studies have thus far researched the relationship between multicultural personality traits and positive psychological well-being among international exchange students in Japan. The present study therefore examined the relation between the MPQ and SPWB among international exchange students in Japan. Based on the results of earlier studies (Schmutte & Ryff, 1997; Ponterotto, Costa-Wofford, Brobst, Spelliscy, Kacanski, Scheinholtz & Martinez, 2007; Sharma, 2012), the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 1: International exchange students who score higher on the multicultural personality traits, have a higher psychological adjustment.

1.2.2 Previous Experience

Life changes were found to be one of the predictors of psychological adjustment (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). These life changes are stressful experiences that a person has encountered in the past and require personal adjustment, such as the death of a spouse or being fired from work, but also changes in environment, such as a new school, change in residence or a major change in social activities (Harmon, Masuda & Holmes, 1970). In this study, previous sojourning experience (e.g. study, work or internship abroad) in either Japan or another country will be regarded as life changes.

Having prior sojourning experience can help put new similar experiences into perspective. For example, in a study among Korean students studying in the United States it was found that Korean students who had been on an exchange before had expected linguistic and cultural challenges, and therefore had a more realistic expectation of their study abroad period (Kim & Okazaki, 2014, p. 251). Students without prior sojourning experience often have higher expectations than those with prior experience (Vande Berg, 2007), and have been found to be stressed when the exchange fails to meet their expectations (Pitts, 2009). In addition, sojourners without prior sojourning experience were found to feel less confident in their ability to deal with the psychological challenges of a sojourn than sojourners with prior experience (Martin, 1987). Previous sojourning experience could thus facilitate adjustment (Church, 1982). In fact, an international students' positive experience of a prior sojourn was said to positively affect their psychological adjustment (Matsumoto, Hirayama & LeRoux, 2006). It is therefore hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 2: International exchange students with previous sojourning experience have a
higher psychological adjustment.

1.3 Sociocultural Adjustment

Sociocultural adjustment is related to connecting with the host culture. It encompasses "the ability to fit in and to negotiate interactive aspects of the new culture" (Searle & Ward, 1990, p. 450). The level of a sojourner's sociocultural adjustment is indicated by "the amount of socio-cultural difficulties experienced" (Leong, 2007, p. 548) and can be divided into difficulties encountered in academic setting, daily life, and interpersonal relations (Simic-Yamashita & Tanaka, 2010).

According to Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, sociocultural adjustment can be achieved through observational learning. Observed behavior of host country nationals may

be identified by sojourners as model behavior and lead to a change in the sojourners' behavior; the so-called adjustment. It is thus essential for sojourners to be in contact with local citizens in order to learn the ways of the local culture and its norms and values, and thus to socioculturally adjust (Searle & Ward, 1990). It is said that sociocultural adjustment can therefore be predicted by factors related to social relationships with local citizens and cultural instruments (Hirai, Frazier & Syed, 2015), such as proficiency of the host country language and quality of contact with host nationals, amongst others (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999; Zhang & Goodson, 2011).

1.3.1 Foreign Language Proficiency and Use

Language proficiency in the host country language has been found to positively influence the sociocultural adjustment of international university students in various countries (Church, 1982; Mak & Tran, 2001; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Simic-Yamashita & Tanaka, 2010). Higher proficiency of the host country language was found to increase the ability of international students to effectively interact with locals (Mak and Tran, 2001) and facilitates the ability to build relationships with locals (Mori, 2000; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Moreover, it facilitates sociocultural adjustment through interpersonal contact (Masgoret & Ward, 2006). Lower language proficiency was found to be related to sociocultural problems (Sano, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1993), such as being unable to ask questions to teachers and peers (Mori, 2000), and being unable to engage in fulfilling conversations and running daily errands (Peltokorpi, 2008).

Surprisingly, in a study of international students in Japan, higher Japanese language proficiency was found to decrease their sociocultural adjustment (Takai, 1989). International students with a higher Japanese language proficiency felt less connected to the Japanese community (Tanaka, Takai, Kohyama & Fujihara, 1994) and indicated having unsatisfying relationships with Japanese people (Iwao & Hagiwara, 1987). In contrast, other studies among international students and expatriates in Japan have indicated that Japanese language proficiency positively affected sociocultural adjustment (Peltokorpi, 2008; Simic-Yamashita & Tanaka, 2010). In another study, international students in Japan who were more proficient in Japanese were found to have more Japanese friends than those who were less proficient in Japanese (Yokota & Tanaka, 1992). As sociocultural adjustment is measured by difficulties encountered in interpersonal relations with hosts (among others), it might be assumed that having more Japanese friends would contribute to international students' sociocultural adjustment.

The conflicting results found among international students and expats in Japan require further research in order to clearly establish the relationship between proficiency in the host country language and sociocultural adjustment. However, it is important to note that international exchange students in Japan often use a mixture of Japanese and English to communicate, as exchange programs are developed to offer English-taught courses (MEXT, 2010). It is thus not comprehensive enough to solely investigate proficiency in the host country language. Research needs to investigate if the proficiency levels of the two languages, Japanese and English, contribute to international students' sociocultural adjustment in Japan, as both of these languages are likely to be used on a daily basis. In addition, the actual use of the two languages should also be measured in order to investigate that the two languages are indeed being used during the exchange, and whether using these languages contributes to sociocultural adjustment.

Thus far, only a few studies have investigated the proficiency and use of both English and Japanese among international students in Japan (e.g. Simic & Tanaka, 2008). Interestingly, one study showed that international students in Japan found English to be more useful than Japanese (Simic, Tanaka & Hasegawa, 2006). However, a follow-up study indicated that using English was found to lead to alienation from the local society, especially among those who found themselves to be more proficient in English (Simic & Tanaka, 2008). As sociocultural adjustment encompasses "the ability to fit in (…) the new culture" (Searle & Ward, 1990, p. 450), using English could possibly lead to a lower sociocultural adjustment. In addition, in the same study international students who found themselves more proficient in Japanese indicated that they did find Japanese useful, but mainly in social settings (e.g. when interacting with friends) and pragmatic settings (e.g. when doing groceries), whereas English was found to be useful in academic settings (Simic & Tanaka, 2008). In the current study, sociocultural adjustment was measured by the sociocultural difficulties encountered in academic settings, in daily life, and in interpersonal relations. Therefore, it would be interesting to investigate to what extent the use and proficiency in the two languages (Japanese and English) are linked to sociocultural adjustment and its sub-constructs. Hence, the following hypotheses and sub-research questions were formulated:

Hypothesis 3: International exchange students with a higher Japanese language proficiency have a higher sociocultural adjustment.

Hypothesis 4: International exchange students with a higher English language proficiency
have a lower sociocultural adjustment.

Sub-Question 1: To what extent does an international exchange students' use of the Japanese
language predict sociocultural adjustment?

Sub-Question 2: To what extent does an international exchange students' use of the English
language predict sociocultural adjustment?

1.3.2 Quality of Contact

Contact with locals, and in particular social contact with locals, is said to be crucial in order to socioculturally adjust (Searle & Ward, 1990; Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004). However, interaction between international students and locals has often been found to be absent (Tsuboi, 1991; Butcher, 2002; Gareis, 2012) as both locals and international students remain within their own cultural group (Searle & Ward, 1990; Brown & Daly, 2004; Glass & Westmont, 2014). Those who do interact with locals show different outcomes in terms of sociocultural adjustment. On the one hand, research has indicated that interacting with locals is related to lower levels of sociocultural difficulties (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004) and higher sociocultural adjustment (Black, 1988; Tsang, 2001; Ward, 2001; Li & Gasser, 2005). Specifically, a higher frequency of contact with locals was found to be an important factor of the sociocultural adjustment of international students in Japan: international students who more frequently were in contact with locals showed a higher sociocultural adjustment (Tanaka, Takai, Kohyama, Fujihara & Minami, 1997). Interestingly, higher frequency of interaction was also found to lead to a contrasting result, as one study mentions that with "a higher degree of interaction with Japanese (…) the worse becomes their image of them" (Tanaka, Takai, Kohyama & Fujihara, 1994, p. 69).

Quantity of contact between international students and locals has often been the focus of research, however quality of contact has been less studied (Yang, Noels & Saumure, 2006; Hirai, Frazier & Syed, 2015). When looking at the quality of contact between sojourners and locals, research has shown that unsatisfying relations with host nationals have been linked to social difficulties (Ward & Kennedy, 1993) and acculturative stress (Yeh & Inose, 2003). It has also been repeatedly noted that international students face difficulties in building friendships with locals, which is considered to be a serious problem (Tanaka & Okunishi, 2016) as it

negatively affects a students' study abroad experience (Volet & Ang, 1998). Consistent with these results, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 5: International exchange students who are more satisfied with the quality of their contact with locals, have a higher sociocultural adjustment.
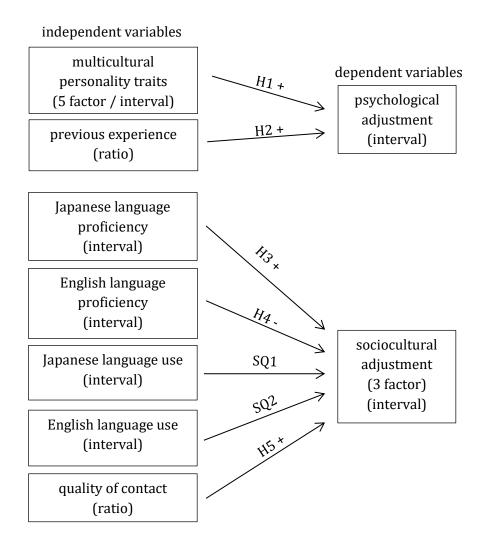
1.4 The Present Study

The present study investigated the psychological and sociocultural adjustment of international exchange students in Japan. This study was built on Searle and Ward's model of adjustment during cross-cultural transitions. Based on the gaps in research, the following main research question was investigated: "*To what extent do multicultural personality traits, previous experience, foreign language proficiency, foreign language use and quality of contact predict intercultural adjustment among international exchange students in Japan?*". This question was subdivided into several hypotheses and sub-questions.

The intention of this study was to further explore Searle and Ward's model with alternative and additional variables. Therefore, the commonly used depression scale for measuring psychological adjustment was replaced with a more comprehensive alternative, positive psychological well-being, and tested for its relation with multicultural personality traits and previous experience. Furthermore, proficiency in English was measured in addition to proficiency in the host country language, Japanese. Moreover, the actual use of both languages was researched for its relationship with sociocultural adjustment. Finally, in this study, quality of contact with locals was measured, as opposed to the quantity of contact, for its relation with sociocultural adjustment.

This study attempted to gain understanding of international exchange students' adjustment in Japan. It was hoped that the findings of this study would contribute to the limited literature on intercultural adjustment during an exchange in Japan. As Japanese government and educational institutions continue to attract more international students (MEXT, 2008; Kakuchi, 2014), and English-taught short-term exchange programs in Japan are increasingly developed (Horie, 2002; Kudo, 2016; Lassegard, 2016), the results of the present study may be of interest to Japanese government, educational institutions and study abroad professionals. Understanding international exchange students' psychological and sociocultural adjustment, and their predictors, can help improve (advise on) exchange programs, and the study abroad experience.

2. Method

This study aimed to provide insight into the intercultural adjustment of international exchange students in Japan by researching the relationship between multicultural personality factors, previous experience and psychological adjustment, and foreign language proficiency and use, quality of contact, and sociocultural adjustment (Figure 1). Several hypotheses and research questions were formulated, which were investigated with a survey.

Figure 1. The proposed hypotheses, sub-research questions and proposed relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

2.1 Instruments

A survey was chosen as method for this research as the items on the questionnaire examined the subjective, self-perceived image of the independent and dependent variables. In addition, using a survey ensured the measurement of latent variables. All latent variables were measured

by existing scales, which enabled the comparison of the results of this study to previous and future studies. As the respondents - international exchange students in Japan - came from all over the world, the survey was conducted in English. Prior to their exchange the students had indicated that their English was proficient enough for attending university classes by handing in an English Language Requirement statement from their home university or by handing in a TOEFL ibt certificate with a minimum score of 90. Completing a survey in English was therefore not expected to lead to any difficulties. In order to ensure that language did not interfere with comprehensibility of the survey, a pretest of the survey and the questionnaire items was performed among nine international students who had started their exchange at Kwansei Gakuin University (KGU) prior to the Spring semester. The pretest showed no abnormalities.

In the questionnaire, the respondents were first asked to provide some demographic information, such as gender, age, native country, native language, and accommodation during the exchange (host family, dormitory or other) (see Appendix I for full survey). In addition, the respondents were asked to provide information about the level of Japanese language classes they were attending at KGU, and, if applicable, the score of their TOEFL ibt. These latter two questions were asked as objective control variables for Japanese and English language proficiency. Then, four independent variables were measured by author devised questions. ***Previous experience*** was measured by the indication (no/yes) whether students had any prior sojourning experience, either in Japan or another country. ***Foreign language proficiency*** was measured by international students' perceived writing, reading, listening and speaking competence on 5-point Likert scales ranging from 'preliminary' to 'native'. The foreign language proficiency scale proved to be reliable for both Japanese language proficiency ($\alpha = .96$) and English language proficiency ($\alpha = .98$). ***Foreign language use*** was measured by asking respondents to indicate how often they used Japanese and English on 5-point Likert scales ranging from 'never' to 'always'. The scale proved to be reliable for both Japanese language use ($\alpha = .87$) and English language use ($\alpha = .87$). ***Quality of contact*** with locals was assessed with a single item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'extremely dissatisfied' to 'extremely satisfied'. The same item was used to assess the quality of contact with internationals, which served as a control variable.

Existing scales were used for the variables multicultural personality traits, psychological adjustment and sociocultural adjustment (see Appendix I). The ***Multicultural Personality Questionnaire*** was used to measure the multicultural personality traits cultural empathy (showing sincere interest in people with another cultural background), open mindedness (open

and unbiased attitude towards a different culture), social initiative (initiating and maintaining contact with locals), emotional stability (coping with stressful or difficult situations) and flexibility (adjusting behavior in new situations) (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2001). The MPQ has proven to be a significant predictor of sojourner adjustment (Leong, 2007; Kagnici, 2012; Yakunina, Weigold, Weigold, Hercegovac & Elsayed, 2012) and has been tested under various target groups, such as students, expats, spouses of expats, children of expats and refugees, but also under a wide variety of countries, including The Netherlands, Canada, Japan, China and New Zealand amongst others (Dewaele & Van Oudenhoven, 2009). Previous studies have shown that the MPQ is an adequate instrument for measuring multicultural personality traits, and that the measure has high validity and reliability (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000; Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2001; Van Oudenhoven, Mol & Van der Zee, 2003; Van der Zee & Brinkmann, 2004; Dewaele & Van Oudenhoven, 2009; Leong, 2007; Arasaratnam, 2013; Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013). The short form of the MPQ consists of 40 items measuring five multicultural personality traits on 5-point Likert scales ranging from 'totally not applicable' to 'completely applicable'. In the current study, however, the reliability analysis indicated unreliable scales for the multicultural personality traits 'social initiative', 'emotional stability' and 'flexibility'. Therefore, six items were deleted in order to find a satisfactory alpha. Thus, in this study, a total of 34 items measured the five multicultural personality traits. The scales created for cultural empathy ($n = 8$, $\alpha = .76$), open mindedness ($n = 8$, $\alpha = .71$), social initiative ($n = 7$, $\alpha = .75$) and emotional stability ($n = 7$, $\alpha = .61$) were found to be reliable. The scale measuring flexibility did not prove to be sufficiently reliable ($n = 4$, $\alpha = .50$), but was used nevertheless for further analysis in order to distinguish the fifth multicultural personality trait as one. Items of the MPQ included 'I get upset easily' (-) and 'I sympathize with others' (+).

Psychological adjustment was measured by Ryff's (1989) Scales of Psychological Well-Being (SPWB). The SPWB measures positive psychological well-being in the sense of happiness and life satisfaction (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Various studies have tested this scale in a study abroad context in various countries (e.g. Chirkov, Safdar, De Guzman & Playford, 2008; Iwamoto & Liu, 2010). The measure was found to have high validity and reliability (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Akin, 2008). The short form of SPWB exists of 18 items. As the reliability analysis indicated an unreliable scale, six items were deleted from the scale in order to find a satisfactory alpha. In this study, 12 items measured psychological adjustment on 5-point Likert scales ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' ($\alpha = .65$). Items of the scale included:

'During my exchange, I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others' (+) and 'When I look back on this exchange, I am pleased with how things have turned out' (+).

Sociocultural adjustment was measured with Searle and Ward's Sociocultural Adjustment Scale (SCAS). The SCAS measures the amount of difficulty international students experienced during their exchange through "skills required to manage everyday situations and aspects of living in a new culture" (Searle & Ward, 1990, p. 454). The SCAS has been tested in various compositions, whether it be the full-length version or a shorter adapted version, and has been studied amongst various target groups, such as students and expats, and a wide variety of countries, including the United States, Singapore and New Zealand (Ward & Kennedy, 1999; Renner, Salem & Menschik-Bendele, 2012). Studies have shown that the SCAS, has a high validity and reliability throughout its variety of length and purposes (Ward & Kennedy, 1999; Simic-Yamashita & Tanaka, 2010). In this study, Simic-Yamashita and Tanaka's (2010) 18-item version was used as it was specifically composed to measure the sociocultural adjustment of international students studying in Japan. Sociocultural adjustment was measured on 5-point Likert scales ranging from 'no difficulties' to 'extreme difficulties' ($\alpha = .83$). Items included: 'making friends' (+) and 'finding your way around' (+). The scale is divided into three subscales measuring academic adaptation, adaptation to daily life, and interpersonal adaptation (Simic-Yamashita & Tanaka, 2010). The subscales were found to be bordering on reliable to reasonably reliable: academic adaptation ($n = 5$, $\alpha = .65$), adaptation to daily life ($n = 8$, $\alpha = .80$), interpersonal adaptation ($n = 5$, $\alpha = .60$).

2.2 Procedure & Sample

The data for this research was collected at Kwansei Gakuin University (KGU). KGU is a private education institution that offers Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees (Kwansei Gakuin University, 2016). The exchange program designed for international exchange students is focused on cultural enrichment through the study of Japanese language and culture. KGU's efforts reach beyond the classroom, as they have set up many opportunities for international exchange students to connect to locals, such as homestay opportunities, a Global Student Network, the Nihongo Partnership, and Coffee Hours.

The sample of this study was approached through snowball sampling and were asked to voluntarily fill in a questionnaire on paper or online. The respondents were approached in class, in the global lounge (gathering place for international students) and through a Facebook group for international students studying at KGU. There were two criteria for selecting respondents.

Firstly, students had to be international exchange students at KGU. Secondly, they needed to have started their exchange in the Spring semester of 2016. Previous research found that the length of residence in the host country influenced psychological and sociocultural adjustment (Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Mak & Tran, 2001), and that the first four months of an exchange were especially challenging (Cemalcilar & Falbo, 2008). Therefore, it was important that all respondents had started their exchange around the same time, in order to measure the same moment in the development of their adjustment.

The sample of this study consisted of 90 international students who went on exchange to Kwansei Gakuin University starting from the 2016 Spring semester (March – August '16). Out of these 90 students, 77 students (86%) completed the survey (for an overview of sociodemographic data, see Appendix II). These 77 respondents consisted of 31 men (40%) and 46 women (60%) between the ages of 19 and 32 ($M = 22.61$, $SD = 2.36$). 43% of the respondents lived with a Japanese host family during their exchange ($N = 33$), 48% lived in a dormitory amongst other international students ($N = 37$), and 9% of the students had other living arrangements ($N = 7$). The students came from 23 different countries around the world (for an overview of countries, see Appendix II), however 34% of the respondents ($N = 26$) came from the United States of America. It is therefore not surprising that 49% of the respondents are native English speakers ($N = 38$), and that on average international students perceived their English language proficiency ($M = 4.34$, $SD = .87$) to be higher than their Japanese language proficiency ($M = 2.59$, $SD = .92$).

2.3 Statistical Treatment

Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the reliability of each scale. In addition, correlation tests were done in order to expose any correlations between the dependent variables 'psychological adjustment' and 'sociocultural adjustment' and possible intervening variables such as level of Japanese language classes, quality of contact with internationals, type of accommodation, native language, gender and age. As no significant correlations were found, multiple regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses and research questions.

3. Results

3.1 Psychological Adjustment

A multiple regression analysis was run with the predictor variables 'multicultural personality traits' (H1) and 'previous experience' (H2), and the dependent variable 'psychological adjustment'. The multiple regression showed that the model was significant (F (6, 70) = 17,96, $p < .001$) (see Table 1). The five multicultural personality traits and previous experience explained 60% of the variance in psychological adjustment. Three of the five multicultural personality traits, cultural empathy ($\beta = .35$, $p < .001$), open mindedness ($\beta = .35$, $p = .001$) and emotional stability ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$), were found to be significant predictors of psychological adjustment, given that all other variables were kept constant. Social initiative ($\beta = .16$, $p = .101$) and flexibility ($\beta = -.09$, $p = .280$) were not found to be significant predictors of psychological adjustment. Thus, international students with a higher cultural empathy, open mindedness and emotional stability have a significantly higher psychological adjustment, partially confirming hypothesis 1. Previous experience, however, was not found to be a significant predictor of psychological adjustment ($\beta = -.03$, $p = .740$). Hypothesis 2 was therefore not confirmed. International students with previous sojourning experience were not found to have a significantly higher psychological adjustment. For an overview of means and standard deviations, see Table 2.

Table 1.   Regression analysis for the predictor variables 'multicultural personality traits', 'previous experience' and the dependent variable psychological adjustment ($N = 77$)

variable	B	$SE\ B$	β
MPQ: cultural empathy	.30	.08	.35*
MPQ: open mindedness	.30	.09	.35**
MPQ: social initiative	.10	.06	.16
MPQ: emotional stability	.23	.05	.38***
MPQ: flexibility	-.05	.04	-.09
Previous experience	-.03	.08	-.03
R^2	.61****		
F	17.96		

* $p < .001$, ** $p = .001$, *** $p < .001$, **** $p < .001$

Table 2.   Descriptive statistics for the predictor variables 'multicultural personality traits', 'previous experience' and the dependent variable psychological adjustment ($N = 77$)

variable	No of items	M (SD)	Range	α
Multicultural personality traits	34	3.79 (.34)	1 – 5	.76
Cultural empathy	8	3.99 (.50)	1 – 5	.76
Open mindedness	8	3.63 (.50)	1 – 5	.71
Social initiative	7	3.32 (.67)	1 – 5	.75
Emotional stability	7	3.72 (.72)	1 – 5	.61
Flexibility	4	3.80 (.80)	1 – 5	.50
Previous experience	1	n/a	no / yes	
Psychological adjustment	12	3.81 (.43)	1 – 5	.65

3.2 Sociocultural Adjustment

A multiple regression analysis was run with the predictor variables 'Japanese language proficiency' (H3), 'English language proficiency' (H4), 'Japanese language use' (SQ1), "English language use" (SQ2), and 'quality of contact with locals' (H5) and the dependent variable 'sociocultural adjustment'. The multiple regression showed that the model was significant ($F (5, 71) = 3.12, p = .013$) (see Table 3). The variables predicted 18% of the variance of the dependent variable.

Japanese language proficiency was found not to be a significant predictor of sociocultural adjustment ($\beta = -.25, p = .074$). International students with a higher perceived Japanese language proficiency did not show a significantly higher sociocultural adjustment. In addition, English language proficiency was found not to be a significant predictor of sociocultural adjustment either ($\beta = .03, p = .778$). International students with a higher perceived English language proficiency did not show a significantly lower sociocultural adjustment. Therefore, hypotheses 3 and 4 were not confirmed. In addition, use of Japanese language was not shown to be a significant predictor of sociocultural adjustment ($\beta = .15, p = .281$). Thus, in answer to sub-question 1, there is no significant relation. Interestingly, use of English language was found to be a significant predictor of sociocultural adjustment ($\beta = -.36, p = .007$), given that all other variables were kept constant. International students who more frequently used English, showed significantly less sociocultural difficulties and thus a higher sociocultural adjustment, thus answering sub-question 2. Finally, quality of contact with locals was also a significant predictor of sociocultural adjustment ($\beta = -.32, p = .006$), given that all

other variables were kept constant. International students who were more satisfied with the quality of their contact with locals, indicated a significant higher sociocultural adjustment, confirming hypothesis 5. For an overview of means and standard deviations, see Table 4.

Table 3.   Regression analysis for the predictor variables 'Japanese language proficiency', 'English language proficiency', 'Japanese language use', 'English language use', 'quality of contact with locals', and the dependent variable sociocultural adjustment ($N = 77$)

variable	B	$SE\ B$	β
Japanese language proficiency	-.14	.08	-.25
English language proficiency	-.02	.07	.03
Japanese language use	.09	.09	.15
English language use	-.22	.08	-.36*
Quality of contact with locals	-.19	.07	-.32**
R^2	.18		
F	3.12***		

* $p = .007$, ** $p = .006$, *** $p = .013$

Table 4.   Descriptive statistics for the predictor variables 'Japanese language proficiency', 'English language proficiency', 'Japanese language use', 'English language use', 'quality of contact with locals', and the dependent variable sociocultural adjustment ($N = 77$)

variable	No of items	$M\ (SD)$	Range	α
Japanese language proficiency	4	2.59 (.92)	1 – 5	.96
English language proficiency	4	4.34 (.87)	1 – 5	.98
Japanese language use	9	3.04 (.83)	1 – 5	.87
English language use	9	3.20 (.85)	1 – 5	.87
Quality of contact with locals	1	3.86 (.87)	1 – 5	
Sociocultural adjustment	18	2.29 (.51)	1 – 5	.83

Additionally, three multiple regression analysis were run in order to further investigate the results of the abovementioned regression analysis at the level of three sub-constructs of sociocultural adaptation: academic adaptation, adaptation to daily life, and interpersonal adaptation (see Table 5 for an overview of means and standard deviations). Firstly, a multiple regression analysis was run with the predictor variables 'Japanese language proficiency',

'English language proficiency', 'Japanese language use', 'English language use', and 'quality of contact with locals' and the dependent variable 'academic adaptation'. The multiple regression showed that the model was significant ($F (5, 71) = 2.95, p = .018$) (see Table 6). The variables predicted 17% of the variance of the dependent variable.

In line with the regression results of sociocultural adjustment as a single construct reported above, Japanese language proficiency ($\beta = -.05, p = .721$), English language proficiency ($\beta = -.03, p = .818$), and Japanese language use ($\beta = .14, p = .310$) were not found to be significant predictors of academic adaptation. Again, use of English language ($\beta = -.31, p = .021$) and quality of contact with locals ($\beta = -.29, p = .015$), were shown to be significant predictors of academic adaptation, given that all other variables were kept constant. International students who more frequently used English, showed a significantly higher academic adaptation. Finally, international students who were more satisfied with the quality of their contact with locals also showed a significantly higher academic adaptation.

Table 5.   Descriptive statistics for the subscales of the dependent variable sociocultural adjustment ($N = 77$) (1 = no difficulties, 5 = extreme difficulties)

variable	No of items	M (SD)	Range	α
Sociocultural adjustment	18	2.29 (.51)	1 – 5	.83
Academic adaptation	5	2.47 (.68)	1 – 5	.65
Adaptation to daily life	8	2.13 (.61)	1 – 5	.80
Interpersonal adaptation	5	2.36 (.68)	1 – 5	.60

Table 6.   Regression analysis for the predictor variables 'Japanese language proficiency', 'English language proficiency', 'Japanese language use', 'English language use', 'quality of contact with locals', and the dependent variable academic adaptation ($N = 77$)

variable	B	SE B	β
Japanese language proficiency	-.04	.10	-.05
English language proficiency	-.02	.09	-.03
Japanese language use	.12	.11	.14
English language use	-.25	.10	-.31*
Quality of contact with locals	-.22	.09	-.29**
R^2	.17		
F	2.95***		

$* p = .021, ** p = .015, *** p = .018$

Secondly, a multiple regression analysis was run with the predictor variables 'Japanese language proficiency', 'English language proficiency', 'Japanese language use', 'English language use', and 'quality of contact with locals' and the dependent variable 'adaptation to daily life'. The multiple regression showed that the model was significant (F (5, 71) = 3.16, p = .013) (see Table 7). The variables predicted 18% of the variance of the dependent variable.

Interestingly, Japanese language proficiency was found to be a significant predictor of adaptation to daily life (β = -.36, p = .011), given that all other variables were kept constant. International students who indicated a higher proficiency in Japanese, showed a significantly higher adaptation to daily life. In line with the results of the regression run for sociocultural adjustment as a single construct, reported above, English language proficiency (β = .15, p = .167) and use of Japanese language (β = -.02, p = .877) were not found to be a significant predictor of academic adaptation. Again, use of English language (β = -.35, p = .009) and quality of contact with locals (β = -.23, p = .043), were shown to be significant predictors of adaptation to daily life, given that all other variables were kept constant. International students who more frequently used English, showed a significantly higher adaptation to daily life. Finally, international students who were more satisfied with the quality of their contact with locals, showed a significantly higher adaptation to daily life.

Table 7.   Regression analysis for the predictor variables 'Japanese language proficiency', 'English language proficiency', 'Japanese language use', 'English language use', and 'quality of contact with locals', and the dependent variable adaptation to daily life (N = 77)

variable	B	$SE\ B$	β
Japanese language proficiency	-.24	.09	-.36*
English language proficiency	.11	.08	.15
Japanese language use	-.02	.10	-.02
English language use	-.25	.09	-.35**
Quality of contact with locals	-.16	.08	-.23***
R^2	.18		
F	2.60****		

* p = .011, ** p = .009, *** p = .043, **** p = .013

Finally, a multiple regression analysis was run with the predictor variables 'Japanese language proficiency', 'English language proficiency', 'Japanese language use', 'English language use',

and 'quality of contact with locals' and the dependent variable 'interpersonal adaptation'. The multiple regression showed that the model was significant (F (5, 71) = 2.84, p = .021). The variables predicted 17% of the variance of the dependent variable (see Table 8).

Japanese language proficiency (β = -.11, p = .438) and English language proficiency (β = -.11, p = .321) were not found to be a significant predictor of interpersonal adaptation. However, unlike the results of the regression run for sociocultural adjustment as a single construct, use of Japanese language was found to be a significant predictor of interpersonal adaptation (β = .30, p = .036), given that all other variables were kept constant. Surprisingly, international students who more frequently used the Japanese language, indicated more difficulties in interpersonal adaptation. Contrary to previous results, use of the English language was not found to be a significant predictor of interpersonal adaptation (β = -.17, p =.185). However, quality of contact with locals was shown to be a significant predictor (β = -.26, p = .029), given that all other variables were kept constant. International students who were more satisfied with the quality of their contact with locals, showed a significantly higher interpersonal adaptation.

Table 8.　　Regression analysis for the predictor variables 'Japanese language proficiency', 'English language proficiency', 'Japanese language use', 'English language use', and 'quality of contact with locals', and the dependent variable interpersonal adaptation (N = 77)

variable	B	$SE\ B$	β
Japanese language proficiency	-.08	.10	-.11
English language proficiency	-.09	.09	-.11
Japanese language use	.25	.12	.30*
English language use	-.14	.10	-.17
Quality of contact with locals	-.20	.09	-.26**
R^2	.17		
F	2.84***		

* p = .036, ** p = .029, *** p = .021

4. Conclusion & Discussion

The present study investigated the psychological and sociocultural adjustment of 77 international exchange students studying at Kwansei Gakuin University in Japan. This study specifically focused on the relationship between multicultural personality traits, previous experience and psychological adjustment, and foreign language proficiency and use, quality of contact and sociocultural adjustment. The main research question of this study, "*To what extent do multicultural personality traits, previous experience, foreign language proficiency, foreign language use and quality of contact predict intercultural adjustment among international exchange students in Japan?*", was guided by several hypotheses and sub-questions.

In general, it can be concluded that the results regarding the psychological and sociocultural adjustment of international exchange students in Japan were not in line with previous research. A possible explanation could be that the specific target group, host country and time span of the present study differed from prior research on which the hypotheses were based. In the sections below, each hypothesis and sub-question is discussed for its result.

4.1 Predictors of Psychological Adjustment

The first two hypotheses of this study investigated the relationships between multicultural personality traits, previous experience and psychological adjustment. Firstly, it was hypothesized that international exchange students who score higher on the multicultural personality traits, have a higher psychological adjustment (H1). This study has demonstrated that international exchange students with a higher degree of cultural empathy, open mindedness and emotional stability also had a higher level of psychological adjustment. This result is partially in line with previous studies, which also found the multicultural personality traits 'flexibility' to be a significant predictor (Ponterotto, Costa-Wofford, Brobst, Spelliscy, Kacanski, Scheinholtz & Martinez, 2007; Sharma, 2012).

Although cultural empathy and open mindedness might be regarded as multicultural personality traits needed to adjust to any new culture, emotional stability might specifically be necessary for the adjustment to the Japanese culture. Emotional stability is regarded as the ability to cope with stressful or difficult situations (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2001) in a way that a sojourner "remains calm rather than showing strong emotional reactions" (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2012, p. 738). In Japanese culture, it's common not to express ones' emotions or feelings in public (Peltokorpi, 2008). Therefore, emotional stability could be a specifically important multicultural personality trait for sojourners' adjustment in Japan.

The multicultural personality traits social initiative and flexibility were not found to be significant predictors of psychological adjustment in the present study. This is in contrast to the hypothesis and previous studies which did find these multicultural personality traits to be significant predictors (e.g. Ryff, 1989; Ponterotto, Costa-Wofford, Brobst, Spelliscy, Kacanski, Scheinholtz & Martinez, 2007). The discrepancy in results can possibly be explained by the difference in researched country. Earlier research that has focused on multicultural personality traits and psychological well-being has taken place in the United States, whereas the current study has taken place in Japan. In addition, the scale for the multicultural personality trait 'flexibility' was found to be unreliable in this study ($\alpha = .50$), but was used nonetheless. As a result, the findings related to flexibility could therefore be questioned for their accuracy.

For the second predictor of psychological adjustment, it was hypothesized that international exchange students with previous sojourning experience have a higher psychological adjustment (H2). In this study, previous experience was found not to be a significant predictor of psychological adjustment. Although this result does not confirm the hypothesis, it does confirm the findings of some earlier studies which also showed no significant correlations between prior international experience and adjustment of international students and academics (e.g. Tsang, 2001).

In the current study, previous sojourning experience was solely measured by the indication whether students had any prior sojourning experience (yes or no). Whether their experience was positive or negative was not incorporated in this research, nor was the length of the previous sojourn or its type (e.g. exchange, internship, volunteering). Future research could investigate whether these aspects of influence a subsequent sojourn. In addition, it should be noted that the small sample size of the present study ($N = 77$) was a limitation for the reliability of the results, as only 18 students indicated having prior sojourning experience. In future studies, a larger number could increase the reliability of the result and benefit to the generalization.

4.2 Predictors of Sociocultural Adjustment

Three hypotheses and two sub-questions were formulated for the predictors of sociocultural adjustment. First, it was investigated whether international exchange students with a higher Japanese language proficiency would have a higher sociocultural adjustment (H3). Earlier studies found language proficiency in the host country language to be a significant predictor of sociocultural adjustment (Church, 1982; Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Mak & Tran, 2001; Simic-Yamashita & Tanaka, 2010). The present study found that Japanese language proficiency was

not a significant predictor of sociocultural adjustment, nor of its constructs academic adaptation and interpersonal adaptation. However, Japanese language proficiency was found to be a significant predictor of adaptation to daily life. International exchange students who were more proficient in Japanese indicated having significantly less sociocultural difficulties in daily activities, such as finding their way around and using the transportation system. This result is consistent with earlier studies among both international students and expats where higher proficiency in Japanese language was positively linked to its practical use in daily life (Simic & Tanaka, 2008; Peltokorpi, 2008).

The actual use of Japanese was also tested for its relationship with sociocultural adjustment. Based on the gaps in research, it was investigated to what extent an international exchange students' use of Japanese predicted sociocultural adjustment (SQ1). Japanese language use was found not to be significant predictor of sociocultural adjustment, nor of its constructs academic adaptation and adaptation to daily life. However, it was found to be a significant predictor of interpersonal adaptation. Surprisingly, international students who more frequently used the Japanese language indicated having more sociocultural difficulties in interpersonal adaptation, such as difficulties making friends and dealing with people staring at you. A possible explanation could be that by using the Japanese language, international students in Japan might not be seen as visitors, but as intruders (Tanaka, Takai, Kohyama & Fujihara, 1994). This can leave international students feeling unaccepted by the Japanese (Takai, 1989), which negatively affects their relationships with locals, and causes difficulties in interpersonal adaptation.

The fourth hypothesis in this study investigated whether international exchange students with a higher English language proficiency had a lower sociocultural adjustment (H4). In prior research, using English was found to alienate sojourners from Japanese society, especially sojourners who were more proficient in English (Simic & Tanaka, 2008), causing them to feel less socioculturally adjusted. However, unlike hypothesized and in contrary to earlier research, English language proficiency was not found to be a significant predictor of sociocultural adjustment nor any of its constructs. Hence, it can be concluded that English language proficiency does not predict sociocultural adjustment. A possible explanation for this result is that 49% of the respondents in this study were native English speakers, leaving for a very skewed distribution of English language proficiency. Therefore, a limitation of this study was that the respondents were not representative for the actual population and the population studied in prior research. This study's results regarding English language proficiency can thus not be widely generalized.

The actual use of the English language was also tested for its relationship with sociocultural adjustment. Based on the gaps in research, it was investigated to what extent an international exchange students' use of English predicted sociocultural adjustment (SQ2). In this study, English language use was found to be a significant predictor of sociocultural adjustment. International exchange students who more frequently used English, indicated having a higher level of sociocultural adjustment. In addition, international exchange students who more frequently used English also indicated having a significant higher level of adaptation to daily life. English language use was also linked to a significant higher academic adaptation. This latter result corresponds with the findings of prior research which demonstrated that international students found English to be most useful in academic settings (Simic & Tanaka, 2008). As English was the language of instruction at Kwansei Gakuin University for most of the courses followed by respondents of this study, and as a majority of the respondents were native English speakers, it is not surprising that using English was positively linked to a higher academic adaptation (e.g. coping with academic work, understanding what is required from you at university).

The final hypothesis investigated whether international exchange students who are more satisfied with the quality of their contact with locals, had a higher sociocultural adjustment (H5). In line with prior research (Black, 1988; Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004) quality of contact with locals was found to be a significant predictor of sociocultural adjustment, and its three sub-constructs. International students who indicated being more satisfied with their contact with Japanese people were found to have higher levels of sociocultural adjustment overall, and thus indicated having less difficulties in academic adaptation, adaptation to daily life, and interpersonal adaptation.

5. Limitations & Further Research

The current study has attempted to increase empirical knowledge on the intercultural adjustment of international exchange students in Japan. Although this research has been carried out to the best of the researcher's abilities, a number of limitations should be mentioned. Firstly, the data collection for this study took place at one university. Therefore, the results of this study can be applied to international exchange students studying at Kwansei Gakuin University. As this institution is a well-funded private university, certain factors, such as smaller class size, could have affected students' intercultural adjustment. In addition, KGU was selected to receive funding by the Japanese government for internationalization projects promoting Japanese culture and language education. Therefore, their exchange program was specifically focused on cultural enrichment through the study of Japanese language and culture. Moreover, they actively attempted to connect international students with locals through outreach programs. These activities could also have influenced the psychological and sociocultural adjustment of the students. In future research, a comparison could be made between universities who receive government funding for internationalization and those who don't in order to see if there is any effect on international exchange students' intercultural adjustment.

As the data for this study was only collected at one university, the country of origin of the respondents was heavily influenced by the partnerships that KGU had. At the time of this study, KGU collaborated with many US partners. Therefore, 34% of the respondents came from the United States of America. Moreover, 49% of the respondents were native English speakers. These skewed results in country of origin and native language left for an unrepresentative sample. In future studies, a greater sample size of international exchange students divided over multiple public and private universities in Japan would increase the external validity and enable a broader generalization of results.

The current study has investigated international exchange students as one single group due to its small sample size. However, previous research has found that the cultural distance to the host culture can influence the level of adjustment (Rienties & Tempelaar, 2013) and that smaller cultural distances were easier to bridge than larger ones (Ward and Kennedy, 1993). Therefore, future studies should distinct different cultural groups of exchange students instead of researching all international exchange students as one group.

The intention of this study was to further explore Searle and Ward's model with alternative and additional variables. A limitation to achieving this, was the time-span of this study. Adjustment, as argued by Ward (2001), should be seen as a process of development.

Therefore, longitudinal research with multiple measurements would be the appropriate way of capturing the process of adjustment.

In this study, the survey was administered at one single moment: 3.5 months after the start of the exchange, shortly before the end of the Spring semester. Previous research has found that the first four months of an exchange are especially challenging (Cemalcilar & Falbo, 2008), both psychologically and socioculturally. Longitudinal research has shown that the psychological challenges seem to decline over the course of one year. Therefore, it would be interesting to see what happens to the psychological and sociocultural adjustment of those who return to their home country after one semester. In future research, a longitudinal study could compare the intercultural adjustment of students who have returned return to their home country, and those who remained in the host country.

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Appendix I: Survey

Study Abroad in Japan
Radboud University Nijmegen (The Netherlands)

Dear participant,

With this research, I aim to investigate your study abroad experience in Japan. I would like to ask you to fill in this questionnaire.

In this questionnaire, some questions or statements require you to give your opinion on a scale from one to five. Example:

I am interested in sports

Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly agree

If you are not at all interested in sports, please circle '1'. The more you are interested in sports, the higher the number you circle. If you circle number 5, it means that you are very interested in sports.

Other questions in this survey may require you to answer the question on the dotted line (……..) or tick the box (❑) with the answer most applicable to you.

There are no right or wrong answers. I am purely interested in your experience. However, please make sure to answer all questions.

The answers that you provide, will be handled confidentiality. You will remain anonymous throughout the study.

Thank you for your participation!

TJOA Siu Liën
チョーア　シュー　リェン

1. What is your gender?
   ❒ male
   ❒ female

2. What is your age?

   ……………………………………………………………………………………………

3. Which country are you from (natively)?

   ……………………………………………………………………………………………

4. What is your current accommodation?
   ❒ host family
   ❒ dormitory
   ❒ other

5. Have you been on an exchange to Japan before?   ☐ No   ☐ Yes
   (e.g. study abroad, internship or work related)

   ✓ If yes, please indicate how often you have been on exchange to Japan before, and how long each exchange has been.

   ……………………………………………………………………………………………

   ……………………………………………………………………………………………

6. Have you been on international exchange before to a country other than Japan?
   (e.g. study abroad, internship or work related)   ☐ No   ☐ Yes

   ✓ If yes, please indicate where (other than Japan) and how long (e.g. 1 week, 4 months etc.)

   ……………………………………………………………………………………………

   ……………………………………………………………………………………………

6. What is your native language?
   ❒ Japanese
   ❒ English
   ❒ Other

7. Please indicate which level of Japanese language classes you are currently attending and which track.

   ……………………………………………………………………………………………

8. If you have taken the TOEFL IBT test prior to coming here, please indicate your score below. If you haven't taken the test, or if you are a native English speaker, please indicate so as well.

   ……………………………………………………………………………………………

9. Please assess your Japanese language proficiency on the following components.

	Preliminary	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Native
Writing					
Reading					
Listening					
Speaking					

10. Please indicate how often you use Japanese.

I use Japanese…	Never				Always
…to communicate with teachers at university.	1	2	3	4	5
…to communicate with peers at university.	1	2	3	4	5
…to write assignments for university.	1	2	3	4	5
…to communicate with your host family / roommates.	1	2	3	4	5
…to communicate with Japanese friends.	1	2	3	4	5
…to communicate with fellow international friends.	1	2	3	4	5
…to communicate with Japanese friends through social media or chat applications (e.g. Facebook).	1	2	3	4	5
…to communicate with fellow international friends through social media or chat applications (e.g. Facebook).	1	2	3	4	5
…to buy something (e.g. groceries, drinks, lunch).	1	2	3	4	5

11. Please assess your English language proficiency on the following components.

	Preliminary	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Native
Writing					
Reading					
Listening					
Speaking					

12. Please indicate how often you use English.

I use English…	Never				Always
…to communicate with teachers at university.	1	2	3	4	5
…to communicate with peers at university.	1	2	3	4	5
…to write assignments for university.	1	2	3	4	5
…to communicate with your host family / roommates.	1	2	3	4	5
…to communicate with Japanese friends.	1	2	3	4	5
…to communicate with fellow international friends.	1	2	3	4	5
…to communicate with Japanese friends through social media or chat applications (e.g. Facebook or WhatsApp).	1	2	3	4	5
…to communicate with fellow international friends through social media or chat applications (e.g. Facebook or WhatsApp).	1	2	3	4	5
…to buy something (e.g. groceries, drinks, lunch).	1	2	3	4	5

13. Please indicate how satisfied you are with…

	Extremely dissatisfied				Extremely satisfied
…your contact with Japanese people.	1	2	3	4	5
…your contact with other internationals.	1	2	3	4	5

14. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

	Not at all applicable				Totally applicable
I work according to plan.	1	2	3	4	5
I take the lead.	1	2	3	4	5
I worry.	1	2	3	4	5
I leave initiative to others to make contacts.	1	2	3	4	5
I get upset easily.	1	2	3	4	5
I find it difficult to make contacts.	1	2	3	4	5
I pay attention to the emotions of others.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a broad range of interests.	1	2	3	4	5
I try out various approaches.	1	2	3	4	5
I work according to strict rules.	1	2	3	4	5

I like routine.	1	2	3	4	5
I like to get to know others profoundly.	1	2	3	4	5
I am a good listener.	1	2	3	4	5
I look for regularity in life.	1	2	3	4	5
I notice when someone is in trouble.	1	2	3	4	5
I look for new ways to attain my goal.	1	2	3	4	5
I want predictability.	1	2	3	4	5
I am apt to feel lonely.	1	2	3	4	5
I make contact easily.	1	2	3	4	5
I am reserved.	1	2	3	4	5
I like to imagine solutions to problems.	1	2	3	4	5
I keep calm when things don't go well.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to speak out.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a feeling for what's appropriate in another culture.	1	2	3	4	5
I work according to strict scheme.	1	2	3	4	5
I am insecure.	1	2	3	4	5
I am often the driving force behind things.	1	2	3	4	5
I am a trendsetter in societal developments.	1	2	3	4	5
I am nervous.	1	2	3	4	5
I am not easily hurt.	1	2	3	4	5
I make others feel at ease.	1	2	3	4	5
I am under pressure.	1	2	3	4	5
I sympathize with others.	1	2	3	4	5
I function best in a familiar setting.	1	2	3	4	5
I sense when others get irritated.	1	2	3	4	5
I start a new life easily.	1	2	3	4	5
I seek people from different backgrounds.	1	2	3	4	5
I have fixed habits.	1	2	3	4	5
I take initiative.	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy other people's stories.	1	2	3	4	5

15. Please indicate to what extent the following statements are applicable to you.

		Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1.	During my exchange, I felt in charge of the situation I was in.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	During my exchange, I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	During my exchange, I lived life one day at a time and did not really think about the future.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	During my exchange, maintaining a close relationship has been difficult and frustrating for me.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	For me, this exchange has been a continuous process of learning, changing and growth.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life in Japan.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes to my life a long time ago.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the Japanese consensus.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I like most aspects of my personality.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements during my exchange.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	The demands of everyday life in Japan often get me down.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	When I look back on this exchange, I am pleased with how things have turned out.	1	2	3	4	5

16. Please indicate how much difficulty you experienced <u>during your time at KGU</u> in each of these areas.

	No Difficulties				Extreme Difficulties
1. Express your ideas in class.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Understanding the Japanese language.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Making friends.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Coping with academic work.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Dealing with bureaucracy.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Dealing with people of higher status.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Dealing with people staring at you.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Finding your way around.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Following rules and regulations.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Getting used to the pace of life.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Going shopping.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Going to cafés / restaurants.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Living away from your family overseas.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Making yourself understood.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Talking about yourself with others.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Understanding jokes and humor.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Understanding what is required from you at university.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Using the transportation system.	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix II: Demographic Data

	N	%
Participant Total	77	
Gender		
Male	31	40.3
Female	46	59.7
Age (*M* = 22.61, *SD* = 2.36)		
< 20	1	1.3
20 – 24	63	81.8
25 – 29	12	15.6
> 30	1	1.3
Country		
Australia	1	1.3
Canada	5	6.5
China	5	6.5
Denmark	1	1.3
England	2	2.6
Finland	1	1.3
France	4	5.2
Germany	3	3.9
Hong Kong	1	1.3
Iceland	1	1.3
Indonesia	5	6.5
Latvia	1	1.3
Malaysia	2	2.6
New Zealand	1	1.3
Norway	3	3.9
South Africa	1	1.3
Switzerland	1	1.3
Taiwan	5	6.5
The Netherlands	3	3.9
Turkey	1	1.3
Uganda	3	3.9
United States	26	33.8
Vietnam	1	1.3
Native Language		
Chinese	13	16.9
Danish	1	1.3
Dutch	2	2.6
English	38	49.4

Finnish	1	1.3
French	3	3.9
German	4	5.2
Icelandic	1	1.3
Indonesian	4	5.2
Latvian	1	1.3
Luganda	3	3.9
Norwegian	3	3.9
Turkish	1	1.3
Vietnamese	1	1.3

Accommodation
Host Family	33	42.9
Dormitory	37	48.1
Other	7	.09

Previous Sojourning Experience
No	59	76.6
Yes	18	23.4
Japan	7	.09
Other country	9	11.7
Both	2	2.6

Japanese Language Classes
Regular
Preliminary	14	18.2
Level 1	3	3.9
Level 2	9	11.7
Level 3	9	11.7
Level 4	1	1.3
Level 5	1	1.3
Level 6	2	2.6

Intensive
Preliminary	4	5.2
Level 1	5	6.5
Level 2	12	15.6
Level 3	5	6.5
Level 4	4	5.2
Level 5	6	7.8
Level 6	2	2.6

Japanese Language Proficiency
Preliminary	12	15.6
Beginner	16	20.8

Intermediate	35	45.5
Advanced	13	16.9
Native	1	1.3
English Language Proficiency		
Preliminary	0	0
Beginner	4	5.2
Intermediate	9	11.7
Advanced	17	22.1
Native	47	61.0