

## The Career-related Challenges and Needs of Japanese Female University Students at a US Study Center of a Japanese University

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### 【Abstract】

This study examined the perceptions of Japanese female college students regarding their career-related challenges and support needs while studying abroad. One-time semi-structured interviews with 10 Japanese female college students were analyzed qualitatively. This study drew upon Krumboltz's learning theory of career decision-making as the conceptual framework. The participants reported their needs of direct learning experiences (e.g., internships and volunteering) as instrumental learning experiences, and indirect career exploration opportunities (e.g., observation of company offices abroad or interactions with workers) as associative learning experiences. These study abroad experiences aided in their career decision-making processes. Among the participants, environmental factors (e.g., lack of career-development opportunities at the study center and U.S. visa regulations) and genetic endowment (e.g., gender and nationality) affected all participants without much variation. However, the implementation of individual task approach skills (e.g., activeness and open-mindedness) influenced students to access instrumental and associative learning experiences, which further allowed them to enhance their self-observation and world-view generalization while developing the task approach skills. As an implication, institutional assistance for students, especially those who lack task approach skills, is important in order to enhance the career-related learning experiences of students who study abroad by helping them find direct and indirect career exploration opportunities.

【Keywords】 Studying abroad, career decision making, career support needs, internships,  
Japanese female college students

### 1. Introduction

In Japan, promoting students to study abroad has become an emerging agenda by the government and universities, especially since the decline of the number of Japanese students who studied in the United States in the late 2000s (e.g., Institute of International Education, 2010). Although studying abroad is beneficial in developing global perspectives and intercultural competencies that are important in a globalized society, students who study abroad often report issues in their job searches and careers after their return. For example, more than 20 % of survey

respondents who studied abroad for more than one year experienced challenges in lagging behind on their job search in Japan compared to other Japanese students (Benesse Corporation, 2009, p. 58); Japanese companies typically recruit university graduates just once a year, at the beginning of spring. This is often the middle of the semester in other countries (e.g., U.S.A). In addition, a lack of job-related information for students who studied abroad is also reported (Japan Student Services Association [JASSO], 2005). While recent efforts to promote studying abroad have been mainly centered on providing financial support and offering various programs, support for career-related issues has been largely ignored.

Although the majority of students who studied abroad start their job search after returning to Japan, some students start the process earlier. According to the JASSO (2013), while more than half of the students who study abroad start their job search after returning to Japan, approximately 23.5 % of survey respondents started their job search while they were abroad, and approximately 10 % of survey respondents started their job search even before their departure from Japan to other countries (p. 49). These students started gathering information through company websites and attending job fairs for their future careers after studying abroad. Having the ability and opportunity to start exploring their career plans while still studying abroad would be helpful for students to use their time overseas to be involved in career exploration opportunities and to reduce their career-related challenges upon return to Japan. However, the realities regarding career-related challenges and service needs for students who are studying abroad has not been examined extensively.

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of Japanese female students regarding their career-related challenges and support needs while studying abroad. This study is a part of a larger study that explored the overall experiences of female Japanese students who were studying abroad. The study focused on Japanese female students as the participants for two reasons. First, more Japanese women study abroad than men; 27,941 women and 15,068 men studied abroad through university exchange agreements in 2012 respectively (JASSO, 2014). The similar gender trend has been observed in the United States (Stroud, 2010). This is related to the gender differences in terms of choice of academic field; students in certain majors, such as foreign languages, humanities, and the social sciences, have more female students than men (Shirley, 2005). Students in these majors were reported to be more likely to study abroad (Shirley, 2005). Second, in Japan, although the government has been promoting women to participate in the workforce, the number of women who actually participate is still low among the OECD countries (e.g., Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2009). Issues regarding studying abroad and career-related support are especially important for women in the context of Japan.

## 2. Conceptual framework

### 2.1 *The selection of career development theories: Krumboltz's social learning approach*

In order to aid the interpretation of students' career development through studying abroad, this study draws upon Krumboltz's learning theory of career decision making (Krumboltz, 1979; Krumboltz, Mitchell, & Johns, 1976; L. K. Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990, 1996). Krumboltz's theory argues that people choose their career through their learning experiences in society and their interactions with others. Compared to other career development theories, Krumboltz's theory fits the current study better in several ways. First, Krumboltz argues that individual's career interests could change over their lifetime through their learning experiences. This is a contrast to Parson's (1909) trait-and-factor theory, which assumes the stability of one's interests throughout their lives (as cited in Krumboltz, 1994). Krumboltz's perspective is appropriate to examine the career needs of students who study abroad because they can have unique and influential learning experiences that potentially influence students' career decisions. Second, Krumboltz's theory highlights how people develop their career interests, which is not discussed in typological approaches, such as Holland's (1997) six types of vocational choices (as cited in Krumboltz, 1994). Thus, Krumboltz's approach is effective in exploring how students potentially develop their career plans and choices through learning experiences while study abroad.

### 2.2 *Concepts of Krumboltz's social learning theory of career decision making*

Krumboltz argues that there are four factors that influence people in choosing their careers: (1) genetic endowment, (2) environmental factors and events, (3) learning experiences, and (4) task approach skills. Among these four factors, learning experiences as career-needs are particularly relevant in the results and discussion sections in this study.

(1) *Genetic endowment and special abilities.* Genetic endowment and special abilities are "inherited qualities that may affect people's ability to acquire certain educational and occupational preferences and skills" (L. K. Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996, p. 237). These qualities include gender, physical appearances and characteristics, intelligence, musical, artistic and athletic abilities. In the case of the current study, the participants' female gender and individual students' academic or personal abilities are examples of factors that affect students' career decisions differently.

(2) *Environmental factors and events.* Environmental situations in the society, culture, politics, and economy also affect individuals' career decision making. While many of these factors tend to be out of individuals' control, some factors could be planned for. Several examples of environmental factors include the availability of jobs and trainings, requirements for certain jobs, experiences and family resources, labor laws, educational institutions, and the community (L. K. Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990). For the students of the current study, the availability of career

exploration opportunities and trainings at the institution while studying abroad were factors that influenced students' career development. In addition, visa regulations in the host country could be a factor that determines the range of career-related activities that international students can engage in while studying in the country.

(3) *Learning experiences*. One's learning experiences are one of the key factors that influence their career decisions by working as stimuli and reinforcement. The theory provides two categories of experiences: instrumental learning experiences and associative learning experiences. The instrumental learning experiences occur when "the individual acts on the environment so as to produce positive consequences" (L. K. Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996, p. 238). For example, a student who had a language tutor and received positive feedback or found the experience to be rewarding would develop their career interest to become a language teacher.

Another type of Krumboltz's learning experiences, associative learning experiences, occurs when individuals connect positive or negative meanings with neutral stimuli mostly by listening to others and hearing about their choices and subsequent consequences. These learning experiences include situations where individuals form a particular impression about a particular career through listening to words or observing images from others, or in the media or publications. Some students who study abroad might observe a person who is satisfied with their job and frequently uses English or frequently travels abroad. This might lead students to long for a career with an international travel component.

(4) *Task approach skills*. Task approach skills determine the way in which individuals respond to the career-related tasks or problems in career decision processes. Examples of task approach skills include: "performance standards, work habits, perceptual and cognitive processes (for example, attention, and retention), mental sets, and emotional responses" (L. K. Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996, p. 242). Task approach skills are acquired based on interactions among the aforementioned three factors (genetic endowment, environmental conditions, and learning experiences). For example, some students who would like to learn about certain occupations make extra efforts to find information on their own, or try to find a way to contact workers in their fields of interest. Other students might not take active actions to seek out these opportunities. When visa regulations do not allow international students to complete an internship, some students just give up. Other students respond to the situation differently. They have an ability (problem solving skills) to explore alternative ways to find similar experiences as internship opportunities.

*Outcomes and support needs*. Krumboltz' theory explains that as a result of the interactions among the four factors that influence individuals' career decision-making, people will be able to develop self-observation generalization, world-view generalization, and task approach skills. As for

the self-observation generalization, individuals generalize their career-related attitudes and skills by assessing their own performances or by comparing with others to decide what they enjoy or not. Then, world-view generalizations are made based on learning experiences and observations; individuals make generalizations about how the world and society work. Interactions of the factors are helpful to improve task approach skills, such as the examination of the accuracy of self-observation and world-view generalizations, information gathering, and elimination of unappealing career options (Krumboltz & Baker 1973 as cited in Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996). People finding challenge in these outcomes need assistance. Typical problems due to the inaccuracy of self-observations and world-view generalizations includes: failure in making an effort in problem solving, having anxiety in successfully pursuing the goals, and overlooking potentially good career options (L. K. Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990).

### 3. Methods

In order to explore the students' perspectives regarding career-related needs while studying abroad, a basic interpretive qualitative study with the use of in-depth interviews was employed as a research method. The qualitative approach is appropriate in accessing the perspectives of participants.

The main data were collected through individual interviews with Japanese female students who were at the U.S. study center of a Japanese university. This is a part of a larger study that was to explore the career-related experiences of Japanese female students who study abroad.

#### 3.1 Research site and participants

The participants were recruited at the study center of a Japanese women's university in the United States. This study center hosts Japanese female college students regularly, which was helpful for recruiting the participants of the current study. Since career-related challenges were often reported by the returnees who studied abroad for a longer period (e.g., JASSO, 2013), the students in the longest study abroad program at the center were targeted for recruitment as participants in this study. The length of the study abroad program for the participants was 18 months. They left for the U.S. after finishing the first semester as freshmen at their home campus in Japan. Given that shorter programs were available at the participants' home university, students who participated in the 18-months program could be considered to be highly motivated for studying abroad and having international experiences. Each participant was interviewed 14 to 15 months after their arrival in the United States. Students were selected if they did not have previous overseas experiences for more than one consecutive month prior to the current visit. This was done in order to explore the learning experiences of students who had not previously had

extensive experiences abroad.

Ten sophomore female students participated in this study, all between 19 to 20 years old. Nine of them majored in English language and communication, and one majored in human sciences. They were residing in a residence hall with other Japanese students at the study center and mostly taking courses on English language and communication with other Japanese female students from the same university. This made them distinct from other typical exchange students who enroll at American universities who take courses with American and other international students. The study center was located in the suburb of a city. At the time of the interview, there was no office for career services at the study center, although the home university in Japan had an office of career services with staff and resources. At the study center, guest speaker sessions regarding overall life in the United States sometimes included career-related topics, which might be considered as career exploration opportunities for students.

Although most participants were still exploring their career plans at the time of the interviews, they typically reported they had taken into consideration the use of English language or communication skills in their future jobs. These jobs included hotel clerk, worker at a travel agency, translator, and schoolteacher. Some participants also began to consider graduate school study after graduation. Regarding the location of their future work, some preferred to work in Japan, while others were open to working in the United States or other countries.

### 3.2 Data collection and analysis

During October and November 2011, one-time individual interviews were conducted with each participant for 60 to 90 minutes. The interviews were conducted in Japanese. Among the 24 questions in the interview protocol, the three career-related relevant questions are listed in the following. Other questions included in the interview were about their study abroad academic experiences during abroad. The interview consisted of open-ended questions to allow participants to express their perceptions on the topic without being influenced by the researchers' biases.

#### *Sample questions from the interview*

- What are your concerns regarding your career?  
ご自身のキャリアに関して、どのようなことが不安、課題ですか？
- What kind of career support will be beneficial before, during, and after studying abroad?  
(留学前、留学中、留学後に、キャリアに関してどのような支援サービスが役に立つと思いますか？)
- What kind of services for study abroad and career development would it be helpful to receive from university?  
留学や、キャリアの発達に関して、どのようなサービスを大学から受けたいですか？

Once several interviews were recorded, researchers transcribed and started to analyze the data. After the initial analysis was started, new participants were selected and interviewed, in order to

add more interview data (Patton, 2002). In the analysis process, codes were assigned to segments in the data line by line (e.g., Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Researchers mainly took an open coding approach, where the researchers developed codes based on the parts of the interviews (Creswell, 2007). Through the analysis process, a constant comparative method was used, where the codes were compared with other codes to form larger categories and themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Then, Krumboltz's concepts, such as instrumental learning, associative learning, and task approach skills, were referred to in order to re-categorize the codes. After the tenth interview, researchers agreed they had reached data saturation, where the no new information was emerging out of the interviews. The categories included direct learning experiences (e.g., internship and volunteer work) and indirect learning experiences (e.g., interactions and observations).

#### 4. Themes

The participants often stated the need for direct or indirect career exploration opportunities. Examples of direct engagement included internships and volunteering, where participants actually put themselves in activities that are relevant to some careers; examples of indirect career development opportunities included observing company offices and interacting with workers.

##### *4.1 Direct learning experiences: Internships and volunteering*

In this study, more than half of the participants reported their needs for having internships or hands-on, job-related actual experiences for career planning purposes while studying abroad. Most Japanese students (including all the participants) enroll in universities after finishing their primary and secondary schools without ever working full-time. The lack of full-time working experiences was a source of concern for some participants during the job search process. One participant, who did not have any experiences with either part-time jobs or internships, talked about her anxiety in her career exploration.

Although I am studying English, but other than English, I feel like I am lacking the knowledge regarding the society in general. I have never done a part-time job. So, I want to learn the meaning of work for earning money by working in the society. I have never had a boss or somebody like that, but I want to learn in that kind of environment. (Student #10)

Including this student, three participants stated that their lack of part-time working experiences was related to challenges in terms of how they viewed the world of work. The disconnection between school life and society outside the university caused concern related to their career planning.

In order to fill in their lack of experiences in the world of work and to develop career plans, some students considered that internships or other career-related experiential opportunities would

be beneficial. One student, who was interested in using English in her later career, explained her expectation that internships would be helpful in identifying potential jobs that would be interesting and suitable for her.

I would like to do something like an internship since I have no experience in a working place, which is my concern. ... I would like to experience. I don't know what kind of opportunities are available, but when I asked my senior student, she was talking about some jobs with the use of the English language, such as English newspapers, or something related to airports. Anyway, I would like to experience first. (Student #3)

As in this example, participants who were studying abroad were often interested in careers that used foreign languages or occupations with some international dimensions. Internship opportunities would help students learn about occupations through actual involvement, which allows students to examine their fit to potential jobs.

Although direct career exploration opportunities were perceived to be beneficial, challenges were also reported. As one of the visa regulations for students with student or exchange visitor visas in the United States, students cannot participate in internships unless they are developed as part of an academic program or approved by program advisors. At the time of the interviews, the study center did not provide internships as a part of its academic program. Therefore, if participants wanted to participate in internships, they had to find opportunities that were offered off-campus and individually seek approval from the U.S. study center. One student reported that she received information on internships through her personal networks.

I know that there are some internship opportunities at companies abroad, and I think those career-related opportunities would be useful. I would like to do an internship abroad. For now, we have to find those opportunities by ourselves, not through the study center. The study center does not provide opportunities for that, but I just knew it from my senior friend who found those opportunities by herself. That's why I knew it, but I hope to have those kind of internship opportunities. (Student #10)

For some students, personal networks seem to be an important resource for them to find information on internships. However, another student reported her experience of missing the timing of the application for an internship, due to the lack of systematic support in helping students find internships.

In fact, I had some free time during the last summer break, so I was interested in doing an internship, but I heard from my friend at that time that I missed the application deadline already. ... I want the university to increase the offering of internship sites and opportunities. (Student #2)

Direct engagement in working experiences was perceived to be beneficial for students who study abroad in developing their career plans. However, due to the visa regulations the arrangement of internships and the limitation of internship information posed challenges for students who were interested in those opportunities.

Despite the challenges regarding internship opportunities, a few students were able to find direct career-related experiences that helped their career development, through volunteering or academic experiences. One student, who was interested in working at a non-profit organization in the field of international development, was able to narrow down her career choices by working as a community services volunteer in the United States.

Through the experiences of volunteer work, I saw that the situation was that more volunteering opportunities are available in the United States. I've already been interested in the field of international development, but it has become clear through the volunteering experiences, and I have discovered some new aspects of this kind of work, in which I think I can use the skills and knowledge in the future. (Student #6)

Through actual involvement in volunteering activities that were related to her career plan, she was able to deepen her career interest in the international development field. Outside of volunteering opportunities, another student, who was interested in becoming an English teacher, developed career-related ideas from her experience participating in English classes at the study center in the United States with a native English speaker.

Well, after I studied English here, I thought that English classes at high schools and junior high schools in Japan were not actually useful to actually communicate in English. So, if I were to become an English teacher, although I have to follow the curriculum, I would like to use my experience here in the United States somehow. ... So, I would like to explain to the students that studying English is very interesting, which I have realized after I came to the United States. (Student #5)

Even if limited in number, the academic experiences abroad could serve as direct career exploration experiences for students interested in becoming educators. Other than internships, if direct experiences were relevant to students' career interests, the engagement in those experiences seemed to be helpful in developing their career perspectives.

#### *4.2 Indirect learning experiences: interactions and observations*

Among the participants, indirect career exploration opportunities, such as interactions with and observations of people in the working society were also reported as helpful for career development while studying abroad. Hearing about the experiences of people who are working was perceived as career-related need among students who were studying in the United States. For

students, especially those who did not know much about the working environment, opportunities to meet and discuss with people in society about the students' career selection processes was insightful for the students in terms of planning their futures. One student commented about the need for such an opportunity in order to develop images about working.

I think it will be helpful to have some opportunities that allow me to hear comments and experiences from people who are in their careers in order to think about my future. So, it doesn't necessarily have to be large job fairs, but I would like to have opportunities to hear opinions and comments from people who are currently working. (Student #5)

Another student requested to have opportunities to hear about the experiences of others, especially Japanese workers who were working in the United States.

If I were to think about working abroad, I would like to know how other Japanese workers started to work in some foreign companies. I would like to know from them about the process of their job-search. (Student #7)

Including these experiences is especially important for students who are studying abroad because they have needs for interacting with or hearing from workers who are at companies abroad, or whose jobs have international orientations, such as requiring the use of foreign language or international communication skills. It seemed to be more important for universities to offer opportunities to have these experiences for students studying abroad compared to domestic students in Japan. This is because students studying abroad tended to lack resources for contacting people in the working society in the United States even though they could greatly benefit from interacting with people who have hands-on working experiences in the United States.

Interactions with people already established in their careers were perceived to be informative in knowing the details of the occupations, and helpful in understanding the reasons and processes behind these people's career selections. Understanding how and why some people chose particular careers was helpful, especially for students who were still figuring out their career interests. This also helped students to take steps towards choosing an occupation. One student commented that she was interested in interacting with people in the society since it would allow her to learn about other people's career-related values and processes and in turn, help her think about her own future.

I know there are people who know the world that I don't know well. I think that the words of those people who have lived their lives are very real, and I am very interested in listening to it. I am interested in how they took their career path, and what kind of ideas or philosophies they have. I think I tend to be easily influenced by others. So, by talking with others in the different generation, I think I will be stimulated in various ways. (Student #2)

To know about other people's career paths and selection processes was perceived to be helpful in examining and figuring out how students would also make their career decisions by reflecting on their own situations.

While the need to interact with people in careers was reported, among the participants, some students were able to find opportunities to interact with workers in the United States mostly through their personal networks. The students reported their perceived benefits from those experiences. One student participated in a career fair, and had opportunities to talk to some workers about their jobs, which was helpful in increasing the students' information regarding a particular occupation.

I went to a career forum offered off-campus, and I've changed my future career plan. Well, I did not want to do office work, such as to sit in front of a computer all day. I thought that I did not like that kind of work. But, after I talked to some company workers at the career forum, I found that workers really enjoy their work, and they are trying to make contributions to their companies, not just using a computer. By knowing the situation, I thought about that office work is not bad at all. (Student #9)

This student developed a positive image of office work through interactions with current workers who enjoyed their work. In addition, the interaction could be also informative for students who were interested in pursuing advanced academic degrees.

I had chances to talk with a person who went to a graduate school. She gave me some feedback regarding my career plans. She gave me some information that I really did not have. For example, if I have a particular degree, it is easier to enter into the graduate school, or something like that. In addition, she also gave me other necessary things that I should have. I was talking to a staff at the study center, and she gave me also some feedback. (Student #6)

Interactions with people in the older generation, who could serve as role models, were helpful for students in terms of hearing about their experiences, and also allowed students to receive some advice regarding career selection. Students who studied abroad often report increased interest in the possibility of continuing their study at graduate schools (e.g., Paige, Fry, Stallman, Josic, & Jon, 2009). Therefore, for students who study abroad, providing opportunities to interact with people who entered graduate school is important, in addition to interacting with people in the working society.

While some students reported interactions with workers related to their career plans or academic interests through personal networks, one student found an opportunity for career exploration by chance through her personal network. She was able to observe an office providing

study abroad programs without knowing much about the work and became interested in the occupation.

I was interested in something like a tour guide, but now I am interested in providing programs for studying abroad. ... I went to a language school, and I went to an office once with a friend who knew about an office for studying abroad. The atmosphere of the office was good, and I saw the environment was good since there are staff who use not only English. There seems to be opportunities to talk with people other than in English. ... Well, it was just a coincidence. I just went to a party in the office. I did not intend to go there for my career exploration, though. So, I happened to be there with my friend. (Student #3)

In this case, a coincidental encounter helped develop her career interests. Although it is not clear whether other students also had unexpected events which could assist their career development, there were only a limited number of students who reported that they were able to make these chance opportunities useful in their career exploration. Among the participants, those who were flexible and had a positive attitude could probably best utilize unexpected events for their career exploration.

While interactions with people who are established in their careers seems to be necessary and helpful for the participants at the study center for their career development, challenges regarding those opportunities were also reported. Although the study center provided some sessions for students to meet people who were working as a part of classes or seminars, opportunities seemed to be limited. Therefore, if students were looking for those opportunities, they mostly had to find ways to do it themselves. One student reported that guest speakers in classes were not always helpful since these people's careers were not relevant to her interests.

There are classes that invite guest speakers and ask students to write a report regarding it for credit, but the guests typically have quite unique careers, such as a writer, and it requires some special gift to do the job, so I hope to have more people in typical jobs come to the class to talk about their experiences in their careers. (Student #2)

Another student, who was interested in studying at graduate schools, tried by herself to find opportunities to meet people who went to a graduate school since the study center did not provide those opportunities at the time of the interviews.

Well, I looked by myself for opportunities to see people who went to a graduate school. I asked my friends to see if they knew some people who knew that kind of people. Then I was able to see the person. But, if the university offers some opportunities to see them and hear their experiences, I think many others might be interested in going to graduate schools. (Student #6)

At the time of the interviews, although the study center offered some opportunities for the participants to interact with workers in the society, the number and the variety of these were limited. The lack of opportunities to meet appropriate role models for some students at the study center left students to their own efforts to find those people established in their careers.

Another challenge regarding opportunities for interactions was that information regarding how to find these opportunities seemed to be limited. At the time of the interviews, the students had to find these opportunities by themselves, mostly through their own personal networks and efforts. One student discussed her request for the study center to provide a job fair in the United States, since she worried about missing the chance to explore her career.

I hope to have a career service to connect companies abroad to us. In terms of that, I heard that there is a career forum for Japanese students who study abroad offered off campus, so I think it will be useful. However, if I didn't know about it, I would have been spending time without going there, so I think I have to look for it. But, if the university could provide this kind of information more, it would be helpful. (Student #10)

Another student found the information regarding the job fair through a senior student.

The reason that I went to the career fair was that I don't have much information when I study here. So, I thought it is a great opportunity to go to that kind of job fair. There are many other Japanese students who can speak English, so I would like to see them, or to be stimulated by them. Also, I know that senior students also went there every year, so I thought about going there without too much thinking. I just wanted to go there since there is a chance. (Student #9)

The students who went to job fairs reported that they found information about the fairs through their personal networks, rather than from the U.S. study center at the university. In order for students to have opportunities to interact with current workers, the study center could provide more information regarding those opportunities, especially for those who might have difficulties finding career-related opportunities by themselves.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Career service needs with Krumboltz's concepts

Using Krumboltz's theory, the results of this study are examined further. As for the career-service needs of female college students at the U.S. study center, two themes were discussed in the previous section: direct and indirect experiences. Through the lens of Krumboltz's theory, these two types of opportunities can be understood as instrumental learning experiences (e.g., internships and volunteering) and associative learning experiences (e.g., interactions with and

observations of workers) as shown in Table 1, which was developed by the authors. Considering the factors of genetic endowments and special abilities, the participants' Japanese nationality and female gender were common to all participants in this study.

**Table 1: Needs for instrumental and associative learning experiences for students who study abroad**

	Instrumental learning experiences	Associative learning experiences
Examples of Career-related needs	Internships Volunteering opportunities Academic experiences	Interactions Observations

Krumboltz explains that the instrumental learning experiences allow people to directly engage in activities that provide positive or negative stimuli for deciding one's career. In the case of this study, students often requested to have internships or volunteering opportunities in the United States as these are instrumental learning experiences that could provide opportunities to examine their careers. Although the study center did not provide extensive support for offering these opportunities, a few students who had opportunities to engage in instrumental learning experiences found these experiences beneficial for their career development while studying abroad. For example, one student was reinforced to choose her career through volunteering experiences in a community in the United States. The volunteer experiences related to her potential career interest in serving people for international development. Although actual experiential parts of internships or volunteering work are instrumental learning experiences, interactions with and observation of other workers enjoying their work while students are on internships can be categorized as associative learning experience, which is described in the following.

Career-related needs of associative learning experiences, where people can develop positive or negative images towards potential career interests as a result of hearing from or observing others, were also reported by some of the participants who were studying abroad. The examples of these experiences included interactions with Japanese people who were working in American society and observations of workers who enjoy working at offices in the United States. Related to these opportunities, the provision of resources for these experiences was also requested by students at the study center. Similar to the instrumental learning opportunities, there were limited offerings of these experiences at the U.S. study center. For some students, these opportunities served as positive or negative reinforcement for choosing a certain career. For instance, one student developed her interest in pursuing a graduate degree after hearing from a person who went to graduate school and talked about the pros and cons of going to graduate school for certain occupations.

Although most participants reported their needs of instrumental and associative learning experiences for their career development during studying abroad, an environmental factor of Krumboltz's theory was the U.S. study center did not provide these opportunities extensively. This potentially limited the chances for career exploration for some students while studying abroad. At Japanese universities, the importance of career-related services for students was recognized in the late 2000s (e.g., Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2009), which is quite recent. Although Japanese universities have been developing career-related services for students for many years, customized support for students who study abroad has not been well-developed. This is probably because information regarding internships or career-exploration opportunities especially targeting students who study abroad is limited, compared to similar information for domestic students. The disconnection of support for career and study abroad at universities is also recognized in the context of the United States (Hannigan, 2005).

In addition, as a larger environmental factor, that Japanese students were located in the United States while studying abroad also caused challenges in offering career development opportunities. First, the U.S. visa regulations restricted opportunities for internships for foreign students in the United States by requiring permits. The visa regulations did not allow international students to participate in an internship experience unless the internship was included in the curriculum for graduation, such as curricular practical training (CPT). This made it difficult for students to participate in and arrange internships without additional assistance or extra efforts. In addition to visa regulations, the students were studying English in a foreign country, which might have served as an obstacle for them to cultivate volunteering or observation sites by themselves, especially for those who were not confident in their English communication skills in the United States. From the perspective of employers in the United States, international students who are lacking English fluency might be viewed as less competitive compared to native speakers, even if students are equipped with skills or abilities other than language.

The limitation of career-related learning opportunities due to environmental factors highlighted the differences in students' individual factors, or task approach skills. At the time of the interviews, several students were able to find some career-related learning opportunities. The access to those experiences can be viewed as relating to differences in the students' task approach skills in actively seeking the career-exploration opportunities and being open-minded for new experiences. Most of the students who had these opportunities reported they found the opportunities through interactions with senior students, friends, and people outside the study center. These students intentionally or unintentionally reached out to these resources to find the opportunities.

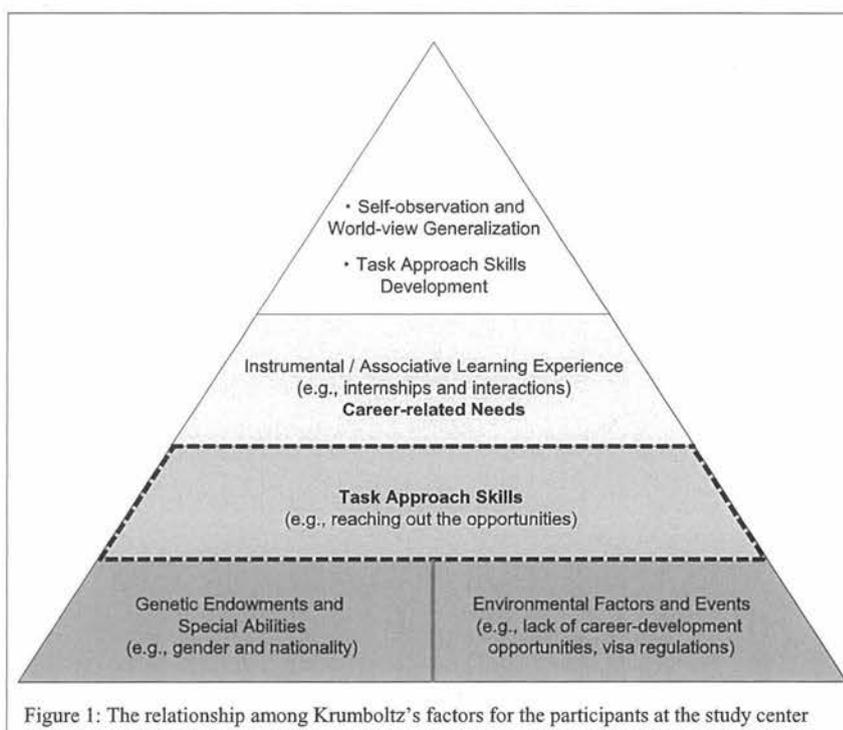
As for the outcomes of these experiences, although they were not experienced by all

participants, the limited number of students who were able to find instrumental and associative learning experiences reported development in their career planning. Using Krumboltz's concepts, the students' career development can also be seen as forming their generalization about the self (e.g., having a better idea of their own abilities and career preferences by having internships and volunteering work), and their generalization about the world (e.g., having more information regarding particular occupations and job search processes by having conversations with or observing workers). The development of the generalization about the self and the world would be helpful in developing task approach skills that could assist them in taking the next step towards their career selection.

In this study, Krumboltz' concept of happenstance was also relevant, although this concept was not used as the conceptual framework of the study. Based on this happenstance concept, Krumboltz argues that people's career decisions are often influenced by coincidental events or activities, when people properly utilized them (K. E. Mitchell, Al Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999). Among the participants, one student reported that an unplanned event (visiting a travel agency) was helpful for her career exploration, even though she had never thought about this type of job previously. Although the role of happenstance was not a central focus of the current study, the potential importance of coincidental opportunities for career development was observed in the study.

### *5.2 Relationship among four factors for the students at the U.S. study center*

Although Krumboltz did not specify the relationship among the four factors that influence one's career decision-making, in the case of participants of this study, relationships among certain factors can be conceptualized as shown in the figure 1. The environmental factor (e.g., the limitations in career exploration learning opportunities and visa regulations for international students in the United States) and the genetic endowment (e.g., Japanese female students) influenced all participants without much variation. Then, the task approach skills (e.g., actively seeking out the opportunities) of some students allowed them to access instrumental and associative learning experiences (e.g., interactions with workers) for their career development. These students, who were able to have the learning experiences through their task approach skills, reported their improvement in self-observation and world-view generalization (e.g., improved understanding about their career-related interests and information). They also reported development of task approach skills (e.g., being clear about next possible steps for their career selection) for career decision-making in the future. Although instrumental and associative learning experiences were reported as career-related needs for most of the participants, the actual engagement in those experiences was strongly influenced by the individual students' task approach skills for these learning opportunities.



### 5.3 Implications for future practice

The interview results showed that there is a gap between the students' career-related needs of instrumental and associative learning experiences and the environmental arrangement of those opportunities. The current situation required individual students to reach out to those opportunities through their personal networks. However, in order to assist students regardless of their individual networks, or especially for students who are lacking those individual resources, the study center could offer assistance by providing guidance regarding how students could individually find these opportunities or the center could provide these learning experiences at the study center. The provision of learning experiences will be meaningful for students to develop their career plans while studying abroad.

From the interview results, there is room for improvement in developing instrumental and associative learning opportunities at the U.S. study center for students who are studying abroad. As reported by participants, direct engagement opportunities such as internships or volunteer work should be offered more for students who are studying abroad. As for internships, since there is a visa regulation, the study center should carefully examine visa requirements in order to develop and design internship opportunities that follow the regulations. This could mean including the internship component as part of the curriculum. While developing internship programs, the study center can also improve the offerings of other types of instrumental learning opportunities for career development that are not bound by visa regulation, such as volunteering or academic

experiences. In addition, the study center could also provide more indirect career development opportunities and information, such as opportunities to interact with current workers who can serve as role models by organizing job fairs, guest speeches, or career panel discussions. As for associative learning experiences, since the study center already provides similar activities, the content of these experiences, their relevance to students, and the frequency of these experiences could be improved to fit the needs of students. In addition, career exploration can be developed through unplanned events, or happenstance. Thus, students should be encouraged to be positive, curious, and flexible so that they can take advantages of unplanned activities that are potentially beneficial for their career development. The improvement in instrumental and associative learning opportunities that promote self-observation and world-view generalization regarding students' careers would be important for students who are studying abroad.

#### 5.4 Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First of all, this is a qualitative study based on 10 students at one study center in the United States. The relatively small number of participant could reduce the generalization of the findings. Future studies concerning this issue using a larger group of students will be necessary to further examine and understand career-related challenges for Japanese students. In addition, the study center mainly hosted female Japanese students from a home university in Japan. The participants mostly interacted with other Japanese students although they were outside Japan. Therefore, the experiences of students who come as exchange students and take courses mainly with Americans or international students were different. In the future, studies looking at exchange students who are taking courses with non-Japanese students should be examined. Third, this study did not have a control group by gender, which made it difficult to conclude the results specific to a particular gender. In future studies, using larger samples and different study cite with a mix of both genders would be meaningful. This would help to further examine and understand the results of this study and develop career-related support for students who study abroad.

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