

Fieldwork study on Japanese women in the Greater Toronto Area and their adaptation to life in Canada

Momo KANO PODOLSKY

Abstract :

This paper presents an overview of recent trends in immigration from Japan to Canada. We will argue that the preponderance of women who furthermore display a high rate of intermarriage warrants a close examination of the adaptation patterns of such women to life in Canada. Findings from fieldwork among a group of Japanese women in the Greater Toronto Area will be outlined, and issues such as the increasing flow of women out of Japan, and the relation between intermarriage and integration will be addressed. We will also suggest our view on the future of Japanese ethnicity in Canada.

Keywords : Fieldwork, Japanese immigrant women in Canada, intermarriage, adaptation patterns

I . Introduction

Immigration from Japan to Canada after the Second World War has been on a very small scale. Statistics Canada's 2001 Census shows that the Japanese immigrant population stands at 17,240, and that it has not shown the steep increase displayed by other Asian groups after the 1967 changes in Canadian immigration law made it easier for immigrants to qualify for entry.

Table 1 : East and Southeast Asian immigrants to Canada by group and period of immigration

	Before 1961	1961-1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-2001	Total by group
Chinese	16,800	36,530	118,755	181,755	400,580	754,420
Filipino	220	9,075	42,875	52,515	118,355	223,040
Southeast Asian	340	2,055	31,995	61,100	44,275	139,765
Korean	115	3,020	11,955	13,505	42,585	71,180
Japanese	1,155	2,400	3,675	2,550	7,460	17,240
Total by period	18,630	53,080	209,255	311,425	613,255	1,205,645

(Source : 2001 Census, Statistics Canada)

It is the contention of this researcher that the *relatively* minimal influx of recent immigrants, combined with the dramatic history of pre-war immigrants and their offspring¹⁾, has resulted in a conspicuous lack of studies pertaining to the current makeup of Japanese immigrant communities in Canada. However, Table 1 shows a significant increase in the number of arrivals from Japan in the 1991-2001 time period (a three-fold jump from the previous decade), which, while not at the scale of other Asian ethnic groups, warrants a closer examination.

This present paper hopes to address the lacuna in literature by 1) pointing out the characteristics in recent immigration patterns from Japan to Canada, namely that women account for most of the arrivals in the last decade and have a remarkably high rate of intermarriage, and 2) presenting some preliminary findings from an on-going fieldwork study of Japanese immigrant women residing in the Greater Toronto Area, Ontario.

II . Trends in recent immigration from Japan to Canada : A Growing Gender Imbalance

1 . The “Working Holiday Scheme” as contributing factor ?

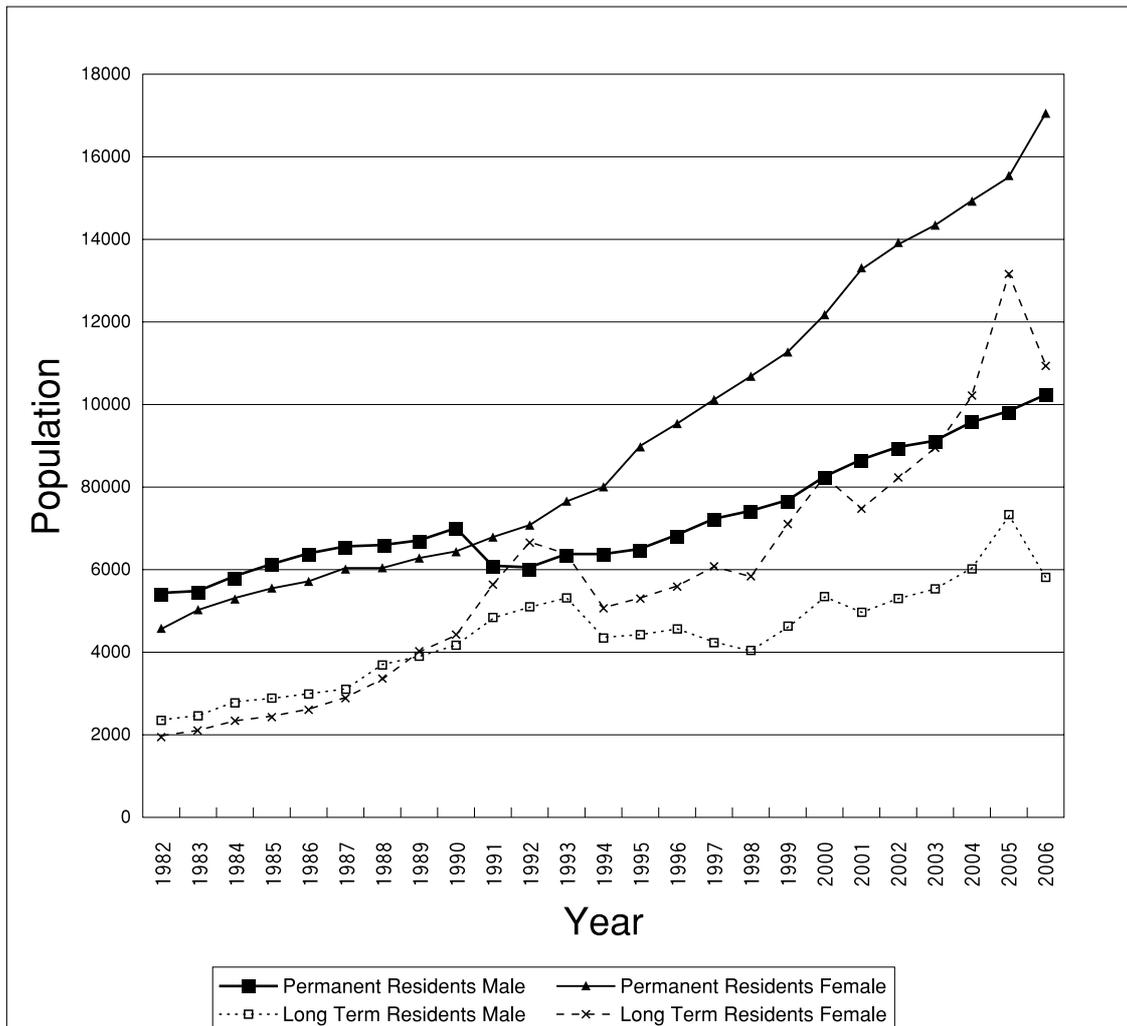
The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs publishes an *Annual Report of Statistics on Japanese Nationals Overseas*, which breaks down the Japanese overseas population in each country by type of residence, visa category, gender, and distinguishes between the actual visa holder and his/her dependents. The more recent reports are available on the MOFA website in PDF format²⁾, but older records are only accessible through printed reports. Hard copies of reports dating back to 1982 were made available to this researcher by the Consulate General of Japan in Toronto, and are the source of the tables contained in this chapter.

Table 2 shows the breakdown of the Japanese population in Canada by category of residence and by gender.

“Long-Term Residents” (*Chouki Taizaisha*) are Japanese nationals who reside in one foreign country for more than three months, and are required to register with the local Japanese consulate. “Permanent Residents” (*Eijuusha*) are Japanese nationals who obtain a visa of permanent residence from the host country, such as a Landed Immigrant Visa in the case of Canada³⁾.

-
- 1) Early immigrants from Japan to Canada are often the subject of studies related to their wartime internment as “Enemy Aliens”, post-war relocation, subsequent “voluntary” assimilation, as well as the redress movement spearheaded by their third generation offspring resulting in a formal apology and financial settlement from the Canadian government.
 - 2) The MOFA website page on the Japanese Nationals Overseas:
<http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/toko/tokei/hojin/index.htm> (downloaded August 30, 2007)
 - 3) The discrepancy between the number of Permanent Residents in Canada recorded by the MOFA and the number of Japanese immigrants enumerated by the 2001 Census of Canada is most certainly the result of the way records are managed by Japanese consulates. Once a Japanese national registers their PR status, the

Table 2 : Japanese Residents in Canada by Category and Gender



We can see from Table 2 that the number of Japanese residents in Canada increased in both categories of residence and for both genders over the last 25 years. However, a more notable trend is the steep increase of Japanese women in Canada. Women started outnumbering their male counterparts in 1989 for Long Term Residents (LTRs), and in 1991 for Permanent Residents (PRs); in both categories the trend has not been reversed since. Moreover, female LTRs now are more numerous than male PRs (since 2004). As of 2006, women account for over 63% of the Japanese population in Canada.

What accounts for this gender imbalance?

For a clue, let us take a closer look at the 2006 data on LTRs, taking into consideration only the main visa holders and not their dependents. This reveals that men account for 77% of the corporate

consulate does not keep track of their whereabouts, and could thus possibly have records of people no longer living in Canada, or who have not been reported deceased.

expatriates (1,390 men out of a total of 1,798 corporate visa holders), while women vastly outnumber men and account for 71% of all other types of LTRs (8,522 women out of a total of 11,920 non-corporate visa holders).

An interview with a member of the Consulate staff⁴⁾ in Toronto revealed a perception that the increase of Japanese women in Canada coincides with the establishment of the “Working Holiday Scheme” between Japan and Canada. JAWHM (Japan Association for Working Holiday Makers, an organization under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare) defines this scheme as follows:

The Working Holiday Scheme is intended to promote a greater mutual understanding between our respective countries, and to broaden the international outlook of our young people. The Working Holiday Scheme makes it possible for citizens of one country to enter the other country for an extended holiday while encouraging in temporary employment in order to supplement their travel funds⁵⁾.

The attraction of the Working Holiday Scheme is that it gives easier access to the country of destination than a student visa (academic transcripts and acceptance letters are not required), allows for a longer stay than a tourist visa (six months to a year), and permits the holder to seek employment in the host country, something only full-time work permit holders were entitled to until then.

The agreement between Japan and Canada took effect in 1986, and the number of visas issued to Japanese applicants quickly rose from 236 in the first year to 1,315 two years later, reaching a yearly average of 3,500 between 1991 and 1997, and of 5,000 by 2002 (the maximum number of visas issued now stands at 5,000)⁶⁾.

Although there is no readily available data on a gender breakdown of Working Holiday visa applicants, the above mentioned MOFA records pertaining to LTRs gives us a good indication that a lot more women than men come into Canada using the Working Holiday Scheme. Working Holiday Makers would be categorized as “Others” among LTRs, and Table 3 shows the fluctuation in that category over the last two decades⁷⁾.

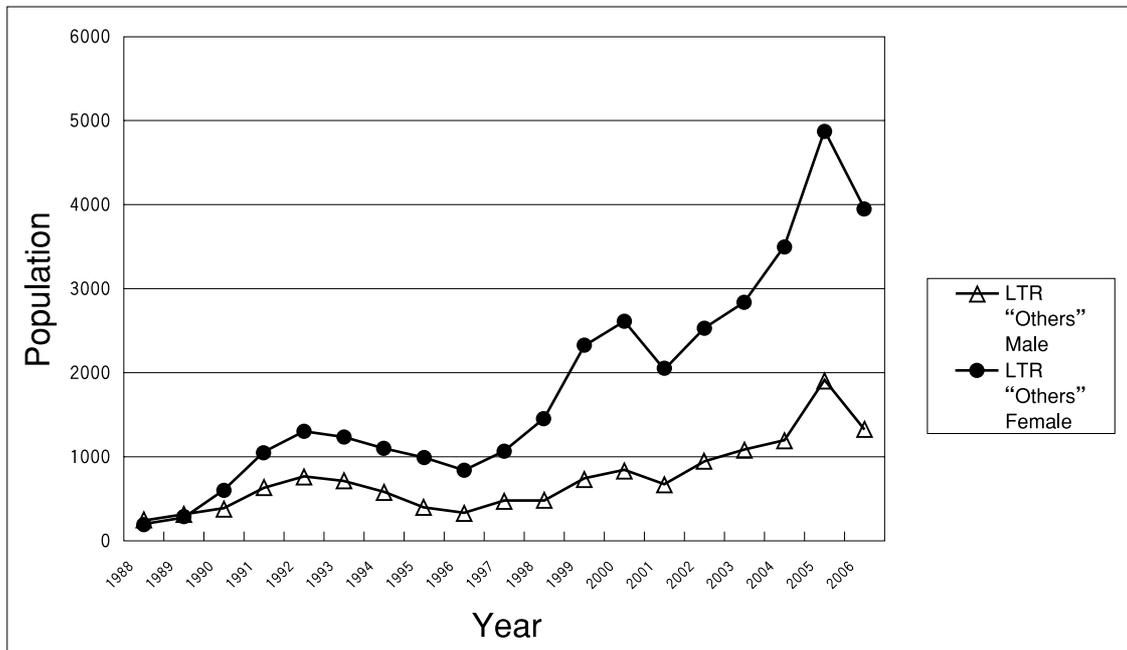
4) These interviews were conducted by phone and in person between August 13 and 20, 2007. The member of the consulate staff wishes to remain anonymous, and all data quoted in the present paper were given as “approximations” so as not to infringe on the privacy of individual Japanese residents.

5) Official website of JAWHM: <http://www.jawhm.or.jp/eng/index.html>

6) See data provided by JAWHM on the number of Working Holiday Visas issued by each country (<http://www.jawhm.or.jp/eng/prgrm/visa-e.pdf>).

7) Here also, we consider the number of “Other” LTRs who are the actual visa holder and not a dependent. Such a breakdown only became recorded since 1988.

Table 3 : Long Term Residents in Canada — “Others” Category by Gender



In 1988, both men and women in the “Others” category number around 300, but women start averaging more than 1,000 between 1991 and 1997, rise above 2,000 by 1999, and have been hovering between the 3,000 and 4,000 marks since 2004. Meanwhile, men do not pass the 2,000 mark even at their peak in 2005 (N = 1,907 compared to N = 4,858 for women that same year), rather averaging around 1,000 for the past 5 years.

The age restriction for Working Holiday visa applicants varies from country to country, but Canada requires a minimum age of 18 years to a maximum of 30 at the time of application. As the typical length of stay for Working Holiday Makers is 6 months to a year, we can assume that only people who can afford to take extended time off from their studies or work will apply: typically, in Japan, men are more likely than women to stick to their jobs so that they have a better chance at a steady promotion along their career path, thus resulting in the gender imbalance in this category.

There is reason to believe that a significant proportion of this Working Holiday Maker population does not return to Japan after the expiry of their visa. Instead, the interviewee at the Consulate suggested, they apply for a Landed Immigrant visa and choose to stay in Canada.

The Consulate in Toronto used to process about 150 demands a year for police background checks to be submitted along with a Landed Immigrant visa application, but now the number has more than doubled. Of course, it is not known how many of the 300 or so visa applications filed by Japanese residents in the Greater Toronto Area are actually approved by the Canadian government. However, the increase in the number of such applications is a reality, and the same trend is certain to be unfolding in Vancouver, but at double the scale of Toronto. The total number of applications

from those two metropolitan areas (approximately 800 to 900) would indeed account for the steady increase in the number of Permanent Residents in Canada in the last decade.

2. High rate of intermarriage

What becomes of those people whose immigrant application is granted?

Our informant at the Consulate pointed out that their office used to receive a total of about 150 marriage and birth registrations in a year, but again, that number has doubled in the past ten years. When asked how many of the marriages took place between a Japanese man and woman, the informant replied “virtually none—most of them are between a Japanese woman and a Canadian citizen or an immigrant from a different ethnic background”.

Again, we can only speculate as to whether many Japanese women become immigrants in view of getting married to someone who makes Canada their permanent home, or get married in Canada as a result of their prolonged stay in their host country. However, the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) states on its website:

(M)arriage patterns of Japanese immigrants show that in the younger age group, the majority of male immigrants are married to female immigrants, but the majority of female immigrants marry Canadians of other ethnicity. Of the new immigrants who come to Canada each year, the largest group is the young, single women⁸⁾.

Such a trend has been noticed for quite some time within the Japanese communities of Vancouver and Toronto, which together account for over 80% of the total Japanese population in Canada. Responding to the needs of their members, the Greater Vancouver Japanese Immigrants' Association held 18 workshops on “*Kokusai-Kekkon* (international marriages)” from 1997 to 2000⁹⁾, providing couples an opportunity to talk about their experiences and to listen to advice from mental health professionals and intercultural communication experts. In Toronto, Japanese Social Services also saw the need to organize workshops on “cross-cultural marriages”, and Japanese heritage language schools reported that the number of children from *Kokusai-Kekkon* families was steadily increasing in the 21st century (Kano Podolsky, 2003). Those “community-level” observations have also been supported by some analyses of census data by Canadian scholars.

8) NAJC website: “Japanese Canadians Today: Post-War Immigrants”

http://www.najc.ca/thenandnow/postwar_today.php (downloaded August 28, 2007)

9) Japanese Association of Greater Vancouver Area website: “*Kokusai-Kekkon* Workshop” page

<http://www.geocities.co.jp/WallStreet/1915/intermrg.htm> (downloaded August 28, 2007)

In her 2002 study of Japanese immigrant women, Audrey Kobayashi states that Japanese female immigrants to Canada are often single or married to men of non-Japanese backgrounds. She goes on to say that those women usually settle in Vancouver or Toronto, are highly educated, with an average age of immigration at approximately thirty years. Kobayashi's census data analyses lead her to conclude that "from no other country in the world does Canada receive such a proportionately high number of such women" (206).

Lee and Boyd (2007) compare the intermarriage rates among five Asian ethnic groups in the United States and Canada, and their study is unique in its focus on the generational factor. The overall tendency among the subject groups is for the rate of intermarriage to increase with each subsequent generation after initial arrival into Canada or the United States. This finding would suggest that the rate of intermarriage is a good indicator of assimilation and the impact of exposure to Canadian or US society while growing up. However, Lee and Boyd are puzzled to find that "foreign-born" Japanese women have a rate of intermarriage far exceeding that of other Asian women of similar generational status, in the US as well as in Canada. These first-generation Japanese immigrant women's intermarriage rate is even comparable to (if not exceeding) the intermarriage rates of "native-born" Asian (including Japanese) women in both countries.

This finding presents a serious challenge for scholars of Japanese ethnicity (such as Makabe, 2005) who claim that the high incidence of intermarriage among Japanese in Canada is the result of a systematic post-war dispersal program, which discouraged the formation of Japanese ethnic communities in Canada, and made endogamy virtually impossible. Do we have to assume, then, that Japanese women who come to Canada intermarry by default (that is, they would marry a Japanese man residing in Canada if they could find one)? Is it not conceivable, as the Consulate informant suggested, that only those who have (or plan to get) intermarried become immigrants?

In any case, intermarriage would seem to be widespread, if not the norm, among recent Japanese immigrant women, and the reason for such a trend should be explored.

Ⅲ. Fieldwork among Japanese immigrant women in the Greater Toronto Area

1. Purpose of study : Issues to be addressed

We have so far established that the fastest growing sector of the Japanese population in Canada consists of women, Permanent as well as Long-Term Residents. We have also reason to presume that a large proportion of those women are aged in their twenties and thirties, and most likely are or become married to men of non-Japanese ethnic backgrounds.

The present study is based on fieldwork among a group of such women residing in the Greater

Toronto Area¹⁰), one of the two main geographical areas of concentration for recent arrivals from Japan. We will be looking at the patterns in which the subjects adapt to their Canadian surrounding, and hope to address the following issues:

- 1) What light can their experience shed on the reason for the increasing flow of women out of Japan?
- 2) What light can their experience shed on the relation between intermarriage and assimilation?
- 3) What impact may the presence of these new immigrants have on the future of Japanese ethnic identity in Canada?

We will now outline the research design and present some of the preliminary findings from the fieldwork conducted to date.

2. Target group and field entry

The target group consists of 10 Japanese women, all members of a Japanese language playgroup (which we will call the “GTA Club”) for young children under the age of 3 years and their mothers. These women are aged between 27 and 36 years, arrived in Canada within the last ten years, and are married to a Canadian citizen or a landed immigrant of non-Japanese ethnic background. The subjects currently hold a landed immigrant visa, although some of them first entered Canada with a tourist or Working Holiday visa.

It was with the aim of following up on an earlier study that this present research was initially designed. The previous study (Kano Podolsky, 2003) examined the various patterns of cross-cultural and multi-lingual socialization undergone by children in intermarried families. The target group for this study was thus chosen because all women had at least one child (two of them have two children). Another specification in the research design was to differentiate it from Kobayashi’s study (2002, mentioned above) which focused on “career-minded” working women. In this study, all but two women are full-time housewives: the remaining two are one woman on maternity leave, and the other expecting her second child and thus greatly cutting back on her working hours.

The first contact with the GTA Club was made through an introduction by Yukari Ikebata, director of the Ikebata Nursery School in Toronto¹¹). Ms. Ikebata was to give a talk on early childhood education to the members of the group, who started gathering regularly in a meeting room of a church in Oakville (a city in the western GTA) in January, 2007. The researcher accompanied

10) The Greater Toronto Area includes the City of Toronto and four regional municipalities (Durham in the east, York in the north, Halton and Peel in the west). Our target group meets in the regional municipality of Halton.

11) This nursery school was itself the subject of a previous study by the researcher (Kano Podolsky & Kamoto, 2005).

Ms. Ikebata to one such meeting on March 8th, 2007, after obtaining permission from the group's coordinator by e-mail.

At the beginning of the meeting, the researcher was formally introduced as a member of the Kyoto Women's University faculty, conducting a study of Japanese immigrant women in the area. Permission was then granted to attend all sessions of the GTA Club that would take place at the church, between spring and early summer 2007.

3. Fieldwork timeline

The observation period stretched from April to June 2007.

The researcher attended all but one of the 13 weekly GTA Club sessions that took place during that period. The GTA Club consists of 12 women and 13 children (boys and girls 8 months to 2 years old at the time of study), and were recruited through an ad on an internet Japanese forum¹²⁾. The members mostly live within a 15 – 20 minute drive from the church, but some of them drove for one hour or rode the bus for close to two hours to attend the sessions.

One typical playgroup session would start around 10:45 am, with mothers and children gradually gathering in the spacious meeting room. The leader/coordinator of the group, Ms. N., herself a mother of a two year-old boy, calls everybody to attention in the middle of the room around 11:15 am, and begins "Circle Time" with a welcoming song. All mothers and children sit on the floor in front of the fireplace, and Ms. N. goes around the circle to give everybody the opportunity to report on "What's New". More singing and "Craft Time" follow, then it is lunch time around 11:45 am.

After lunch, "Story Time" is taken over by one or two mothers who are designated every week and bring a favorite picture book to read aloud to the group. Some last songs signal the end of the session, by 1:00 pm. Clean-up ensues, and everybody leaves in their own car or van, or on foot to the nearest bus stop.

From the second week of May, Ms. N. had to leave the group to prepare for the birth of her second child. The playgroup would have disbanded for the summer, but members took the initiative to continue the sessions themselves, using the same room and same meeting time. The playgroup thus met for two more months until the end of June, following more or less the same schedule that was established by Ms. N., but with the difference that every week, different mothers would take over the session by presenting crafts, stories and songs to entertain the group.

12) The GTA Club actually has 12 members, but only 10 were included in the present sample. The leader/coordinator of the Club was left out as she was absent for most of the fieldwork period due to the birth of her second child. One mother came as the spouse of a Japanese corporate expatriate, and thus her input was used as a "control" case to the rest of the Club.

Individual interviews with the members and visiting family were conducted from May to June 2007. The purpose of the interviews was to see the members in their home environment, in a different setting from the church meeting room. Interactions with the child(ren), visiting grandparents, neighbors and spouses were also observed and became a source of additional data.

Group discussions were introduced in mid-May, 2007. The researcher asked members to submit e-mail essays on particular themes in order to discuss them at subsequent meetings, and all members responded, more or less on time. These were followed by survey questionnaires, four in all, again submitted through e-mail or filled out on printed forms during the church meetings.

Although the playgroup sessions ended in the last week of June, the researcher felt obliged to schedule a special lunch meeting to thank the members, and five were able to come. This luncheon meeting enabled the researcher to see the mothers in yet a different light, as it involved interacting with staff and members of a private social club where the meal was to be had.

One last feedback session was scheduled at the end of July, and all members were present to hear the analysis of their survey questionnaires and interviews.

4 . Report on findings : adaptation patterns of the GTA Club members

The following is a broad overview of the findings from the fieldwork described above, a digest of notable traits rather than a comprehensive description. We will most often discuss characteristics of the GTA Club as a whole, with reference to individual cases as needed.

4.1 Some theoretical background

The adaptation patterns of the GTA Club women were studied following the theoretical framework of Gordon's "assimilation theory" (1964), later refined in Isajiw's theory of "ethnic identity retention" (1990) and "social incorporation" (1997).

The main idea we wish to retain from those previous works is that there exist various patterns in which immigrants adapt to their host society, so that a scholar has to be careful in assessing the degree to which individuals (or groups) appear to be "assimilated" in a host society. In order to conduct a proper assessment, at least three dimensions (Gordon lists seven) should be included in the research design, namely the "cultural" patterns adopted by the subject, the "structural" (or interpersonal) networks the subject has developed, and the "identity" the subject has formed in the host society.

We should also note that "assimilation" (a concept which itself merits a detailed discussion, unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper) is not the reverse process of "ethnic retention". The two processes are not a "zero-sum phenomenon", in that a person who appears to be assimilated in the host society to a certain degree (in some or all of the three aspects mentioned above) should not be assumed to have lost his/her ethnic ties to a corresponding degree. On the con-

trary that same person may have retained many of his/her ethnic cultural patterns (such as language, food, customs), have a wide network of friends and acquaintances of the same ethnic background, and feel a strong emotional attachment to the ethnic community or even to the “home” country.

Patterns of adaptation, thus, can emerge in a number of combination, as we take into consideration two related but distinct processes (assimilation and ethnic retention), and three dimensions (cultural, structural, and identity) for each of those processes.

4.2 General characteristics

The GTA Club women are overall a well-educated, well-traveled group of women, with a high level of intellectual curiosity.

All women attended a 4 year university or junior college, and four of them were educated or received training (for a period ranging from one to five years) in North America. All of the women have been employed full-time while in Japan, mostly in office work but also as a teacher in an English language school, diving school instructor, and flight attendant. One woman worked in several Asian countries and Australia (she was a Japanese language teacher). Only three women have work experience in Canada, of which one was employed in an agency for Japanese students and Working Holiday Makers.

The most remarkable characteristic of this group of women was their extensive overseas travel experience. Beginning in high-school with language exchange programs, all of them took several trips overseas even before their move to Canada, traveling to North America, Europe and Oceania (all very popular tourist destinations) but also to Asia and even Africa for weeks at a time.

Most GTA Club members are stay-at-home mothers and currently lead a relatively sedentary lifestyle, but this should not be taken as evidence of passivity. These women’s past education and professional backgrounds, combined with their taste for exploration, make them avid learners. They were quite enthusiastic at the prospect of weekly discussions led by the researcher, and very cooperative in the submission of e-mail essays and survey forms. The perfect attendance at the feedback session (in late July, after the Club sessions themselves were over) attested to their interest. The members were impressed that their input was processed as data and analyzed in a Power Point presentation with printed handouts, and some of them shared in personal e-mails sent to the researcher that their passion for learning and studying had been rekindled.

Another evidence of these women’s latent talents appeared when the GTA Club was on the verge of going on hiatus after the leader/coordinator went on maternity leave. One of the members took it upon herself to continue the club in Ms. N.’s absence, and circulated an e-mail message among the members, asking whether they would be willing to attend further sessions should they take place at the same location on the same day of the week. All members responded positively,

and agreed to maintain the weekly pace (although the GTA Club had initially started on a bi-weekly basis). The format of the sessions, while preserving most of the time table set by Ms. N., became more interactive than leader-driven, with all mothers pitching in with their own handmade craft ideas, songs, and story-telling styles.

It should be noted that the researcher's group discussion was introduced during that transition period, and may have helped break the formal timetable: one woman volunteered to give a yoga lesson during one of the sessions, another gave a lecture on organic produce and nutrition, and lunchtime became more of a pot-luck party with every week an increasing number of women sharing their recipes and homemade dishes. It was impressive to see the creativity and enthusiasm of these women, who were quite ready to share their talents when called upon. We can say that this two-month period served as a real "bonding" experience for the GTA Club members, whose e-mail exchanges became even more frequent and animated as a result.

4.3 Cultural adaptation

The adaptation of the GTA Club women regarding the cultural dimension can be assessed as follows. Most of them are highly skilled in English language, as per their own evaluation and the researcher's observation, although not all of them consider themselves confident enough to be as outspoken as they would be in Japanese. The fact that they communicate with their husbands in English on a daily basis is not sufficient to explain this level of proficiency: most of the women state that their English improved after arriving to Canada and/or meeting their spouse, but also, English was their favorite school subject while growing up in Japan, and most of them admit to being very keen on verbal communication in any language. As could be seen from their e-mail messages and essays (in Japanese), the GTA Club women were highly literate and able to write coherent, well-organized texts.

Being proficient in English does not mean that they are totally comfortable in it, however, and the majority of the women confessed that they conducted internet searches in Japanese and preferred to read the news in Japanese (unless it pertained to Canadian news). Some of them subscribed to the Japanese cable television and others downloaded Japanese programs through the internet, and most women were very pleased when I brought out Japanese novels to lend them at the weekly meetings: Japanese remained their language of choice when it came to relaxation and entertainment. Only one woman told me that she would be quite ready to write to me in English, as most of her e-mail communication was with English speakers.

One area which was unequivocally slanted toward Japanese culture was food. Perhaps because their children are young, the GTA Club women were very aware of the nutritional value of various food items, and preferred the Japanese cooking style for most ingredients. Most women said that they cooked Japanese-style meals five times a week on average, and ate rice every day. Trips to

Asian food markets were made a few times a month to stock up on rice, tofu and condiments, but most groceries were bought at the local Canadian supermarkets.

The subjects were understandably more observant of Canadian customs and festive events, especially Christmas, which they all described as being a far more important occasion in Canada than in Japan. Because these events involve the family as a whole, having a Canadian husband and in-laws would naturally lead the mother to follow the local calendar of events and style of celebrations. The young age of the children also helps explain the importance of Halloween and Easter, which might not otherwise be part of their lifestyles.

4.4 Structural dimension

Lunchtime was undoubtedly the most animated part of the GTA Club meetings. This is when the conversation really flows, and the mothers enjoy themselves, venting frustrations about their in-laws or sharing proud “mother moments” such as their toddler’s appetite or first words. The GTA Club was started as a playgroup for young children to provide them with a Japanese-language environment, but it had obviously become a social club for the mothers, who sought the company of other Japanese women with similar life experiences in Canada.

In examining the GTA Club women’s interpersonal networks, we are struck by how clearly they are divided along language lines. Personal and intimate friends are mostly Japanese-speaking, while English-speaking people are most often restricted to acquaintances and neighbors. Husbands and in-laws are frequently the only English-speaking people that the women will associate with on a personal basis. The two exceptions among the subjects were, not unexpectedly, those who had a job in a non-Japanese work environment. They had developed a network of friends among their colleagues, and had also more interaction with their neighbors and husbands’ friends.

We might assume that the length of stay in Canada may have an impact on the type of networks a subject develops, but this was not necessarily the case. In fact, one woman explained that the longer she lives in Canada, the more she finds herself drawn towards Japanese friendships. At the beginning of her stay in Canada six years ago, she had almost no Japanese friends and interacted mainly with English-speaking people around her. Now, she is more reluctant to accept invitations from neighbors and prefers to associate with other Japanese women such as the GTA Club members. Although this woman’s English proficiency is excellent, she says she is not energetic (or young) enough anymore to express herself constantly in English, hence her preference for Japanese-speaking friends.

The women kept very close ties with their family and friends in Japan. Thanks to technological advances, daily communication is easy and instantaneous. This aspect was in sharp contrast with a study conducted by the researcher in 1994, before the advent of e-mail and internet, in which

the subjects (families of Japanese corporate expatriates) kept in touch through letters and expensive overseas phone calls. The frequency of trips to Japan was also surprising, as some women returned at least once, if not twice a year for a period of two to four weeks to their homeland. Grandparents also visited often, a proof of how casual it has become for Japanese people of all ages to travel overseas over the last decade or so.

4.5 Identity adaptation

We follow Isajiw's definition of identity (1990) as a "social-psychological process of locating oneself in relation to various social systems". The subjects were asked to respond to the identity questionnaire by thinking whether they would locate themselves as being "an insider", "an outsider", or "on the margins" for each question asked. The questionnaire explored three main aspects of identity: the emotional attachment of the subject toward Japan or Canada, the way in which the subject sees herself being defined by other people in Japan or Canada, and the way in which the subject defines herself in relation to Japan or Canada.

The one respondent who most consistently saw herself as an insider in Canada was, not surprisingly, the only GTA Club member who had made her way to Canada as an independent immigrant. This woman had first come to Canada as a high-school student and had decided very early on that she would one day come to live as a permanent resident. She meticulously planned her subsequent studies and career path so as to accumulate enough "points" to qualify as a business immigrant to Canada. She is one of only two women who met her husband in Canada after arriving as a single woman. However, even this woman did not consider herself a complete outsider in relation to Japan, and kept strong emotional ties to her home country.

The more common identity pattern developed by the members of the GTA Club was that of someone on the "margins", especially in relation to Canada. Although a lot of women were ready to cheer on a Canadian team at an international sports event, and saw themselves as treated as integral members of Canadian society by people around them, they most often stood as objective observers, neither completely in nor out of Canadian society. Many women also felt not completely "in" vis-à-vis Japan, especially when it came to self-definition and definition by others, although on the emotional level, attachment towards Japan was much stronger than toward Canada. One woman felt she was an "outsider" in relation to Japan, mostly in terms of self-definition. Her interview revealed that she had always had a keen interest in the English language, and a strong yearning to live overseas from a very young age. She also experienced a lot of "gender discrimination" from teachers and her father while growing up, and feels liberated in Canada.

As we saw from the GTA Club members' structural adaptation patterns, these women keep a very strong emotional attachment toward Japan, but their prolonged absence from their home country has had an undeniable impact in that they see themselves (literally as well as figuratively)

“on the outside looking in”. They are aware that they have undergone some cultural changes, not only in their behavior but also in their way of thinking, and that it would be difficult for them to completely submit back to the way things are done in Japan. They are also aware, on a practical level, that they will most likely not live in Japan with their family, considering that their husband would not be able to easily find work there. As a result most women look positively forward to building their life in Canada, with the hope that they might become wealthy enough to take regular return trips to Japan. Some cases also suggest that having felt “like they were suffocating” in Japan, some women might have felt on the margins of Japanese society to begin with, and their coming to Canada was only a logical outcome.

IV. Conclusion

We will now discuss the study’s findings in relation to the issues which guide this fieldwork project.

“What light can the experience of the GTA Club members shed on the reason for the increasing flow of women out of Japan?”

There are scholars who suggest that a veritable “exodus” is taking place, whereby Japanese women are taking the “internationalization route” to escape the confines of a patriarchal Japanese society (Kelsky, 2001; Kobayashi, 2002). Signs of this exodus may range from the large number of Japanese women who study English and seek jobs with an “international” flavor, to those who marry non-Japanese (in most cases, English-speaking and white) men, before or after moving out of Japan to live, study, or work overseas.

All GTA Club members in this study did express keen interest in English language studies, and traveled extensively overseas in their youth. However, we cannot necessarily conclude that these women were trying to escape the restrictions of Japanese gender relations, and as a result, ended up marrying a non-Japanese man. In fact, only two respondents expressed that they were personally bothered by gender discrimination in Japan and cited it as a motivation to come to Canada.

The majority of our study’s subjects came to Canada as a result of meeting their husbands elsewhere. Four couples met in Japan (all husbands were teachers of English language at the time of meeting), and four met on “neutral territory” (while both wife and husband were working or studying overseas, or, in the case of one couple, while working on an international flight). Only two subjects were already in Canada when they met their future husbands, one who had come as an independent immigrant, and one who was a Working Holiday Maker. The latter was all ready to return to Japan after her visa expired, thinking this was to be her last stay overseas before

settling back in Japan, where she had dear friends and family waiting for her.

Would it not be more natural to conclude that the increase in international travels and work opportunities, not only among Japanese women, but among young people worldwide, contributed to the unions seen in our sample, rather than attribute Japanese women a compulsive wish to escape Japan?

That said, we still have to explain why there is a preponderance of women and not men among Japanese young people who travel and reside overseas. We have already alluded to this point in our discussion of Working Holiday Makers and the reluctance of Japanese young men to take advantage of that system. Young Japanese women nowadays are overall highly educated and thus can hold well-paid (albeit entrance level) jobs. They therefore are likely to possess a significant amount of disposable income, especially if they live with their parents. Their wealth, combined with the fact that career expectations placed on them by their parents, society at large, and most often by themselves, are much lower than on men of similar age, make them prime applicants for overseas jobs and studies that may not lead to any long-term benefit.

It may actually be that the real characteristic of Japanese emigration patterns lies in that so few young men are willing to leave Japan to seek their chance overseas. The apparent “exodus” of women from Japan may be partly an “optical illusion” due to the conspicuous absence of Japanese male immigrants.

This may also help us explain the high rate of intermarriage among “foreign-born” Japanese women in Canada, which so puzzled Lee and Boyd, while being conveniently overlooked by Makabe. We should return to the relatively small scale of Japanese immigration as compared to other Asian immigrant groups: the actual number of foreign-born Japanese women who intermarry may not be so out of line with that of women from other Asian groups with similar generational status. It may again be the absence of all other sorts of immigrants from Japan that makes the Japanese women stand out among all foreign-born women in Canada: basically, only the women who have intermarried (or plan to intermarry) with Canadian citizens or landed immigrants will choose to become permanent residents themselves. Japan as a home country is still attractive enough for most Japanese to return to (or remain in), even for women.

Indeed, although Kobayashi suggests that there is a “push-factor” for career-minded Japanese women to move out of Japan, Kamoto’s suggestion of a “housewifization” of immigrant women (2007) may fit better the profile of the GTA Club women and explain their presence in Canada.

Kamoto cites the Japanese economic recession of the last decade as a factor in the increase of international marriages among Japanese women. Her thesis is that Japanese women born in the 1970s and who were brought up by well-off parents during the “bubble economy”, will seek a marital arrangement similar to their mothers’, that is, they want to become a stay-at-home mother

after working for a few years following their college graduation. However, due to a shortage of well-paying, steady jobs, fewer Japanese men are able to guarantee such an arrangement, hence men from outside of Japan are increasingly called upon to fill the demand. It could be said that the growing number of international marriages is in part the result of Japanese women looking for a “housewife position”, who have enlarged their pool of potential suitors to include well-off foreign men.

We are not suggesting that the subjects of our study are not ambitious or career-minded. However, we can also say that they did not move out of Japan specifically because they were pursuing professional aspirations or seeking personal emancipation. It is just that for these women, the man whom they decided to marry “happened to be” a non-Japanese. It may also be that their high level of education and language skills gave them the confidence to start a life overseas and even the prospect of spending the rest of their lives in a foreign country did not deter them.

“What light can the experience of the GTA Club members shed on the relation between
intermarriage and assimilation?”

In his theory of assimilation, Gordon lists intermarriage as one of the seven dimensions of analysis. Gordon is famous for hypothesizing that of all the dimensions of assimilation, the structural component is the most important: once structural assimilation (or assimilation in the area of interpersonal relationships) occurs, all other dimensions are likely to follow as in a “domino effect”. As Lee and Boyd pointed out in their study, prolonged exposure to the host society makes it more likely for the children of immigrants to associate with people outside of their parents’ ethnic group, and therefore may lead to a higher incidence of intermarriage. In that context, intermarriage can be conceptualized as the “end-product”, and thus an indicator, of the immigrant’s ever-increasing interaction with members of the host society at large.

However, intermarriage can happen even in the absence of prolonged and intense interaction with people from the spouse’s ethnic group or home society, as is plainly seen in the case of “war brides”, or couples who meet in a country which is foreign to both husband and wife. In the case of the GTA Club members, all but two of them married before or shortly after their move to Canada, leaving little or no time for them to have been “structurally assimilated” into Canadian society before intermarriage took place.

Does intermarriage, then, in time engender structural and other forms of assimilation? This statement cannot be made either, according to the study’s sample. It is rather the circumstances according to which the women came to Canada that seem to dictate how actively they will try and gain membership into various social circles, most notably on the labor market.

As we mentioned earlier, the two women who had the most varied and intensive networks

among Canadians were the ones who held a job in a non-Japanese work environment. We have already discussed the case of the woman who applied for an independent business immigrant visa, and we can understand that if it was her own well-planned course of action to come to Canada, she could be expected to make a conscious effort in establishing herself in all aspects of life in Canada. The other woman with extensive Canadian networks met her husband in Japan, but nevertheless it was her own choice to come to Canada, even though her husband would have been quite happy to remain in Japan. After her arrival, she attended business and computer courses at a local college, and obtained a job in an IT company where she will resume work after her maternity leave.

Another common point between the two women is the length of time (5 and 7 years respectively) between their arrival to Canada and the birth of their first child. All other women gave birth to their first child shortly after arriving in Canada (6 months to 2.5 years), and this may explain that they did not have enough time to look for a job or acquire training before getting too busy with child-rearing.

In the case of immigrant women, therefore, we could conceive that membership in the non-ethnic labor market is a better indicator of all-around assimilation into the host society, as it would presuppose proficiency in the host language, and exposure to (or even active development of) interpersonal relationship with members of the host society at large.

“What impact may the presence of these new immigrants have on the future of
Japanese ethnic identity in Canada?”

The GTA Club sample did not provide us with enough data at this point to address the third issue. However, we will venture a guess, and leave it for future analysis.

It is tempting to assume that because a large proportion of recent Japanese immigrant women are intermarried, this will bring about a critical situation in terms of ethnic culture retention in the Japanese community in Canada. Children of an intermarried couple may be thought more prone to “losing” their ethnic characteristics, especially if one of the parents is from the majority Canadian background.

Indeed, a study of Japanese immigrants who arrived in the 1980s (conducted by this researcher in the late 1990s and early 21st century; Kano Podolsky, 2003) revealed that it is an arduous task even when both parents are Japan-born to maintain Japanese culture at home and convince the children to attend a Japanese heritage language school on Saturdays. In the case of intermarried families, the pressure falls squarely on the Japanese parent who wishes to transmit their mother tongue and culture, and the process can cause stress within the family.

It is interesting to note, then, that attendance in Japanese ethnic schools is on the rise, and to

speculate on the cause and outcome of such a trend. One particular Japanese ethnic school, which was featured in the researcher's above mentioned study, has currently almost twice the number of students it had in the mid 1990s. The majority of students are children from intermarried families, most often the mother being the Japanese parent. This enrolment trend obviously reflects the general increase of Japanese immigrants in Toronto, but also could be a sign that recent Japanese immigrants, despite their high rate of intermarriage, maintain a keen desire to transmit their Japanese culture and identity to the next generation.

The study of the GTA Club members gives us a clue about what process is at work: it is our hypothesis that Japanese immigrants who arrived in the last decade may hold much stronger emotional and practical ties with Japan than their predecessors.

This is greatly due to the internet and e-mail which allow instant access to information and people in Japan, but also because of the immigrants' mindset: they are just not ready to consider themselves fully established in Canada, nor completely cut off from Japan. Japan is, for many, a country that they did not leave because they wished to escape from it, and thus remains a place to yearn for.

The parents of immigrants also play an important role in the maintenance of this mindset. As both grandmothers whom the researcher interviewed offered, parents will "fly out any time to come and fetch" their daughters, should they not be happy in Canada. In other words, "permanent residence" is but a legal status that does not preclude a return to Japan.

If such emotional attachment persists, we can predict that the GTA Club members and other Japanese mothers like them will see it only as a natural outcome of their Japanese identity to educate their children in Japanese, and maintain a social life based on friendships with other Japanese residents and their children. Here also, the widespread use of the internet will play a role in the organization of Japanese language playgroups, home daycare, and after-school programs which are sure to proliferate in the near future.

This trend is already taking place, and although it will not guarantee the transmission of ethnic culture beyond the second generation, it will greatly serve in instilling a sense of community and bonding among Japanese immigrants in Canada. As Breton (1964) suggested in his theory of "institutional completeness" among ethnic communities, when services and institutions geared specifically towards a certain ethnic group increase in number and variety, members of that ethnic group are likely to remain (or become) closely knit.

In short, we should not equate the increase of intermarriages among Japanese immigrants with an imminent disappearance of Japanese ethnicity in Canada. On the contrary, we should not be surprised if the community bonds among Japanese immigrants should strengthen, and this may yet trigger some form of Japanese ethnic revival in Canada.

References

- Breton, Raymond (1964) "Institutional completeness of ethnic communities and the personal relations of immigrants", *American Journal of Sociology*, 70, pp. 193 – 205
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2006) "Recent Immigrants in Metropolitan Areas: Canada – A Comparative Profile Based on the 2001 Census"
- Gordon, Milton (1964) *Assimilation and American Life*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Isajiw, Wsevolod W. and Tomoko Makabe (1982) "Socialization as a factor in ethnic identity retention", Research Paper No. 134, Toronto: Center for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto
- Isajiw, Wsevolod W. (1990) "Ethnic Identity Retention", In Breton et al. *Ethnic Identity and Equality*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press
- Isajiw, Wsevolod W. (1997) *Multiculturalism in North America and Europe*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press
- Kamoto, Itsuko (2007) "International Marriage in the Age of Globalization – Housewifization as a Strategy". Unpublished grant report submitted to the Ministry of Culture and Science (in Japanese)
- Kano Podolsky, Momo (2003). "Ethnic culture retention in multicultural families: Five case-studies from Toronto, Canada". *Japan Journal of Multiculturalism and Multilingualism*, 9, pp. 87 – 106.
- Kelsky, Karen (2001). *Women on the Verge: Japanese Women, Western Dreams*. Durham and London: Duke University Press
- Kobayashi, Audrey (2002). "Migration as a Negotiation of Gender", In *New Worlds, New Lives*. Stanford: Stanford University Press
- Lee, Sharon and Monica Boyd (in print) "Marrying out: Comparing the marital and social integration of Asians in the U.S. and Canada" *Social Sci. Res.* (2007), doi: 10.1016/j.ssresearch.2007.01.002
- Makabe, Tomoko (2005). "Intermarriage: Dream Becomes Reality for a Visible Minority?". *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 37, pp. 121 – 126.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1983 – 2007). *Annual Report of Statistics on Japanese Nationals Overseas*