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Research Paper

A New Framework of Workplace Acculturation: The Need to Belong and Constructing Ontological Interpretive Spaces

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Abstract

This study aimed to clarify how perceptions of belonging in one's national cultural outgroup impacts quality of intercultural work relations and job effectiveness, utilizing the specific case of Japanese and Americans working with each other in Japan. Twenty-nine informants were interviewed (11 Japanese and 18 Americans) in a semi-structured format. Using methods commonly employed in dimensional analysis (a variant grounded theory methodology), a framework was induced highlighting two key dimensions which participants used to construct the meaning of their acculturation processes and outcomes: the degrees to which they perceived themselves accepted as members of the outgroup's cultural-linguistic community and as core members of their shared work organization. These two dimensions were juxtaposed to identify four ontological interpretive spaces ("OIS") from which participants made sense of their intercultural interactions, assessed their quality of intercultural work relationships, and made choices about their behavior within those relationships. Informants moved dynamically among the OIS depending on various contextual factors, including (a) the intentions they attributed to their communicative partner; (b) their sense of agency; and (c) perceptions of their own cultural, linguistic, and professional competencies. Participants tended, however, to associate primarily with one or two OIS, with the others being more peripheral to their acculturation. Finally, the two dimensions are generalized to demonstrate how the framework could be applied to other acculturation contexts besides those demarcated by national culture differences in the workplace.

Keywords: acculturation framework, acculturation in Japan, belonging

1. Introduction

This paper reports on the development of a new framework, induced from interview data gathered from American and Japanese working with each other in Japan, for characterizing perceptions of their acculturation expectations, dynamics, and outcomes. The framework specifically examines how social inclusion at multiple levels impacts employees' broader acculturation experiences, including their quality of intercultural relationships with colleagues as well as their sense of empowerment to actualize their professional expertise. Primary consideration is given to (a) individual acculturation, a process that "emerges within the context of interactions, both physical and symbolic" between someone who has entered a cultural community different from where s/he was initially socialized and members of that community (Chirkov, 2009, p. 178), and (b) psychological acculturation, or changes in individual attitudes, values, identity, language, and behaviors (Castro, 2003; Sam, 2006).

Many studies of psychological acculturation focus upon *acculturation attitudes*, or attitudes held by acculturating individuals "towards the ways in which they wish to become involved with, and relate to, other people and groups they encounter" (Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989, p. 186). Berry (1997) proposed *acculturation strategies* to encompass both acculturation attitudes and their related behaviors. Such strategies comprise two independent, fundamental aspects: heritage cultural maintenance and intercultural contact, which when considered simultaneously yield four distinct strategies: assimilation, integration, separation, or marginalization (Berry, 2008, 2013).

Berry's framework (2008, 2013) and Bourhis and colleagues' Interactive Acculturation Model, or "IAM" (Bourhis & Dayan, 2004; Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997), which is partially based on Berry's framework, have been used to deepen understanding of acculturation strategies, dynamics, and outcomes in Japan (Inoue & Ito, 1993; Komisarof, 2006, 2009, 2012; Partridge, 1987). However, *belonging* has emerged as an important, if not central theme in the acculturation of Japan-based populations (Asai, 2006; Komisarof, 2006, 2009, 2012; McConnell, 2000; Partridge, 1987; Russell, 1991), and while Berry's framework assesses preferences for intergroup contact, the most common operationalizations of this dimension (detailed in Snauwaert, Soenens, Vanbeselaere, & Boen, 2003) are not isomorphic with belonging. Moreover, Komisarof (2009) raised concerns about the IAM in Japanese contexts with findings contrary to its prediction that a combination of assimilation and integration acculturation strategies between host society members and non-natives (i.e., "problematic" acculturation strategy alignments) results in more negative acculturation outcomes when compared with matching integration or assimilation strategies (i.e., "consensual" alignments); in fact, no significant differences between American and Japanese coworkers were found on any one of five dependent measures of quality of intercultural relations. These results suggest that the IAM's distinction between consensual and problematic combinations of acculturation strategies needs refining for Japanese contexts (and perhaps more generally).

Given these findings, the author of this study reasoned that more intentional, ex-

plicit treatment of belonging than Berry's framework or the IAM provide was merited—both in terms of developing a clearer definition of belonging as an acculturation outcome as well as a more nuanced apprehension of how the need to belong drives the acculturation process and shapes its outcomes. Thus, the goal of this study was to refine understanding of how sense of belonging impacts acculturation processes and outcomes in Japanese work contexts, especially in terms of quality of intercultural relations and job effectiveness (the latter constituting the quality of work that participants saw themselves doing in tandem with members of their cultural outgroup).

2. The Importance of Belonging to Acculturation

Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, and Collier (1992) defined sense of belonging as "the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment" (p. 173). Social psychologists argue that human beings seek belonging within interpersonal relationships and groups (Abrams, Hogg, & Marques, 2005) and are driven consequently to form positive, lasting, and stable relationships in part to satisfy what is in fact a basic human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Hagerty & Patusky, 1995). Moreover, when such needs go unmet, the experience of exclusion results in negative outcomes—both affective (i.e., feelings of misery, frustration, and/or anger) and performance-related (i.e., perceived inability in one's capacity to act and achieve) (Abrams et al., 2005). People often report the erosion of valued social and psychological resources, including self-esteem, prestige, self-respect, independence, and self-determination.

Likewise, research strongly indicates that connectedness and belonging are necessary to function optimally in terms of health, adjustment, and well-being (Pickett & Brewer, 2005). For migrants, such acceptance usually comes with sustained host culture involvement, which has been shown to reduce acculturative stress and promote positive affect towards host culture members (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Nguyen, Messe, & Stollak, 1999; Ward, 1996)—specifically in Japan, too (Inoue & Ito, 1993). Moreover, Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, and Vedder (2001) contended that immigrants who feel their efforts towards societal belonging are not rejected report greater general satisfaction and become more productive members of society.

Belonging is also critical in work organizations—not only for acculturators but workers in general; employees usually have a psychological need to belong, and acceptance from colleagues is an important relational outcome in studies of American employees in domestic contexts (Gaertner et al., 2000; Hess, 1993; Levine & Moreland, 1991) as well as expatriates abroad (Aycan, 1997; Palthe, 2004). Such acceptance may positively impact job performance; with it, one can more readily gain assistance from others (Aycan, 1997). A common outgrowth of acceptance is the perception of coworker unity, which can improve cooperation, organizational commitment, coworker-directed affect, and productivity on both individual and group

levels (Gaertner et al., 2000; Hess, 1993; Levine & Moreland, 1991; Oommen, 2016). So acceptance among one's coworkers has far-reaching benefits not only for the individual, but also for the organization as a whole.

Therefore, the stakes are high indeed when considering the degree of belonging achieved during the acculturation process. There are exceptions when exclusion can be considered positive (for example, rejection by an undesirable group) (Abrams et al., 2005), and individuals may choose constructive forms of marginality in relation to national outgroups (Kunst & Sam, 2013) or other groups they encounter (Ellemers & Jetten, 2013), especially when their belonging needs are satisfied elsewhere. However, most humans need to belong *somewhere*, and exclusion's effects are almost wholly negative when people desiring acceptance feel rejected (Abrams et al., 2005).

3. Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study employed dimensional analysis, an approach to the generation of grounded theory pioneered by Schatzman (1991), which aims to (a) identify *dimensions* of experience, defined by Kools, McCarthy, Durham, and Robrecht (1996) as "an abstract concept with associated properties that provide quantitative or qualitative parameters or modifiers for the purpose of description" (p. 316), and (b) understand how people construct, analyze, and define situations, or the meaning of events as perceived by those who experience them and the actions that they take in relation to those perceptions (Kools, 1997; Schatzman, 1991). As the goal of this study was to clarify how participant perceptions of belonging to their cultural outgroup during acculturation impacted the quality and effectiveness of their intercultural work relations, dimensional analysis was considered a promising method to identify the dimensions of belonging that were deemed most important to informants as well as how they conceived the relationship between belonging and acculturation.

3.2. Participants, Sampling, and Data Collection

The population consisted of Americans and Japanese working in Japan-based offices in organizations owned by either Japanese or American entities. Participants were required to (a) be stationed in an office whese at least two-thirds of the employees were Japanese (to provide demographic consistency), (b) work regularly with their cultural outgroup members (a self-assessed benchmark), and (c) have been employed at their current office for at least four months.

The Research Committee at the author's university reviewed the research design for ethical conflicts and approved the study. Participants signed an informed consent form that explained the study's purpose, the intent to publish the results (including interview quotations), as well as an assurance of participant anonymity and the security of all data.

Twenty-nine informants (11 Japanese and 18 American), comprising seven women and 22 men, were interviewed from one to two hours each (detailed in Table

1). Twelve organizations represented were American-owned and 13 Japanese. Theoretical sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was utilized to clarify, test, and elaborate conceptual relationships in the framework as they were gradually induced from the data, as well as to gather information from diverse viewpoints—i.e., a broad range of job statuses (e.g., general staff and management), corporate divisions (e.g., human resources and sales), and types of companies (in terms of industry and nationality of corporate ownership). Such theoretical sampling continued until the categories identified in the data were saturated and no new properties emerged (Charmaz, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Through open-ended questions in a semi-structured format, the author collected rich interview data about how participant perceptions of belonging in their cultural outgroup influenced their quality of intercultural relationships and job effectiveness.

Table 1 *Participant Information*

Participant	Nationality	Gender	Industry	Division or Department	Status	Corporate ownership
1	Japanese	Female	Training	Training	Manager	Japanese
2	Japanese	Male	Pharmaceuticals	HR	Manager	American
3	Japanese	Male	Pharmaceuticals	Sales	Staff	Japanese
4	Japanese	Female	IT	HR	Manager	Japanese
5	Japanese	Male	Research	Chemical engineering	Manager	Japanese
6	Japanese	Male	University education	Psychology	Professor	Japanese
7	Japanese	Female	Research	HR	Staff	Japanese
8	Japanese	Male	University education	Business	Professor	Japanese
9	Japanese	Male	Finance	Sales	Manager	American
10	Japanese	Male	Semiconductors	HR	Staff	American
11	Japanese	Male	Manufacturing	Marketing	Staff	American
12	American	Male	Manufacturing	R&D	Manager	Japanese
13	American	Male	Consulting	Management	Executive	American
14	American	Male	Consulting	M&S	Manager	American
15	American	Male	University education	Liberal Arts	Professor	Japanese
16	American	Male	Insurance	HR	Manager	American
17	American	Female	Insurance	HR	Staff	American
18	American	Male	Insurance	HR	Staff	American
19	American	Male	Medical technology	R&D	Executive	American
20	American	Female	University education	Foreign languages	Professor	Japanese
21	American	Female	IT	Management	Executive	American
22	American	Male	Training	Sales	Executive	American
23	American	Male	Finance	Management	Executive	American
24	American	Male	IT	Management	Executive	Japanese
25	American	Male	Finance	Sales	Manager	American
26	American	Male	Education	Administration	Manager	American
27	American	Female	Education	Administration	Staff	Japanese
28	American	Male	Marketing	Translation	Staff	Japanese
29	American	Male	Training	Training	Trainer	Japanese

Note. HR＝human resources; IT＝information technology; R&D＝research and development; M&S＝marketing and sales.

Probes helped to gain a nuanced view of how they assigned meaning to their experiences, as participant definitions of terms, situations, and events were elicited to tap assumptions and tacit understandings regarding their acculturation processes, outcomes, and work relationships. To get the broadest responses—even those that discounted belonging as irrelevant to acculturation—the subject of belonging was introduced intentionally only later in the interview (see Appendix for questions). As it is atypical for businesses in Japan to grant external researchers permission to use recording equipment, to encourage informant trust, only notes were taken during the interviews, including key quotations and content summaries. Immediately after each interview, one to two hours was spent expanding notes.

Though multiple points of data collection such as video recording, member checks, or lengthy ethnographic observations would have been preferable, one-time unrecorded interviews were considered more likely to facilitate participant candor about their workplace acculturation and collegial relations. Most Japanese work organizations demand strict confidentiality of personal information and tend to resist cooperation with unsolicited research done by outsiders (Ogasawara, 1998), so the author chose the most unobtrusive and non-threatening method of information gathering possible while simultaneously aiming to maximize rich, authentic data by asking only for one interview (without systematic on-site observations or follow-up meetings) as well as handwriting notes instead of using recording equipment.

During the interviews, participants described experiences with coworkers from the other nationality with whom they worked effectively (then ineffectively) as well as those with whom they shared positive (then negative) relationships. They were also questioned how they "knew" from these experiences that their collaborative work was (in)effective and their intercultural relationships positive or negative. In the process, they detailed critical events that catalyzed such attributions and revealed the criteria they utilized to judge the quality of their intercultural relationships as well as their degree of effectiveness when working with cultural outgroup coworkers. Informants were also asked to compare the quality of their relationships (and job effectiveness) with their cultural outgroup with that of cultural ingroup coworkers (for example, Japanese participants juxtaposed their relationships with Americans and those with other Japanese) in order to clarify how intercultural relationships and communication outcomes differed from those with co-nationals.

3.3. Data Analysis

First, the author utilized a form of open coding known as *dimensionalizing* in which interview data were systematically analyzed according to words, phrases, and sentences to identify codes (Kools et al., 1996). Particularly of interest were clues about participants' social constructions of their acculturation experiences in the form of key incidents recalled, or the participants' observations or feelings about such incidents. Codes were then grouped into categories—i.e., more abstract concepts—and the relationships between categories were examined using a dimensional matrix (Kools, 1997; Schatzman, 1991), which provides a framework for the ordering and conceptualizing of data. As categories emerged, they were incorporated in subsequent interviews for verification and further development.

The purpose of the first five interviews was to gather broad data and to discern if indeed the need to belong markedly influenced perceptions of intercultural relationship quality and job effectiveness—or whether belonging was subsumed by another organizing perspective more central to the nascent grounded theory. After initial coding, the author concluded there was sufficient evidence that belonging impacted intercultural relationship quality and job effectiveness, as participants repeatedly described, often with strong affect, a relationship between these two outcomes and their sense of belonging (or lack thereof) in the cultural outgroup. Consequently, belonging, both in terms of the psychological need and behaviors taken to satisfy it, was settled upon as this study's organizing perspective.

With each reading of the interview notes, new codes, categories, and subcategories were added and old ones collapsed into one another. Codes with common elements were grouped under the same category (for instance, the four "ontological interpretive spaces" in the framework are each categories). Using the constant comparative method, a variety of subcategories were induced that served to further elaborate, connect, and differentiate the characteristics of the four interpretive spaces: participants' perceived quality of their intercultural work relationships, outgroup cultural competence and linguistic proficiency, tendencies toward a culture-associated workstyle (e.g., Japanese, American, or a mixture), leadership opportunities, access to organizational insider knowledge, influence in decision-making, job effectiveness when working with cultural outgroup members, prevalent communication problems or successes, and predominant language use.

The nascent framework was induced from the data but then served as a template for organizing and enriching understanding of them—constituting a reciprocal, cyclical process of data analysis and theory building (Charmaz, 2006). For example, the author observed that some participants felt included in their national outgroup's cultural-linguistic community but not as valued members of their work organizations, leading to negative relational outcomes (i.e., the profile described in Section 4.4.1, "Ostracized Cultural Affiliation"). Others perceived organizational belonging but not cultural outgroup acceptance, yet experienced largely positive acculturation outcomes ("Hybrid Membership" in Section 4.4.4). So these two independent dimensions of belonging to the organization and national outgroup culture were discernable from the data, and when considered simultaneously, gave structure to the acculturation dynamics and outcomes articulated by the participants.

Once codes were regularly repeated in the interviews and no new categories or subcategories emerged, the data were considered subsumed in the categories of the grounded theory model. Here, theoretical saturation was assumed, data collection completed, and dimensions and the nature of their relationships were analyzed further until the acculturation framework, or grounded theory, was developed.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. A New Framework of Workplace Acculturation

The basic psychological need in this grounded theory is to fulfill a sense of be-

longing, and the basic social process undergone to satisfy this need is negotiating group boundaries. Participants' search for belonging occurred primarily upon two dimensions: the level of belonging they perceived in their outgroup's cultural-linguistic community (for Japanese, their belonging among Americans, and for Americans, theirs among Japanese) and the level of acceptance in their shared work organization when interacting with national outgroup members (see Figure 1). Participant sense of belonging on each dimension is conceptualized on a continuum from low to high, rather than a categorical yes-no assessment.

From these two dimensions and their properties, participants constructed four different ontological interpretive spaces (or "OIS") for making meaning vis-à-vis the gratification or frustration of their need to belong—each associated with distinct types of assessments of their belonging to their outgroup as well as common patterns of acculturation processes and outcomes. Informants' perceptions of their own belonging on these two dimensions engendered their acculturation experiences with meaning, and those constructions influenced behavioral choices during subsequent intercultural interactions, which in turn affected future perceptions of belonging—a dynamic, symbiotic process of acculturation processes affecting outcomes and vice versa. As Bennett (2013) explained, "Our perspective *constructs* the reality that we describe.…The observer interacts with reality via his or her perspective in such a way that reality is organized according to the perspective" (p. 41). Likewise, the OIS are *perspectives constructed by the participants* that in turn frame intercultural interactions during the acculturation process and position informants to construe central acculturation outcomes such as the quality of their intercultural interactions and job effectiveness with their cultural outgroup.

Each of the four OIS, *Ostracized Cultural Affiliation*, *Alienation*, *Native-Like Membership*, and *Hybrid Membership*, is detailed below in terms of participants' ways of organizing and construing intercultural experiences, attitudes towards the cultural "other," patterns of intercultural communication, and social-psychological relational outcomes. The need for belonging fuels the process of constructing the OIS: when gratified, towards Native-Like or Hybrid Membership, and when frus-

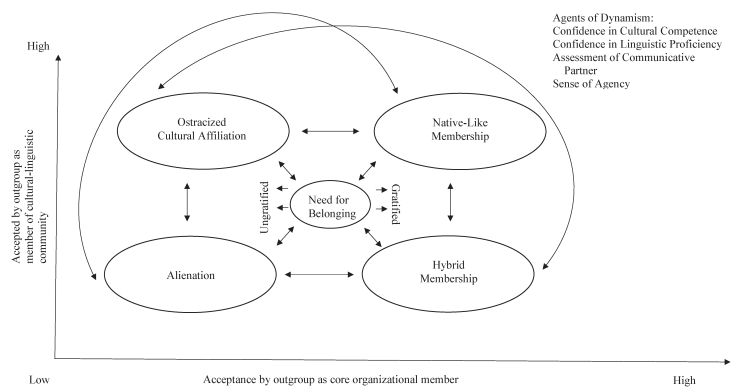

Figure 1 Framework of workplace acculturation

trated, towards Ostracized Cultural Affiliation or Alienation. *Ostracized Cultural Affiliates* ("OCA") perceived that they were not generally accepted as core organizational members by their cultural outgroup coworkers, yet they were expected by their outgroup to adhere to its cultural practices and function in its language as a member of that cultural-linguistic community. *Aliens* felt unaccepted both as core organizational members and in the cultural-linguistic community of their cultural outgroup. *Native-Like Members* saw themselves as core organizational members and accepted in their cultural outgroup, while *Hybrid Members* viewed themselves as removed from the other cultural-linguistic community but deeply accepted in their shared work organization.

4.2. Vertical Dimension: Belonging in Outgroup's Cultural-Linguistic Community

This dimension refers to participants' perceptions of their being accepted as members of the group to which they were acculturating—i.e., whether informants felt viewed by their outgroup as similar enough to be—or potentially become—members of that group's cultural and linguistic community. Through regular intercultural interactions in the workplace, American *and* Japanese participants described acculturation to their outgroup, so *both* were located on this dimension's continuum. Informants perceived they belonged on this dimension when they felt trusted by outgroup members to abide by the group's predominant norms and perform various social roles through their cultural and linguistic competencies (or they were accepted as novices while they learned such competencies). These participants were encouraged to speak the outgroup's language and participate in daily routines and interactions shaped by its predominant norms and values. Informants believed that the outgroup felt a small psychological distance between them and that the outgroup's boundary was permeable.

The question of belonging hinged upon participants affirming an *emotional* and *behavioral* connection to the outgroup—criteria which emerged from the interviews and are supported in the literature. Evidence of emotional connection constituted strong ties with the group's members, or an affective closeness arising from participants feeling accepted, valued, respected, and supported. Belonging also comprised participants' behavioral involvement in the outgroup's daily rituals and routines. As Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe (2004) contended, such involvement enables one "to gain entrance to and acceptance within the group [and] show solidarity with [them]" (p. 93). One form of behavioral involvement occurred through foreign language use, which plays a critical role in belonging as it "serves as a primary agent of social currency with which [acculturators] can access the mainstream culture and pursue personal and social goals" (Kim, 2001, p. 101). While language use and other forms of behavioral involvement are critical components of belonging, they can also be mere responses to social desirability needs or external pressures (Ashmore, et al., 2004) and hence not necessarily indicative alone of belonging. Since belonging is also associated with positive affect (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), a more robust indicator of belonging encompasses both behavioral involvement and emotional connection to the group.

Some participants attributed their belonging to their high cultural competence—that is, cognitive, affective, and behavioral adaptation to the outgroup's culture (Hismanoglu, 2011; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009)—and mastery of its language. Alternatively, other participants described *functional* cultural and linguistic competence that enabled them to accomplish their communicative objectives in daily interactions, though performance of social roles and adherence to behavioral norms often deviated from natives. Even if such levels of functional to high competence had not yet been attained, some informants affirmed they were novices who were *provisionally* accepted by the outgroup—i.e., they were inculcated through consistent, welcomed observation of and limited participation in group activities while they developed their nominal linguistic and cultural competences. For this dimension, though, whatever the informant's actual cultural and linguistic competence, the key commonality is that membership in the outgroup's cultural-linguistic community was perceived as *attainable* and their group boundaries *permeable*.

At the opposite end of this dimension's continuum, informants did not belong—feeling stigmatized as too "different" to be accepted and attributing such rejection to widespread notions in the outgroup that they could not understand the culture, learn the language, or competently practice the group's social norms. Thus, informants perceived outgroup members as conceiving a large psychological distance between them and saw themselves being treated as outsiders no matter how much they adapted.

4.2.1. Differentiating cultural-linguistic belonging from similar socio-psychological concepts. Socio-psychological research has detailed group boundary construction in the context of how citizenship and national identity are conceived and the impact of such representations on national ingroup acceptance criteria and boundary permeability. One implication is that national ingroup status can be *ascribed* or *achieved*. Ascribed identity, which is immutable, can be based upon shared genealogy, territory, traditions, and/or religion (Ha & Jang, 2015; Weinreich, 2009); self-descriptive traits (e.g., in personality such as being diligent) (Ditlmann, Purdie-Vaughns, & Eibach, 2011); or birth along with a common ethnic and/or religious heritage (Esses, Dovidio, Semenya, & Jackson, 2005).

Conversely, national identity may be achieved by endorsing certain values (Ditlmann et al., 2011); loyalty to political institutions, acquiring citizenship, and respect for the host country's cultural traditions (Ha & Jang, 2015); individual choice (Weinreich, 2009); a "voluntary commitment to national laws and institutions" and individual subjectivity constituting "a feeling of being a member of the national group" (Esses et al., 2005, p. 320); or adopting, cherishing, and helping to preserve the national mainstream culture (Kymlicka, 2001). Here, the nation is commonly conceived "as a community of people who adhere to a social contract, which contains a set of basic principles that facilitate life as a community (e.g., respect for societal rules and laws, endorsement of equal political rights, and active participation in society)" (Reijerse, Van Acker, Vanbeselaere, Phalet, and Duriez, 2013, p. 613).

Taken compositely, these concepts of ascribed and achieved national identity elucidate the criteria by which people construct their national identity and decide whether to accept newcomers, but they are not isomorphic with the dimension of cul-

tural-linguistic community belonging. Namely, questions of national (or ethnic) identity and citizenship, central in these conceptual dyads, were not salient or even relevant to some participants in this study—particularly among the Native-Like Members detailed in Section 4.4.3—who felt belonging in their outgroup while also retaining their original citizenship and national identity. They could still be admitted into another cultural-linguistic community without being considered an insider (or considering themselves one) in terms of identity or nationality—i.e., participants could *identify with* the outgroup but did not necessarily *identify as* one of them. As one American informant explained, "I'm American, but if I could never speak Japanese again, I would lose something very important to me. It's an important way for me to express myself and how I look at the world." Thus, this dimension's focus is upon the outcome of admission into the outgroup's cultural-linguistic community, which is not necessarily the same as adopting that group's identity or nationality.

4.3. Horizontal Dimension: Organizational Belonging

The dimension depicted on the horizontal axis in Figure 1 reflects the extent to which participants perceived themselves as core *organizational* members, specifically with reference to the people from the cultural outgroup with whom they worked regularly. Participants on the "high" end felt supported by and invested in relationships with coworkers, had leadership opportunities, were sought out for involvement in collaborative projects, were privy to confidential insider knowledge, exerted influence in decision-making, and actualized their professional skills because of such acceptance and involvement. This dimension is independent of the previous one: some participants reporting high organizational acceptance engaged in their jobs primarily according to the cultural norms and language of their cultural outgroup, while others used their heritage cultural norms and language.

One's sense of organizational belonging can come from various sources, including employment policies, rules, procedures, remuneration, as well as other structural factors, but this dimension's focus is upon the *relational aspects* of participants' *subjective sense* of membership, or how socio-professional relations and communication dynamics with colleagues influence one's sense of acceptance as a core organizational member. While structural vs. interpersonal phenomena can be difficult to differentiate completely, as they can exert mutual influence and/or overlap, the concept of organizational membership employed here is relational and transactional since it concerns participants' constructions of organizational belonging arising from communication with colleagues.

4.4. Descriptions of OIS

Each OIS is a category encompassing attitudes, behavior, and perceptual patterns—an instantiation of a participant's position in relation to the cultural-linguistic community and organizational boundaries embodied in the framework's dimensions. Keeping with Charmaz (2006), this section includes the definitions of these categories, properties and conditions under which the categories arose and were maintained, and the categories' consequences in terms of shaping participant acculturation processes and outcomes.

4.4.1. Ostracized Cultural Affiliation. Participants constructing their acculturation process and outcomes as an Ostracized Cultural Affiliate ("OCA") perceived that their cultural outgroup coworkers assumed the OCA were similar enough to them to adhere to their cultural practices and to function in their language, but OCA did not feel like accepted core members of their work organizations. They described coworker expectations that they follow many of the outgroup's cultural norms, yet felt ostracized as they found themselves to be the target of negative social sanctions for having "failed" to assimilate adequately to those norms. Though OCA consisted of both American and Japanese participants, in order to illustrate within space limitations common acculturation dynamics and outcomes for OCA, only Japanese Ostracized Cultural Affiliates ("JOCA") are detailed.

JOCA were typically highly competent in English and had experience living abroad. In their offices, they were part of the Japanese majority, but they were minorities in their everyday work groups and/or had an American boss (common in American-owned companies)—relationships in which American business and communicative norms and English dominated. JOCA thought American colleagues had acculturated little to Japan, assuming that American business practices and values were "the global standard." Consequently, JOCA felt pressured to assimilate to U.S. business culture, communicate in English, and were ostracized if they did not, as a Japanese manager at an American company discovered:

> My American employees strongly believe I should run the organization as if it were completely American, but my Japanese customers find American customer service lacking. When I tried to train my American staff in Japanese service standards, they acted as if I had betrayed them—probably more so since I speak fluent English and usually am outspoken, relaxed, and joke around like most Americans.

Since JOCA felt pressure to adopt American norms, they desired greater awareness of and respect for Japanese business culture through more mutual adaptation. For example, American colleagues generally did not speak or read Japanese well enough to work in the language, so to accommodate them, the linguistic medium was English for meetings, documents, and email. This reduced JOCAs' job effectiveness, as English communication invariably took more time and energy than in their native Japanese. Conversely, American colleagues often complained that JOCA were inefficient or unproductive, which JOCA interpreted as failing to understand the extra time necessary to complete tasks when using a foreign language.

JOCA frequently felt forced to follow other American communication norms. For instance, some were expected to express spontaneously their opinions at meetings about issues that had not been distributed on an agenda beforehand. One participant shared, "When this happens, I have no time to confirm my Japanese team members' opinions or make a consensus." JOCA were hesitant to respond immediately, as they were afraid Japanese colleagues would perceive such declarations as inappropriate since they had not been consulted first. But JOCA also faced backlash from American bosses and colleagues for "not being more transparent" or "being

passive" and were exhorted to volunteer their opinions more readily.

4.4.2. Alienation. Aliens felt like outsiders both in their work organization and their outgroup's cultural-linguistic community. Japanese or American, they perceived themselves treated as fundamentally different by their cultural outgroup, facing assumptions that they could not adequately acculturate to belong; they also described limited, unsatisfying professional roles in the organization. A subtype of Aliens was Rank & File Aliens ("R&F"), i.e., American employees peripheral to the management track. R&F thought that most of their Japanese coworkers believed they could not understand Japanese culture, language, or competently practice Japanese business norms. Yet R&F described their Japanese speaking (and sometimes reading) skills as job-ready; they also preferred Japanese business practices (to American ones) and were convinced they had the cultural competence to enact them. R&F could not fully utilize their professional skills, either: they lacked decision-making power, leadership opportunities, and contended Westerners could not be promoted beyond rank-and-file positions or management's lowest rungs. One R&F explained this delimited mobility track:

> In the 1990s, Americans and other foreigners were not even getting into the doors of a lot of Japanese companies. Now, most people would say that the doors are open. We have people working there. But there may be some rooms in the castle that still aren't open to us.

R&F often attributed their exclusion from the Japanese cultural-linguistic community to *Nihonjinron*—an ideology or worldview in which Japanese culture and identity are endowed with unique, homogenous qualities that separate Japanese from other national and ethnic groups (Befu, 2001; Sullivan & Schatz, 2009). *Nihonjinron* engenders an exclusive national identity, as non-Japanese, particularly Americans and other Westerners, are presumed unable to become fluent or literate in Japanese, practice a mainstream Japanese lifestyle, understand Japanese culture, or adopt a Japanese identity (McVeigh, 2004; Sakata, 2009). R&F keenly felt the influence of *Nihonjinron* when Japanese colleagues spoke to them in English while everyone else, including the R&F, was communicating in Japanese. One informant explained, "When this happens, it's like saying, 'You can't speak our language properly, and you'll never be one of us.'"

Some R&F, however, believed their exclusion was not pernicious; rather, they were treated as guests in a way simultaneously benevolent yet ostracizing. For instance, they were sometimes offered exemptions from meetings or other tasks in which all Japanese had to participate. R&F surmised that such propositions were meant kindly to reduce their work burden under the assumption that they could not understand Japanese at the level required to effectively participate in or execute the work in question, so they may as well be excused from attending. But R&F actually felt excluded by such offers because they were the only recipient, so if they accepted, everyone would contribute except for the "special" American, which would reinforce their image as outsiders. Ironically, in many cases, R&F perceived themselves fully capable of completing these tasks, hence viewing exemptions from them as unneces-

sary and counterproductive.

Generally, R&F felt stymied by what they perceived as Japanese coworkers' assumption that there was a large cultural distance between them, as it carried the implication that they could never belong, no matter how much they adapted to Japan. R&F hoped for Japanese ethnocultural ingroup boundaries to be more permeable so acceptance could be achieved based on Japanese cultural competence, rather than something that was ascribed by Japanese ancestry and nationality.

4.4.3. Native-Like Membership. Both Japanese and American Native-Like Members prioritized assimilation to their cultural outgroup's business culture, which they assumed the other group expected; consequently, they enjoyed many positive acculturative outcomes including strong intercultural relationships and high job effectiveness. They felt a thorough sense of belonging in their organizations and also accepted in the outgroup's linguistic-cultural community by speaking their language and engaging in daily work rituals and tasks in ways closely aligned with practices, roles, norms, and values which they identified with their outgroup's culture. For example, Americans perceived they were trusted by Japanese as reliable group members in contexts requiring Japanese fluency and cultural competence such as participating smoothly in meetings and serving Japanese customers with deference and respect. An American participant echoed the opinion expressed by both American and Japanese Native-Like Members that through assimilation, they gained acceptance from the cultural outgroup by sharing a language, local and national experience, and even a worldview:

> Many Japanese don't seem to even notice or need to comment when I'm in the room—they just go about their business as usual and accept me as I am. Even if I am American, I am also a "Nihongojin" [a neologism, or combination of the words *Nihongo* and *Nihonjin* meaning "a Japanese language person"], so we share this common language, this way of looking at the world.

Both Japanese and American Native-Like Members also perceived themselves as core organizational members. Cultural outgroup colleagues encouraged their involvement in a variety of joint activities and tasks so they had influence in group decision-making processes, ample leadership opportunities, and fair chances at promotions, which left them feeling fulfilled and effective as professionals. For instance, a Japanese informant who managed a large team of Americans in an American company observed, "Because I do the same kind of managerial work as my American colleagues, I am accepted in this organization." Or as an American participant explained:

> Increasingly, the foreign staff are taken seriously and given ever-higher jobs…if we speak Japanese well and follow Japanese norms.…I am seen as a "reasonable" voice for the "international" element…[because] I can voice my opinions in good Japanese in a rather Japanese way.

Native-Like Members were usually minorities in their organizations in terms of

nationality (i.e., Americans working predominantly with Japanese) and/or diverged in nationality from the head office (i.e., Japanese in American companies or Americans in Japanese companies). Such peripheral status motivated them to develop their linguistic proficiency and cultural competence to the point that they could enact key communication and behavioral norms in the other culture; such mastery was further enabled by grasping the deep culture (Stewart & Bennett, 1991), or common values and conceptual schema, among outgroup members. Although Native-Like Members reported some stress from expectations to assimilate, such stress was generally galvanizing rather than debilitating, as the assimilation process and related acculturation dynamics were challenging but not overwhelmingly so. They actually utilized such tension constructively as motivation to achieve better acculturation outcomes (e.g., high quality of intercultural relations and job effectiveness) and to continue elevating their linguistic and cultural competences.

4.4.4. Hybrid Membership. Both American and Japanese Hybrid Members felt a sense of belonging in their organizations but also separate from their outgroup's linguistic and cultural community. They described a match between their own integration acculturation strategies (i.e., attitudes and behaviors supporting preservation of their national heritage culture while pursuing intercultural relations with their cultural outgroup) (Berry, 2013) and the preference among most colleagues that they integrate. For example, Americans typically used English with Japanese coworkers and interacted according to norms that they associated with American culture—an approach accepted by Japanese colleagues. Thus, both sides were comfortable with Hybrid Members behaving primarily according to their national heritage cultural norms while maintaining a distinct cultural identity. As one American participant explained, "In my company, my Japanese colleagues are very accepting. I speak English and act mostly like I would in America, but I still feel like part of the team."

Colleagues from Hybrid Members' cultural outgroup encouraged their participation in a variety of communal activities and tasks, such as group decision-making and project teams. Hybrid Members also reported ample leadership opportunities, fair chances at promotions, and influence among their cultural outgroup colleagues, all of which contributed to a sense of professional fulfillment, positive intercultural coworker relations, and high job effectiveness. The simultaneous salience of both subgroup and superordinate categories, i.e., national culture and organization, respectively, along with shared preferences for integration, encouraged positive intergroup contact, as both sides were secure in their separate cultural identities while enjoying a collegial bond.

Hybrid Members differed from Native-Like Members in that they were not generally expected to function within contexts requiring foreign linguistic or cultural competence; consequently, their roles and duties usually differed from those of cultural outgroup members. For instance, Japanese in American multinational companies acted as trainers or informants of Japanese business etiquette for American employees, situational translators or interpreters, and bridges in negotiations with Japanese companies. These unique roles were accepted because workloads were equitably distributed and everyone was seen as contributing distinctly yet indispens-

Table 2 Summary of OIS Conditions and Consequences

Conditions and Consequences	Ostracized Cultural Affiliates	Aliens	Native-Like Members	Hybrid Members
1. Cultural-Linguistic Competence	Lower than expected by outgroup	Higher than expected by outgroup	High and matches outgroup expectations	Low and mirrors outgroup expectations
2. Predominant Business Practices	One's outgroup	One's ingroup	One's outgroup	One's ingroup
3. Preferred Business Practices	More balance between in- and outgroup	One's outgroup	One's outgroup	One's ingroup
4. Professional Skills Actualization	Low (disparaged)	Low (frustrated)	High	High
5. Job Effectiveness	Low	Low	High	High
6. Quality of Intercultural Relationships	Low	Low	High	High
7. Acceptance in Organization	Low	Low	High	High
8. Acceptance in Outgroup's Cultural-Linguistic Community	Medium to high	Low	High	Low

ably to the organization. According to one participant, "Some people are good at some things and some are good at others. It's just a division of labor. We try to respect everyone's strengths." Thus, cultural differences, which enabled Hybrid Members to perform their distinct roles and make unique contributions to the organization, were viewed as assets, not deficits.

The conditions and consequences associated with each OIS, organized by subcategory, are summarized in Table 2.

4.5. Dynamic Movement Between OIS

While the OIS constituted four distinct ways that participants made sense of their acculturation, their perceptive mode actually shifted between them; namely, informants' sense of belonging in the other cultural-linguistic community and their organization, as well as their consequent quality of intercultural relationships and job effectiveness, reflected various OIS over time. Consequently, this framework constitutes a dynamic *process* as participants constructed different vantage points for viewing their acculturation processes and outcomes. This movement occurred via *agents of dynamism*, or contextual features that powered them along a trajectory between the OIS (depicted in Figure 1).

One such agent was informant assessments of their communicative partner's intentions and actions toward them, which often changed according to relationship and situation. For example, an American resident of Japan for 25 years and head of HR for an American company in Tokyo could usually be located in the Native-Like Member OIS. Using Japanese, he preferred to interact according to common Japanese social norms (e.g., engaging in nonconfrontational, face-saving communication) and business practices (e.g., participating in systematic consensus building with colleagues, or *nemawashi*, before important meetings). His colleagues welcomed this approach and rewarded him with high organizational status. However, he also sometimes saw himself as an Alien—especially when his non-Japanese status was unexpectedly referenced. This typically occurred when he was conversing in Japa-

nese with colleagues and a Japanese third party would suddenly accost him in English—violating his assumption that he was just another member of the Japanese-speaking community. Also, he recalled being denied the same work opportunities as Japanese when a colleague said (in English no less), "Why don't you let a Japanese person do this job?" about a task he felt perfectly capable of doing. Such sudden differential treatment created distance, as if he were no longer accepted in the Japanese cultural-linguistic community or as a key organizational member (i.e., as a Native-Like Member). In this manner, OIS could shift depending upon the relationship with various communicative partners or when interacting with the same person in different situations (e.g., formal office meetings vs. cafeteria lunches together).

Participants' *sense of agency* also contributed to their movement between OIS; namely, their choice to try to satisfy personally compelling needs and/or goals (e.g., positive recognition from colleagues, proving one's competence, or showing that a foreigner could also do the work at hand) which aligned with a particular OIS in turn shaped situational acculturation dynamics. To fulfill such needs or goals, informants challenged themselves to participate in the same tasks as their cultural outgroup members (thus viewing themselves and expecting to be treated as Native-Like Members), or they assumed duties which, as native speakers of languages and possessors of cultural competencies useful to the organization, they were uniquely qualified to perform (i.e., becoming Hybrid Members). Also, agency empowered participants to create new meanings around being non-natives; they could affirm themselves and stimulate feelings of worth, acceptability, and authenticity while also mitigating those of distress, deficit, or stigma. They could choose an OIS, including how to frame their own acculturation, rather than having it imposed by others. Participants typically realized such agency either by construing their cultural differences as sources of pride (Hybrid Membership) or recasting themselves as competent, valued members of the outgroup while largely following their social norms (Native-Like Membership).

Informants' *confidence* in their own *outgroup cultural and linguistic competencies* to navigate situations and relationships, as well as the *frequency of opportunity* to actualize them, also influenced the trajectory of movement between OIS. When participants believed they had the commensurate linguistic and/or cultural competences to contribute to their organization but were denied the chance because of their nationality, they felt like Aliens, but when given the opportunity to complete a task and confident in their resources to do so, they constructed their experiences as Native-Like Members. When they wanted to use skills related to their native cultural-linguistic background and colleagues supported them, they perceived their environment as Hybrid Members. However, if they were expected to perform a job requiring linguistic or cultural competencies beyond their ken, then they moved into the space of Ostracized Cultural Affiliates.

Therefore, participants constructed their acculturation in ways both context-specific and dynamic: their senses of belonging on the levels of cultural-linguistic outgroup and organization depended on their communicative partner and other situational variables—findings amply supported in the literature. Bhatia & Ram (2009) also observed flux in levels of belonging in the host society, arguing that acculturа-

tion is not linear; rather "immigrants variously experience contradictions, tensions, and a dynamic movement that spirals back and forth…[as] they continuously negotiate their place in the host community" (p. 146). Surak (2013), Nayar (2015), and Varjonen, Arnold, and Jasinskaja-Lahti (2013) similarly contended that ethnic boundaries are actively negotiated on situational and relational bases, rendering group identities (as well as membership within these groups) as interactional processes with ever-present possibilities of change and transformation. Birman, Simon, Chan, and Tran (2014) presented a complementary, contextual approach to conceiving and measuring acculturation through life domains: people adopt different acculturating styles depending on their preferences and skills; on the other hand, each acculturation context tends to demand various kinds of competencies and forms of adaptation, thus constricting and shaping the types of acculturation options available. Such external forces coupled with individual preferences engender the movement that propels people from one OIS to another in the current paper's framework.

Finally, while movement between OIS was apparent, informants seemed to view their acculturation primarily through the lens of one or at most two, with the others being more peripheral to their acculturation experiences. Thus, it is not proposed that participants spent equivalent time positioned in each. Future studies should ascertain the nature and extent of such movement.

4.6. Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The framework presented here is based upon inductive methods utilized in grounded theory research, so this study should be viewed as the first step in theory building and testing. Moreover, as the sample was small and non-random, the findings cannot be generalized to a larger population. However, they will be used to develop an instrument designed to assess the predominance of each OIS in individuals' acculturation. Once a reliable instrument is validated in a Japan-based population, the framework will require testing in a variety of national contexts to confirm its cross-cultural validity and enable its use not only with Japan-based acculturating groups but also those in other national cultures.

The framework can also be developed and potentially applied in a broader variety of acculturation contexts. Conceived abstractly, the framework considers two conceptually distinct dimensions intrinsic to any individual's acculturation experience: the construction of intergroup boundaries—making the experience acculturative—and degrees of membership in a shared group that brings people initially into contact. As presented in this paper, the framework treats belonging at the levels of national culture and work organization, but these are in fact flexible, as the framework could be recast in other acculturation studies to focus upon the two levels of group membership most salient within the social context under examination. For example, national culture could be supplanted in future studies by other types of culture (e.g., ethnicity or religion among co-nationals) if they constitute the predominant intergroup boundary being negotiated through acculturation. Similarly, the framework's other dimension, which considers belonging in the primary shared group between acculturating individuals, could be defined (instead of organization) as a neighborhood community, school, friendship group, or volunteer organization. Moreover, four OIS

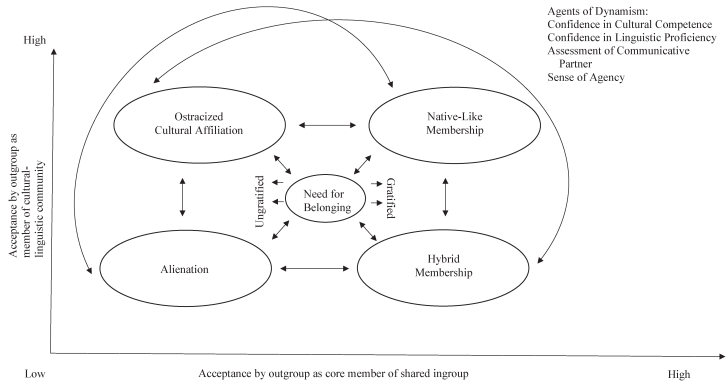

Figure 2 General framework of acculturation

would be predicted: high or low levels of belonging in each dimension with similarly positive or negative outcomes. Thus, in future research, the dimensions can be conceived flexibly to examine dynamics in many acculturative contexts and types of relationships—not only different nationalities at work (see Figure 2).

5. Conclusion

The framework presented here illuminates how acculturators' construction of their position in relation to national cultural group boundaries and sense of organizational membership—perceptions driven by their need to belong—gives structure and meaning to their acculturation experiences. Moreover, this framework treats various outcomes that are of great importance, particularly in work contexts: the extent that people enjoy positive intercultural relationships, social acceptance, and feel empowered to actualize their professional skills. This constitutes a valuable addition to current acculturation literature as the framework highlights the multilayered aspects of belonging and captures the movement between different OIS driven by agents of dynamism such as agency, situational and relational context, and levels of cultural and linguistic competence.

Finally, the framework bridges theory and practice, as two critical issues have been expounded which broadly impact peoples' quests in building satisfying lives abroad and intercultural relationships in their own countries: acceptance in work organizations and in other cultural-linguistic communities. These goals are more likely accomplished when acculturators and their cultural outgroup members share complementary, generous expectations for inclusion and enact such expectations in ways that engender positive acculturation outcomes—as demonstrated by Hybrid and Native-Like Members and their colleagues. Considering the struggles that are common in Japan (as well as in many other countries) to incorporate people from other cultures both into work organizations and the social fabric of communities, this research is both timely and of urgent importance.

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Appendix:

Semi-Structured Interview Format

1. Describe your typical workday.
2. Whom do you work with regularly?
3. What kind of work do you do together?
4. Think of a Japanese/American coworker or group with whom you work effectively and describe an experience that illustrates this.
5. How do you know when you are working effectively together?
6. Repeat questions 4 and 5.
7. Now choose a Japanese/American coworker or group with whom you do not work effectively. Describe an experience that illustrates this.
8. How do you know when you are not working effectively together?
9. Repeat questions 7 and 8.
10. How does your work effectiveness with Japanese/Americans compare generally with your work effectiveness with Americans/Japanese?
11. Choose a Japanese/American coworker with whom you have positive interpersonal relations. Describe an experience that illustrates this.
12. How do you know when you are getting along well?
13. Please choose a Japanese/American coworker with whom you do not have positive interpersonal relations. Describe an experience that illustrates this.
14. How do you know when you are not getting along well together?
15. To what extent do you believe that being American/Japanese makes it easier or more difficult to become a core member of your corporate office?
16. Give an example of an experience that made you feel this way.
17. In your office, who do you think culturally adjusts to whom? Do you think Americans tend to adapt to Japanese culture, or the opposite? Or is there some alternative to American or Japanese culture that you have created?