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## *Essays*

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### **Interviews with Female Japanese Study Abroad Students in England**

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*This paper is a summary of some of the research findings of a three-year qualitative oral history project, examining the lives of Japanese women who have lived in England long-term (defined as two or more years). It is based on in-depth interviews with 16 Japanese women ranging in age from 26 to 51 and categorised into four groups: students, career women, women married to or divorced from British men, and company wives (women who accompany their Japanese husbands on corporate postings), as well as on participant observation. An examination of the methodology exploring the cultural and linguistic issues involved in cross-cultural interviewing can be found in the March 2003 edition of the British Oral History Journal, whilst a summary of the entire project can be found at: [website.lineone.net/~skburton](http://website.lineone.net/~skburton). This paper will focus on the narratives of eight of the women who originally went to England as students, and will consider some of the issues raised by the interviewees such as: their motivations for studying abroad, the importance of English language proficiency for women, dissatisfaction with the Japanese university system, and their views on British education.*

*Biographical details of the eight interviewees can be found in the footnotes. All but two of the interviews were conducted in English and all names are pseudonyms.*

### **Introduction**

As part of an oral history research project on the lives of Japanese women residents in England, I interviewed eight women (out of a total of 16 interviewees) who had originally gone to England on student visas, and had stayed on.

The student experience is a significant issue for research because signing up for a course at an English university or language school is the most convenient means by which Japanese women are able to enter the country for an extended period (the other eight interviewees hold spouse visas). As I interviewed only those who had been living in England for two or more years, they were able to comment in-depth on the education systems both in Japan and England, as well as to provide valuable insights into the long-term processes of adaptation, alienation, language acquisition, migration identities and internationalism.

Focusing on the narratives of female students is also key to understanding the Travel and Study Abroad Booms since they are predominantly female migration phenomena. Since the early 1990's, women travelling abroad have outnumbered men two to one, and 80% of Study Abroad students are female (Kelsky 2001:2). According to the Japanese Embassy in London, at 35% of the total registered resident population (currently around 51,000), "students/researchers/ministers" represent the second largest category of residents in the United Kingdom. As of 1998 (the latest year for which a full breakdown of figures is available<sup>1</sup>), there were 11,097 female and 6,955 male students registered and although the period of residence is not recorded, since short-term students

tend not to bother to register, it can be supposed that most of these are longer-term students. Since 1992, female Japanese students in the United Kingdom have continually outnumbered male and, whilst the number of male students appears to be declining (from a peak of 8,104 in 1996), the number of female students continues to increase. They are, therefore, a statistically significant group for research. Indeed, whilst private company staff represent the largest group of residents at 40%, it should be noted that, in 1998, there were 8,156 male private company staff but only 945 female. Students therefore represent the largest category of female residents in the UK.

### Gaining Entry on Student Visas

There are two main routes to gaining entry to the United Kingdom on a student visa: enrolling at a language school and enrolling at a university. Two of the eight interviewees, Masako Abe and Keiko Jones, enrolled at language schools.

When I was a student, I came to England on a short-term study trip for one month when I was twenty, during the summer holidays. At that time I thought, "Ah, it's good here", and I always thought I wanted to do short-term study or to live here but I never had the opportunity. I graduated [from] university [in Japan] and became an OL and worked for just under two years and then I decided to quit. In Japanese companies you usually quit when you are going to get married but I wasn't, I was quitting to go abroad. I didn't tell the company that though. And I lied to my parents telling them I was only going abroad for about one month. I've been here ever since. I studied English and then went to interior design school and because I needed to live I did various part-time jobs, at a [Japanese-language] newspaper and as a secretary and what else ... anyway for several years I did various part-time jobs ... [for] about three years. (Masako Abe)

Once or twice a year, Masako would return to Japan for up to a month when she ran out of money and couldn't find legal work that did not contravene the 15-hour limit on student employment, coming back when she'd earned enough money in Japan to enrol on another course in England.

Masako is something of a rarity amongst long-term residents because although she represents the majority of Japanese female Study Abroad students who "come to England to do short-term language study, find London life charming, and simply stay on, attending various specialised schools" (Yoshida in the *Eikoku News Digest 2000* – author's translation), few find a legal way to remain long-term. Both Habu (unpublished) and the above *Eikoku News Digest* article note the difficulties Japanese female students face if they wish to stay on and the various strategies they devise or the paths they feel pressured to take in order to achieve their dreams. These include enrolling on course after course in no particular order and with varying rates of attendance.

... many women move between British institutions and study levels, often as part of a strategy to prolong their stay in Britain. For example, not only might a language school student go on to do an MA, but a student who has gained an MA in Britain may go on to a language school (Habu unpublished:6).

I was told by several informants about language schools, predominantly Japanese-owned, which are more than willing to continue taking tuition money whilst turning a blind eye to the attendance register. The *Eikoku News Digest* quotes a woman who has been doing this illegally for four years; she paid fees to a computer school, received her student visa but never attended classes, preferring to work in a Japanese nightclub. She viewed her stay as "probably a long holiday" but didn't rule out the possibility of marrying a gay friend as a last resort in order to get that all-important resident visa. I myself was often asked by women on short-term student visas to be introduced to Western men for this purpose but never by women on longer-term postgraduate courses. Masako Abe and Keiko Jones eventually married and gained spouse visas.

The second type of student (six out of the eight) enrolled on graduate or postgraduate courses either immediately or after a course of preliminary English study, generally at the university they would later attend. They represent a more elite, academically-oriented group. Hitomi Maeda did her undergraduate and postgraduate degree in England:

When I was a second-year university student in Japan, my mother went to Sweden and England as part of her job [a university professor] and I went along to help. In England a friend of my mother's was doing an MA in Women's Studies and we talked and I thought, "Oh, I'd like to study in England". After I returned from the trip, I investigated more and wrote letters and application forms and then the following year I came back.

Whilst the first group seems to have more in common with Gap Year students or those doing the Big OE (Overseas Experience), the second group appears to represent a very different kind of student altogether. They are generally academic elites, and they go on to gain masters' degrees and doctorates at British universities. This is all the more surprising considering the generally low figures for women who enrol on masters' and doctoral courses in Japan. In the year 2002, out of 155,267 students who were enrolled on master's courses, only 43,694 were women. Of those who were enrolled on doctoral courses in the same year, out of 68,245, only 19,051 were women (Figures from the Minister's Secretariat, Monbushou – the Japanese Ministry for Education, Science, Sports and Culture at <http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/nenkan/zuhyou/y2218000.xls>).

Looking at the family backgrounds of the six elite students two points are immediately apparent. They all have generally high socio-economic status and, not unconnected with this, they tend to have strong-willed, highly educated and/or high status parents who have not only encouraged them in their career and life goals but have been able to finance their children's education to a high level, and later their travel abroad. Having motivated and successful parents has its advantages. Most interviewees note being taken to language schools and holidaying abroad as children, even in the late 1960's and early 1970's when travelling abroad was rare for Japanese. Several are the children of expatriates and received some schooling abroad.

Just as importantly, in Japan they mixed in a middle-class culture which acknowledged studying abroad as a desirable and high status activity. They are graduates of high level, in many cases elite, universities in Japan and tended to socialise with other students from similarly ranked universities through clubs and societies which were open to them by invitation. That is how Rimika Toyoda made her friends, who later influenced her decision to go abroad:

So that is how I met these girls and ...it's really horrible to say this but the fact is they passed the entrance exams and they got into these colleges and universities so they had a certain background, we had something in common. Maybe middle-class. And parents are quite willing to pay for the education, that kind of family, you know? So probably that's why my friends had an opportunity to go abroad, not only going abroad, study abroad for years.

Within this elite academic environment peer pressure was a common motivating factor in this Study Abroad migration culture.

They are from the middle-class background. Could be more because all my friends, I'm not exaggerating this, all my friends, one way or another, went abroad. (Rimika Toyoda)

In this way, the elite are more likely to go abroad than other Japanese, as Rimika notes, "Because I am very much a middle-class person whether I like it or not. And I was in that environment."

With most coming from wealthy, middle-class backgrounds they are also financially better off than shorter-term Study Abroad students, either through parental support or, for those who

worked before coming to England, their access to jobs in higher ranking Japanese companies. Moreover, with good academic backgrounds, they are more liable to be awarded Study Abroad scholarships. All of the elite students interviewed, even those who had worked for a few years and were also living off their savings, were receiving or had received some kind of scholarship which covered some if not all of their education costs (depending on how many years it was taking to complete their courses). In short, they have legal and financial advantages that the majority of other students do not have; they can stay abroad longer and they can enrol on long-term higher educational courses.

### **Study Abroad Goals**

What do these two groups wish to achieve by studying abroad? Generally, for women like Masako Abe and Keiko Jones, it seems that coming to England to study is a means to escape temporarily from Japan, and a chance to have some fun before they marry. Women like Masako seem to represent Andressen and Kumagai's Escapees (Andressen and Kumagai 1996), some with no clear idea of what they want to achieve by going abroad except getting out and having fun. They "don't know what to do next so some people just come here and see if anything exciting could come out". (Mitsuko Sato)

Others – from both the short-term and the elite groups – are more motivated to learn a skill that could increase their chances of getting a resident visa or enhancing their CV's if and when they return to Japan.

So many people try, not just to learn English but in their second year or third year they try to get something what could be anything like flower arrangement or antique trading or something, or painting ceramics or it could be anything. Or the most common form of this realisation is teaching Japanese. There are some institutes in London or some other parts so first they try to learn English of course but then try to get qualified for being a teacher so that they could still remain in England longer, and possibly as a way of earning money teaching wherever she be. (Mitsuko Sato)

At the top of this scale are the academic elite, seeking professional qualifications for international jobs that could enable them to have full-time careers. They seem to represent Andressen and Kumagai's Achievers (Andressen and Kumagai 1996). Although they all had stories of being treated unfairly because of their gender none claimed outright that they had been forced to leave Japan. It was more the case that with an international outlook (most having previously spent time abroad) and the general view that the West is a better place for ambitious women, it was natural for them to look there. Consequently they chose to enrol at English universities specifically because it could offer them the opportunity to study in an international environment and it could advance their careers.

I think the biggest incentive came from my academic interest, like UK is always very strong in development field, so to be fair I also looked up some courses available in America but nothing really interested me, and another thing is by then I got accustomed to English culture through my stay in New Zealand and Canada so I felt more comfortable. So both academic and cultural interests, I guess. (Mitsuko Sato)

Actually the tuition fee was cheaper here and also I have experienced study in the States so I thought I wanted to know how things are in Europe and how people think and so I wanted to study in Britain. (Naomi Yamamoto)

With recent changes in the law in Japan making contract work legal, and the economic

recession decreasing women's chances of finding good full-time work, having an extra skill or qualification can increase their employability. Of course the major skill is English and this will be considered further below. However it should be noted that none of the students were unemployed before they came to England. Whilst Hitomi Maeda actually quit her undergraduate course in Japan in order to study in England, the others quit their jobs or moved to England after graduation from Japanese universities.

### **The Importance of the English Language for Japanese Women's Careers**

Becoming proficient in the English language is a major reason for studying abroad. At a fundamental level, English is part of the *akogare* ("longing" – see Kelsky 2000 and 2001) for all things Western. "It's still prevalent that people tend to think it's really nice, it's cool to be able to speak English" (Naomi Yamamoto). For most Japanese, English language examination success is viewed simply as an aid to promotion, not as a usable skill. But with the Japanese economy still the second largest in the world, companies need proficient English speakers and there was a great awareness amongst the interviewees that proficiency in English can improve a woman's career chances.

While I was working, there were quite a few people who were doing some sort of exporting business and they all spoke English. "Wow, people actually do speak English" ... that company was quite famous for hosting the largest and most famous women's golf tournament in Japan - they don't do it any more because they don't have money - and because I was in the publicity section I had to go and help and I saw these Japanese golfers talking to American golfers and, "Wow, they DO speak English" and I just suddenly realised in the world everyone was speaking English and I was the only one who wasn't speaking English so maybe I should do something. (Rimika Toyoda)

English can be an especially important tool for women. This is partly due to the fact that Japanese men are encouraged to get on the career ladder as soon as possible (taking time out to go abroad can seriously damage a man's career chances) and also because the English language itself is viewed as a girls' subject at school with most boys directed towards science subjects, even at university level. Therefore, with education being Japan's standard means of improving one's status, an overseas qualification in English language proficiency can help to give women an academic edge over male colleagues, especially in areas of international study.

Especially for women I think because their opportunities to get a good job are more limited than men so English is one of the like tangible ... good tool, good arm to have. It is a good way to broaden your opportunities for hunting jobs, especially for women ... Generally speaking especially the businessmen want to be able to speak and read and write English, but I think more women are interested in English because of this limited opportunity. (Naomi Yamamoto)

It is also the case that women's working lives are often interrupted by child-rearing, and with a system of lifetime employment and salaries dependent on years of service, women have little chance of re-entering the workforce in anything other than low-paid or part-time jobs. Proficiency in English gives women career flexibility.

Because if you have the English ability then you can be a translator and you can get translation jobs at home while having babies. And you can start working as an interpreter for instance after 13 years. And there's lifetime employment still prevalent in Japan so starting a career at the age of maybe 40 is, you know, it's really difficult to enter into this promotion ladder because now most of the people started their career at the age of 22, 23 and then they go up the promotion ladder. But if you have this qualification to be an interpreter

for instance, then you can just get a job at the age of 40. So I think it's more flexible. It suits to a more flexible job style, working style. (Naomi Yamamoto)

English can therefore be a means to combat some of the discrimination against women in the workplace, or at least give them an opportunity to sidestep it. Moreover, those who return to Japan with English language qualifications increase their chances of being assigned to companies' foreign desks and export sections where male competition is less fierce (because ambitious men prefer to be assigned to the more important domestic sections). The English language is therefore a useful tool for ambitious Japanese women.

### **Dissatisfaction with the Japanese Education System**

In addition to the linguistic advantages of taking a course at an English university, there was also a great deal of criticism by academically oriented women of the Japanese higher education system, and it seems that flaws in the system contributed to their decision to seek an education elsewhere. These include poor teaching, gender bias including the 'old boy' network, and ageism.

Naomi Yamamoto was highly critical of her undergraduate course:

I was not very much satisfied with the lectures that the [Japanese] university was giving because it was kind of a bit too easy to me so I felt that I was not learning so much ... because it was not demanding and we didn't have so much discussion going on in the classroom and it's not practical. We had some conversation classes but it was not very well facilitated and some of the teachers were not very good at teaching us and so I had to study by myself also to get my knowledge about English.

Things get even worse at postgraduate level. A major difference in the postgraduate education systems between Japan and England is the fact that in the West it is respected as a focus of high level academic or technological research. In the United States, 15% of undergraduates go on to postgraduate education. In Japan that figure is only 6% (Figures taken from Kerr 2001:300). As Woronoff (1997:53 - see also Shougo 2002:181 for criticism of postgraduate education in Japan) notes of Japanese universities:

Compared to graduate schools abroad, they are pretty mediocre and thus many Japanese prefer getting their advanced training abroad. They find better courses, better professors, better equipment and a chance to mix with foreigners and improve their speaking ability of foreign languages. While graduate school is usually a finishing process and is widely used in Europe and America, where a doctorate may be essential for a successful career, in Japan the doctorate is often seen as a dead-end.

Criticisms by those interviewees who had done postgraduate studies in Japan included no reading list, no debating or talking in seminars, no instruction in how to write academic essays, no teaching of how to carry out or present research, and no personal supervision. As one student noted, it was like being a "stray sheep" and if you weren't motivated you would just feel lost. Ultimately they claimed the system simply did not work, that even students at the most elite universities were not serious about studying but were simply waiting to graduate to get a good job.

Moreover, interviewees felt that the education system is heavily gender biased. Throughout the Japanese higher educational process, men heavily outnumber women. And as a Tokyo University professor notes in Woronoff (1997:66), "at university, the human network you develop is much more important than the education you receive". But this system places women at a disadvantage because posts are allocated through the 'old boy network' or academic circle so unless they are in one of the generally female dominated areas such as English literature, women

have less chance of obtaining an academic job in Japan than men. The interviewees' general opinion is that even though jobs may be advertised as open competition the decision on who to hire has already been made through *kone* ("connections").

Not only is it gender biased, it is also ageist. Mamiko Akiyama was a housewife with two children when she decided to return to university to do a postgraduate course. The fall in the birthrate has prompted some cash-strapped universities to begin admitting more mature students, however, most still have strict age-limits on new entrants, and restrictions on which classes they can attend. Mamiko was told outright by her supervisor that she would not be able to get a job on graduation.

A new professor came and [this] new professor was the same age as me. And he came through the Tokyo University waiting circle so he didn't understand me. He himself told me, "You are beyond my understanding. Why are you studying?" Beyond my understanding? I think I can now understand their feeling because they went to Tokyo University and they were expected to become professional historians and they were exchanging their ideas and their information within the circle and then they saw me and I was at that time already in my mid-thirties, and I was trying to read feminist history on my own and then I wanted to continue but to their eyes I was strange. "What does this woman want?" ... I wasn't able to say anything. I just [thought], "Strange. Why is this man saying this to me?" But I didn't have words. I was just unhappy. (Mamiko Akiyama)

Mamiko notes of her tutor: "He said to me, I was the ideal person to do a master's course. He thought I was a housewife so I didn't need a job at all".

I don't think people here [in England] really understand gender discrimination and ageism in Japan. (Mamiko Akiyama)

## Academic Life in England

How do the students fare at British universities? Academic life can be tough even for a native speaker. For a foreign student, especially one unfamiliar with British academic life and coming from a system that one student described as "carefree", academe can be totally overwhelming. One of the major problems is unfamiliarity with academic styles and procedures:

It was very intense. The only thing I remember about Cambridge is reading so many books in so little time and not being able to comprehend what they were on the text. Because we were given like a week to read 10 or 20 books. (Rie Inoue)

Producing work, writing academic essays and giving presentations were a common source of stress, especially since students had never been taught to do these things before. Some students wanted to blame the Japanese education system for this; being a process in which students learn passively left them ill-prepared for the active participation expected of them in English universities. Overall, students said they felt under great pressure and were often stressed.

My essays just to begin with [I don't think] made any sense because I wasn't coping either with the social life or the reading. But the first year I think I got a really, really bad mark. (Rie Inoue)

Like when I had to do the presentations, I can feel that I'm not clear enough and academic English is ... a kind of new challenge for me, I think. ... it's difficult because I don't have so much experience writing in an academic way. I was using English but for business letters ... Well, definitely if I compare with my university back in Kyoto it's much much more demanding here. (Noami Yamamoto)

I really like[d] it and I wanted to remain but on the other hand it was a hard time for me. Because it was the

first year in England and first, I felt lots of pressure. (Mitsuko Sato)

All the students found their courses “stressful ... demanding ...in a way confusing” (Naomi Yamamoto). But at the same time, most greatly enjoyed their academic lives in England. “I was at the same time very excited to finally [be able to] study again” (Naomi Yamamoto).

It is important to note that the student interviewees are all successful graduates of English universities and their comments must be viewed with this in mind. Moreover, most of these women are products of elite universities in Japan; they are accustomed to working intensely and to producing work of a high standard. Most already had some experience of academic life abroad through exchange or undergraduate programmes, and so were likely to have some awareness of the Western academic system and an idea of what kind of work was required of them before arrival.

Dropouts (for which no rates can be found) are likely to return to Japan within two years and so would not have been eligible for interview. An article on dealing with depression in the *Eikoku News Digest* (Ijima 2000) highlights just how stressful academic life can be for Japanese female students abroad and indeed, during the period of research, I met several students who appeared depressed and unable to cope. A student who was interviewed but later asked for the audio tapes of her interview to be erased was one of these. A Tokyo University graduate, she had enrolled on a master’s course but had found it to be too stressful, the workload too heavy, and had dropped out to spend hours and sometimes days simply lying in bed.

Although comments on the standards of educational teaching were generally positive, views on the women’s presence on campus were mixed. Some students sensed an English assumption that Japanese girls are not serious students in England but are there on an extended holiday or to find a Western man.

When I meet some English people who had been in Japan they say I sound a little bit different from other Japanese girls and I have really mixed feelings because if I were European they wouldn’t say so...and they don’t find it strange at all for Europeans to study in England to get some qualification but why say so because I’m Japanese? So they somehow sense that Japanese people come to England for other purposes and it’s a little bit disturbing. (Mitsuko Sato)

Habu (unpublished) too noted that female Japanese students tend to be critical of the way they are viewed purely in financial terms as “commodities” or “fee-paying aliens”. Certainly the view seems to exist among some interviewees that (male and female) Japanese students are allowed to graduate to ensure a continuing supply of overseas-fee-paying customers. This is in spite of their written work which may be of poor quality but which their supervisors either rewrite or they encourage the students to pay someone else to rewrite it. This appeared to be common practise at the universities I visited, and indeed on occasion I myself rewrote students’ theses in exchange for Japanese lessons. However, this apparent practice of letting Japanese students through led some interviewees to feel that they did not receive the same standard of support as British students and, moreover, were treated with indifference if they failed or dropped out.

## Conclusion

That half of the interviewees in the research project originally went to England on student visas is no surprise when one considers the popularity of studying abroad as a high status activity and the fact that it is the easiest way to spend time overseas long-term. It represents a type of female migration culture for Japanese women.



Most Japanese women go to England on short-term student visas, and are seeking to escape Japan for a time, have fun and improve their employability through increased English proficiency. Most of these female students stay a relatively short time in England, however a minority are able to overcome visa and work restrictions and extend their stay. A fortunate few, like Masako and Keiko, find a way to gain residency, generally through marriage.

However, the majority of those interviewed are predominantly high status, highly educated women who have made a commitment to long-term postgraduate education in England funded by savings and scholarships. Rejecting what they see as poor-quality and gender-biased tertiary education in Japan, they seek to fulfil career goals through specialised courses at British universities that will enable them to access international jobs.

English universities can feel encouraged that these female Japanese students are satisfied with the high standard of instruction offered, and consider their educational courses to be generally good value for money, both in terms of learning and for the advancement of their careers. However, it must equally be noted that the Japanese state, by doing little to combat institutionalised gender discrimination in the workplace and in academe, appears to be encouraging a female brain drain.

1. The Japanese Embassy has not published a full breakdown of population figures since 1998. The current registered Japanese population of the United Kingdom (figures last taken in 2002) is 50,854, comprising 20,314 males and 30,550 females. The figures for 'Students/Researchers/Teachers' as of October 2002 is 6,435 males and 12,555 females **and their families** so it is unclear who is a student and who is the spouse of a student. For this reason, I have chosen to use the figures from 1998.

### **Notes – Student Interviewee Profiles**

**MASAKO ABE** (born 1963) quit her job at 25 and moved to London to study English language and interior design in London. For three years she took a series of short courses financed by part-time jobs and interspersed with short trips home when the money ran out. Whilst working in the branch office of a Japanese company, she was introduced by her boss to a Japanese colleague whom she married. Her husband has since moved to a British-based company and they intend to remain in England indefinitely. She is now a full-time housewife and mother of one. Interviewed: 28 July 2000 in Japanese.

**KEIKO JONES** (born 1962) graduated from university and worked in PR in Tokyo but was forced to quit at 25 when her health began to suffer after three years without a day off. She used her savings to follow her British boyfriend, Peter, (whom she had met in Tokyo at a friend's party) to London where she studied English for one year. Keiko and Peter returned to Tokyo together and married but because of the costs involved in sending their three children to the private British School in Tokyo they returned to London in 1999. Keiko worked for a time at a Japanese airline office in London but is now studying English again full-time. Interviewed: 2 October 2002 in English.

**MITSUKO SATO** (born 1967) is a university graduate with a BA and MA from elite universities in Tokyo who, after working at a Japanese company, came to England in 1995 on a scholarship and gained another MA and a PhD. She is single with no children. Interviewed: 6 June 2000 and 5 July 2000 in English.

**NAOMI YAMAMOTO** (born 1968) is a graduate of a Japanese university for foreign language studies. She quit her job at 28, did voluntary work in Africa for six months and came to England in 1998 to do an MA. She is single with no children. Interviewed: 14 April 2000 and 9 June 2000 in English.

**RIE INOUE** (born 1972) first came to England in 1986 at age 16 and spent one year at a high school. She returned in 1990, gained a BA from Cambridge University, returned to Japan for her MA, married, and then came back to England to begin her PhD. She has no children. Interviewed: 8 March 2001 in English.

**HITOMI MAEDA** (born 1974) travelled to England for the first time in 1995 with her mother and decided to quit university in Tokyo in her second year and apply to a university in England. After gaining a BA and MA she recently returned to Japan to work at a centre which gives help to foreigners in Tokyo. She is single with no children. Interviewed: 10 September 2001 and 6 March 2002, in English and Japanese.

**RIMIKA TOYODA** (born 1964) is an academic at an English university. After graduating from an elite university in Japan, she worked for several years before quitting and moving to England in 1990 where she gained a postgraduate diploma, an MA and a PhD. She now works in London as an academic researcher. She is single with no children. Interviewed: 31 January 2002 in English.

**MAMIKO AKIYAMA** (born 1951) is an academic and lecturer. After graduating from a Japanese university in 1974 she married and had two children. When she was 32, she took another degree, followed by an MA and began a PhD. She came to England in 1991 to take another MA and then a PhD. She is currently on a short-term academic contract while she continues to apply for full-time jobs in Japan and New York. Her Japanese husband and children remain in Japan. Interviewed: 15 February 2002 in English.

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