

Japanese Language and Literature

Journal of the American Association of Teachers of Japanese

jll.pitt.edu | Vol. 56 | Number 1 | April 2022 | DOI: 10.5195/jll.2022.261

ISSN 1536-7827 (print) 2326-4586 (online)

Our Challenges and Triumphs:

Female Asian Faculty in Leadership Positions in
U. S. Colleges and Universities

Guest edited by

Satoko Suzuki and Junko Mori



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jll.pitt.edu | Vol. 56 | Number 1 | April 2022 | DOI: 10.5195/jll.2022.247

ISSN 1536-7827 (print) 2326-4586 (online)

Our Stories as Female Asian Leaders: Introduction

Satoko Suzuki and Junko Mori

This special section presents stories from eight female Asian faculty who have served in leadership positions in U. S. institutions of higher education. Our purpose in putting together this special section is threefold: to celebrate female leadership, to inspire future leaders by discussing the lived experiences of our challenges and successes, and to offer some practical advice.

Women leaders have been in the spotlight recently both in the United States and in Japan, with, for example, Kamala Harris becoming the U. S. vice president and Yuriko Koike becoming the governor of Tokyo. In the broader world we see young female leaders such as Malala Yousafzai (a Pakistani activist who received the Nobel Peace Prize for her work advocating education for girls). Female leadership in higher education has also attracted attention with the publication of titles such as *Women and Leadership in Higher Education* (Longman and Madsen 2014) and *Surviving Sexism in Academia: Strategies for Feminist Leadership* (Cole and Hassel 2017).

In addition to being women in academia, which has been characterized as a “masculine” field (Czarniawska and Sevón 2008: 235), all of the contributors were born and raised in Japan and are of Asian descent. Kim, Twombly, and Wolf-Wendel (2012: 44) observed that international faculty as a group “are often overlooked and frequently underestimated and misunderstood.” Among international faculty, women of color, as Hernandez, Ngunjiri, and Chang (2015: 534) noted, must confront the daunting “triple threat” of being foreign-born, female, and non-white. We may also add that our being raised in Japan, where women’s status is considered extremely low in international comparisons, intensifies the challenge.¹ In this special section, we are putting a spotlight on female Asian faculty who have overcome (or at least are in the process of overcoming) these multiple obstacles to achieving leadership status.



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As its readers are aware, *Japanese Language and Literature* typically features outcomes of research and pedagogical innovations. However, we proposed this special section because we believe the journal can play a pivotal role in the professional development of its readers in the area of program development and administration. In this special section, we will discuss our experiences of coordinating and advocating for our departments/programs/divisions, applying for grants, and managing interpersonal relationships in the workplace. We are grateful to the journal's coordinating editor, Dr. Hiroshi Nara, and the language and linguistics editor, Dr. Yumiko Nishi, as well as the Executive Director of the American Association of Teachers of Japanese (AATJ), Ms. Susan Schmidt, for their encouragement and support.

In selecting contributors for this special section, we took care to represent diverse experiences and perspectives. Some are literature specialists while others are theoretical or applied linguists. Our institutions also range from liberal arts colleges and private universities to public universities. The leadership roles we have occupied include chairing departments focusing on East Asian languages and cultures as well as larger departments that include European, Slavic, and/or Arabic language faculty, directing Asian Studies programs and various institution-wide projects, and serving as associate dean of a college. Some of the contributors are relatively new to leadership responsibilities while others are seasoned veterans. In addition, although it was not planned in advance, after receiving the essays, we realized that our journeys originated in different regions of Japan (Kantō, Kansai, Kyūshū, Hokuriku, Shikoku).

We asked each contributor to tell her own story, but requested that each essay address the following three areas:

- (1) Journey to their current position
- (2) Challenges and triumphs in their leadership roles
- (3) Advice to future leaders

In covering these areas, the contributors refer, to varying degrees, to aspects of their private selves. Some of us discussed our upbringing or our ethnic or socioeconomic background, while others wrote about personal and inner conflicts experienced along the way, including lack of confidence in one's English, struggles with ascribed identities, post-tenure blues, and juggling a career with motherhood. As editors of this special section, we are delighted to see our contributors generously open their hearts to readers. We are proud to say that each essay provides a rich

narrative of the lived experiences that are so rarely glimpsed in academic writing.

As you will see, the contributors' journeys touch on several recurring themes. One thing we would like to highlight is that none of us dreamed of becoming a leader at an American institution during our youth. Thanks to encounters with life-changing teachers, mentors, or programs, we were inspired to study and work outside of Japan and to launch careers in teaching and research in the United States. In this process, our potential as leaders was recognized by others who encouraged us to step up. With some hesitation, or under compulsion in some cases, we took on these challenges out of a sense of responsibility to others in our communities. Through our experiences, we continue to learn and grow, and to find renewed sense of purpose in our work. We hope that our readers, who may or may not consider themselves leader types, will find these stories relatable and recognize their own potential.

We also observe that the journeys of these contributors, all born and raised from the late 1950s to the 1980s, are shaped by some aspects of Japan's period of rapid economic growth. By expanding the notion of *oya gacha* 'parental lottery; fate or luck of being born to particular parents', which was Shōgakkan's 2021 selection for new word of the year, Kano (this volume) eloquently discusses the impacts of "nation *gacha*" or "generation *gacha*" on this generation of Japanese women.² Behind these contributors' appreciation of English as an enabler of personal transformation and their desire to explore opportunities abroad we can discern Japan's positive outlook and outward orientation at that time. At the same time, the slow progress in the improvement of women's status in Japan, as exemplified by the limited impact of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law of 1985, also appears to have affected the contributors' decisions to leave Japan. Incidentally, some of the contributors acknowledge their mothers, who assumed domestic roles themselves but nevertheless supported their daughters' ambitions to study and work abroad. Further, the rise of Japan's economic power (1980s to early 1990s) and soft power (from the late 1990s on), which contributed to the expansion of Japanese language and culture programs in the United States, coincided with the time these contributors began their academic careers in the United States. This climate of the times is reflected in all of the narratives, despite our diverse backgrounds and the very different aspects of our lives that each contributor decided to foreground in the limited space.

The contributors' accomplishments in leadership roles, on the other hand, illustrate how different types of institutions as well as types of administrative positions give rise to different kinds of challenges and triumphs. In light of this, we hope these essays serve to demystify the work of administrators and help the readers, especially those who have not yet assumed such positions, develop a better understanding of the kind of considerations that go into the operation of different units and activities on campuses. Indeed, we believe that improving awareness of how our everyday practices as educators and researchers are situated in the local dynamics of respective institutions is an important way to increase empowerment for all.

In the first four essays, for instance, Suzuki, Fukunaga, Lee, and Dollase discuss how they developed, expanded, and represented their relatively small Japanese programs. They worked tirelessly to advocate for their programs, as they organized many extracurricular and outreach activities, negotiated with colleagues who specialized in other languages or subject matters, and persuaded some unsupportive upper administrators to continue or expand Asian language programs. In some cases, they were confronted with rather blunt statements from colleagues questioning the need for a Japanese program or dismissing them as full-fledged members of the campus community. The nature of the politics they have had to navigate differs, however, especially depending on whether their Japanese program is situated in a department of East Asian languages and cultures (Suzuki at Macalester College and Dollase at Vassar College) or in a department of modern languages (Fukunaga at Marshall University and Lee at Lehigh University).

The next four essays, by Kano, Sadler, Kondo-Brown, and Mori, on the other hand, reveal different aspects of the operation of R-1 universities.³ In these larger universities that offer graduate education and emphasize research productivity, the Japanese program had been fully established by the time these contributors began their appointments, and their programs' continuation has not been under threat. The challenges they have tackled instead lie in coordinating a larger number of colleagues spread over the campus to identify common goals or to establish a sense of community. Kano at the University of Pennsylvania, for instance, discusses her work as a coordinator of an annual faculty writing retreat, which supports faculty across different departments, and as a graduate chair, responsible for leading and managing a program with a few dozen Ph. D. and M. A. students. Sadler at the University of Illinois at Urbana-

Champaign serves as a director of a National Resource Center for East Asia, which serves nearly a hundred affiliate specialists on East Asia on campus. One of her most critical responsibilities as the center director is to secure the Title VI grants for international and foreign language education awarded by the U. S. Department of Education. The final two essays, by Kondo-Brown and Mori, both refer to the processes of organizational restructuring that have taken place at a number of public universities in recent years. Kondo-Brown at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa writes about this process from the perspective of an associate dean of a college that houses over three hundred faculty members and twenty-four hundred undergraduate and graduate majors in seventeen academic departments. Mori at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, on the other hand, shares her experience of leading a faculty committee that developed a restructuring proposal and had to secure buy-in from members of two departments and three different area studies centers contributing to Asian Studies.

Despite these differences in contexts, positions, and experiences, our voices resonate with each other when it comes to advice for future leaders. Indeed, our recommendations tend to reflect a few fundamental principles of professional conduct, as epitomized below:

- Communicate clearly, honestly, effectively, and efficiently.
- Strive to be rational, fair, consistent, and patient.
- Value and nurture your colleagues and act as a team player.
- Maintain a bird's-eye view and develop a vision, but also remain flexible.
- Understand that the work of a leader can be invisible and thankless, but also rewarding and gratifying.
- Identify role models and mentors, and learn from them.
- Create support mechanisms and try to keep a work-life balance.
- Trust yourself and own your decisions.

Embracing these principles in one's professional life can help anyone develop their potential as a leader. While the future will likely bring different sets of problems and solutions, we believe these fundamentals will remain the same and help future leaders keep their teams on an even keel as they navigate the challenges they will surely encounter.

When we began conceptualizing this project, we were a little apprehensive about our ability to persuade a sufficient number of contributors to share their experiences, which we expected would include some delicate matters. We were also not certain we could convince the

journal to accept this unconventional proposal for a special section. Nevertheless, we pushed forward because of our conviction that we are responsible for passing on our collective knowledge and experiences to the next generation. The final outcome is beyond what we hoped, and we thank the contributors for taking a chance and joining forces with us. We also would like to acknowledge the existence of a number of other female Asian leaders—our predecessors or contemporaries—whose visible and invisible work has established, defended, and enriched our field. We hope they will also enjoy reading this special section, perhaps with nods and smiles of recognition, and consider adding their own voices to this discussion and celebration through formal or informal channels.

Finally, we want to stress that although this special section is framed as stories of female Asian faculty, some elements of our stories will be recognized as common to all female faculty, or all leaders, regardless of their ethnicity or gender. We conclude this introduction with optimism that we will continue to see a number of female Asian faculty rising to the occasion and that someday it will become unnecessary to discuss their accomplishments as remarkable because of their gender and ethnicity.

NOTES

¹ Japan ranked 121st out of 153 countries in the *Global Gender Gap Report 2020*. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

² *Daijisen ga erabu shingo taishō 2021*. (2021 New Words Awards selected by Daijisen.) <https://daijisen.jp/shingo/>

³ See Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education for information regarding the classification framework. https://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/classification_descriptions/basic.php.

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Hold Your Head High

Satoko Suzuki

In the spirit of sisterhood, I address this essay to young female scholars and teachers who will take leadership positions in their institutions. I teach at Macalester College, a liberal arts college in Saint Paul, Minnesota. I chaired the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures (which started out as the Japanese Language Program) at my institution from 1995 till 2015. Here is my story.

In the Beginning

My mother did not go to a four-year college and did not have a professional career, but she brought me up as a feminist. Most heterosexual women I know in my private life regardless of nationality and cultural background put their partners' (men's) needs before theirs. My mother is one of a very few who doesn't. When I was growing up, she often told me I should not get married until I was at least thirty. She herself married young (she was twenty-one) and lived with a difficult and conservative mother-in-law (my grandmother) who insisted on total control of every aspect of their family life. My mother tried to rebel against Grandma's reign, but she could only do so much in a provincial town in Shōwa Japan, where the rights of daughters-in-law did not really count. When she was young, she loved art but was not able to go to art school because her family could not afford it. So, after Grandma passed away, she earned a junior college degree in art by doing a correspondence course. She is now thriving as an amateur sculptor and painter. Her life undoubtedly affected my thinking as I grew up.

My father is politically liberal and socially conservative. I say the latter because he hampered my mother's freedom. For example, he told her that she could not start the junior college correspondence course when their kids were young because the course required her to be away from home for an extended period of time. However, he never inhibited me from doing anything, and he encouraged me to go abroad during college (a huge



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double standard, I know). He also instilled in me a love of writing (he still writes our family newsletter at the age of eighty-six) and books (he introduced me to *Anne of Green Gables* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*), and was a role model as a leader and public speaker (he volunteered to lead the PTA at my schools for multiple years).

Professionally, my journey to my current position started when I met a great English teacher at my local public high school in Niigata. While my other high school teachers came across as just doing their job—doing the bare minimum—to earn a salary, Honma sensei gave his all. He taught English passionately, gracefully, and comprehensively, and delighted in lecturing on the finer points of English grammar and pronunciation (in much greater detail than what regional high school kids needed to pass their college entrance exams). Plus, he suffered no fools. His intensity, poise, and professionalism had a powerful impact on me and inspired me to pursue studying English in college. At that time, my future career goal was to teach English, like him, in a Japanese high school not too far from my parents' home.

My plans changed in college. I got to know my American teachers, David and Pat, who introduced me to other Americans and Canadians living near the college. These new friends asked me to teach them Japanese, which opened my eyes to another career possibility. I found the teaching of Japanese to be much more challenging and thus interesting than teaching English, because I did not really know how to do it. I also studied in England during the summer break of my junior year, and participated in a workshop on internationalism with Thai and Japanese students in my senior year. All of these experiences made me want to see the world after college and possibly teach Japanese language abroad someday.

When I had finished my undergraduate degree, the Rotary Foundation's Ambassadorial Scholarship brought me to the University of Minnesota. After a year, I applied to graduate school and started teaching Japanese as a teaching assistant. I *loved* teaching Japanese! While in graduate school, I learned about Macalester College, its small classes, progressive students, emphasis on internationalism, and charming campus. I thought teaching there would be my dream job. I requested an informational interview with two professors, who later offered me a class to teach. I started teaching there as a part-time faculty member while still in graduate school. A few years later, when Macalester announced a search for the chair of its Japanese Language Program, I hesitated to apply because I certainly did not intend to chair a department at such an early

stage of my career. However, several senior faculty members I had come to know at the college encouraged me to apply. They said they expected to open a second tenure-track position the following year, and they might be able to convince the administration to hire both a senior faculty member as the chair and me as an assistant professor during the current search. So that is what happened. My chair and I were hired at the same time. I was ecstatic. Little did I know then that my chair would leave after only a year and I would have to start leading the Japanese Language Program in my second year on the tenure track.

Being the Chair

I thus landed my dream job, but with hugely added responsibilities. In order to get tenured, I obviously needed to teach classes well and publish my research. At the same time, I had to keep the fledgling Japanese Language Program running. In addition, I started a family. All of these goals and needs clashed with each other and competed for my time. For example, during my pre-tenure sabbatical leave, I had to search for a tenure-track replacement of the senior faculty member who had left, while I was also caring for my first-born, who seemed to pass through every possible childhood illness that year. I was always pulled in different directions and especially torn between the need to get my research done and the perceived societal pressure to be an attentive mother.

At that time, I did not possess a grand vision for my program because I was not at all prepared to be the chair. My first priority was to get tenured so that I could discuss having a vision from a stable perch. During these early years, it was not clear whether or not the Japanese Language Program was going to continue to exist at my institution. In chairs' meetings, several of my senior colleagues often mused about the fate of my program, rather insensitively, in front of me. These men would casually say things such as, "We should introduce Chinese language classes because China's going to be a great economic power, and then we could get rid of Japanese. We don't need two Asian languages, do we?" I played deaf and focused on my research. I survived, and so did my program.

I received tenure, and I ended up chairing my program for twenty years because nobody else got tenured in that time. During most of those years, the upper administration was either indifferent or hostile towards my program, as well as towards other language and culture departments. Although my circumstances were a bit peculiar, I believe it is unfortunately quite common for college/university administrations in the

United States to not be supportive of Japanese language education. Thus, the following story of my program's survival and eventual triumph may be of interest to you and readers in general.

By the time I got tenured, I had ideas of what the future program should look like. I now had "a vision." The Japanese Language Program at that time was staffed with three full-time faculty (one non-tenure track and two tenured/tenure-track) who taught Japanese language and culture courses. In addition, we had received some funding to start Chinese language courses, and thus housed two part-time faculty who taught Chinese. We offered a Japanese minor but not a major. I wanted the program to become a full-fledged department with three full-time faculty for Chinese and three full-time faculty for Japanese, and to offer a major and minor in both Chinese and Japanese. The chance to take a step towards this ideal came during my most difficult year as the chair, when an administrator I will call Bill (a pseudonym) tried to restructure the Japanese Language Program.

Bill's idea was to take the non-tenure track position from the Japanese side of the program and give it to the Chinese side. The college would provide another full-time Chinese instructor position. Then, this new structure, which would be called the Department of Asian Studies, would have two full-time positions in Chinese and two in Japanese. The department would offer an Asian Studies major in which students would choose either the Chinese or the Japanese track. This plan, which might have looked reasonable to outsiders, did not at all please me, the other members of the program, or the members of the Asian Studies Steering Committee (we already offered an interdisciplinary Asian Studies major). It did not make sense to us to reduce the number of instructors in Japanese when we had received a grant to start Chinese on the basis of the strength of our Japanese curriculum. Also, practically speaking, having only two positions in each language would have meant that the department would offer only language courses (which had healthy enrollments) and no culture courses. The curriculum would be completely diluted, and we would end up with a mediocre Japanese program and a mediocre Chinese program.

Therefore, we proposed an alternative plan in which the new Department of Asian Languages and Cultures would house three faculty in Japanese and two faculty in Chinese (the college had already promised one; another would be funded with a grant) and would offer a Japanese major. I explained the merits of our alternative plan in email messages sent

to all the faculty. My colleagues and I campaigned for our position intensely and extensively. We were able to more or less count on the support of our colleagues in the Humanities, Fine Arts, and Social Sciences, from which the Asian Studies Steering Committee members came. The unknowns were the Natural Sciences and Mathematics departments (Bill was a scientist). I went door to door to visit each one of my science and math colleagues in their offices and to explain our plan. Some of them were surprised to see me in their building. Most of them welcomed me and listened to my arguments with an open mind.

On the day of the all faculty meeting, Bill presented his idea first, followed by me and my two Asian Studies colleagues. That was the first time I took the podium at a faculty meeting. I was nervous but somewhat optimistic. After our presentations, faculty in the audience spoke. One after another expressed support for our position. It was gratifying to hear our colleagues from the Natural Sciences departments speak on our behalf. When the time came for a hand vote, we won by a landslide. This is how my department was established and the Japanese major was launched. A few years later, Bill wrote me an email. He said he had recently seen the high number of Japanese majors in the college's institutional report, that it was a wonderful testament to me and my colleagues that we had built such a successful program, and that he had been wrong to try to push for a reduction in the Japanese language faculty. I must admit that I was thrilled to receive this message, and I appreciated his candor.

Since then, our department has added tenure-track positions to the Chinese side and started offering a Chinese major and minor. It is no longer a fledgling program but a well-established department.

Advice to Future Female Leaders

First and foremost, seek older female mentors and friends on campus. If they are people of color or immigrant/international faculty, all the better. Find the people who will empathize and laugh with you about the unnerving or funny encounters with sexism and racism that you are likely to have. Listen when they share the obstacles they faced, the disappointments they endured, and the strategies they developed. I give this advice emphatically partly because when I was young, I had not one but two chances to develop such relationships, and I failed to do so.

Juanita was a charismatic Spanish instructor from Mexico, who loved literature and art and cared deeply about the underprivileged. She was a well-known figure on campus with many friends in different departments.

She took a liking to me and invited me to dinners and poetry readings. Mahnaz was a fashionable Iranian sociologist who wrote about race, ethnicity, immigration, and family. She was a bit reclusive, but we hit it off and often went to lunch. She was the first and only faculty member on campus who told me about the pain of academic rejection. She said when a journal rejected her article, she was so heartbroken that she could not even look at the article for the longest time. I was in awe of her honesty and willingness to show her vulnerable side. Both of these women were so generous and inviting, but I did not realize the value of their friendship until later. As I was raising young children, I saw them less and less. Neither of them had children, and I foolishly thought that meant we didn't have much in common. As my children grew up, I thought about reconnecting with them, but by then it was too late. First Juanita and then Mahnaz died of cancer right around this time. I still wish I could talk to them sometimes about what it means to be an immigrant faculty or a female senior faculty member, but they are gone. Thus, from my sad and bitter experience, I urge you to reach out to older female colleagues, who are likely to have rich life experiences and could become confidantes and mentors to you.

Second, you should be direct and honest in your communication with colleagues. This is hard to do, especially when you have to tell colleagues that they need to improve their teaching or research. When I was a young chair, I did not dare to do this because it was so uncomfortable to give that type of feedback. Plus, at that time I thought: who am I to tell others what to do? I thus neglected to do an important part of my job, guiding non-tenured faculty. My lack of candor and confidence probably contributed to the instability of the department personnel in those early days (nobody else got tenured in my department for a while). Since then, I try to be completely honest in my communications. I believe being forthright is especially important when you are mentoring junior faculty. A candid conversation in which you tell your colleagues that they need to publish more or that they should teach differently is often not well received. Most people do not like to hear about their limitations and often become defensive, at least initially. They might resent you sometimes. However, most people will eventually come around to appreciating your advice and respecting you as a leader. They will know they can trust you because you always tell the truth. But even if you are not lucky enough to receive your colleagues' gratitude, you still need to give them honest guidance, because that is your job. Try not to shy away from your responsibility.

Lastly, remember to hold your head high. Much of a leader's job is invisible (unfortunately, managing interpersonal conflicts among colleagues or fighting against budget cuts cannot go on your curriculum vitae!). Our job is also often thankless. For example, if you are a department chair, you are expected to pay attention to your department colleagues' wellbeing and ask them to go to lunch with you or invite them to your home, but the invitations tend not to be reciprocated. Thus, you might occasionally feel dejected or lonely, and start to wonder why on earth you are doing all this hard work. During these times of distress, remember that younger women (especially younger Asian women) are often looking up to you, even when they don't show it. Earlier this year, I received an email from a Vietnamese American student who graduated fifteen years ago. She wrote that my style of teaching, advising, and leadership in and out of the classroom had had an impact on her, and still influenced how she tries to present herself in the workplace. I was surprised and thrilled to receive this message. She had never mentioned any of this when she was a student. Comments like these remind me of the importance of serving as a role model for students and junior faculty on campus, as female Asian leaders are still scarce in higher education in the United States. Hence, my advice is to keep your cool and hold your head high.

I wish you very best in your journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Penelope Geng and Junko Mori for reading earlier versions of the essay and giving me encouragement and suggestions. I am also grateful to Laurie Durand for her excellent editorial assistance.

Japanese Language and Literature

Journal of the American Association of Teachers of Japanese

jll.pitt.edu | Vol. 56 | Number 1 | April 2022 | DOI: 10.5195/jll.2022.256

ISSN 1536-7827 (print) 2326-4586 (online)

Becoming a Woman Leader in the United States: Finding a Place to Shine

Natsuki Fukunaga

Introduction

My path to a leadership role as a woman in higher education has been long and circuitous, made possible thanks to the impact of many women pioneers before me and leaders in my own life. Starting with my strong-willed mother, my first English teacher in Kagoshima, my former boss who taught me “American English,” my Australian professor at college, my advisor in graduate school in the United States, and the department chair at the time of my job interview were all women. One of the most effective mechanisms of ensuring a bright future for women in higher education is for women to mentor each other to pursue the degrees and qualifications necessary to pick up the leadership torch and bring it into the next generation.

In this essay, I am going to explore how I came to earn a Ph. D. degree and share my experiences as an Asian woman in the US in leadership positions, including director of a Japanese-language program, chair of the Department of Modern Languages (MDL), and mentor for a Japanese outreach coordinator. With COVID-19 and the continuously changing landscape of higher education, we are facing many unanticipated challenges, yet with these challenges also have come new opportunities for Asian women as leaders in academia, language teaching, and in their respective communities.

Formative Years in Kagoshima

I grew up in Kagoshima, Japan, dreaming about living and working outside Japan. Kagoshima is a beautiful place known for fantastic food, *onsen* (natural hot springs), and Mt. Sakurajima, an active volcano. Unfortunately, Kagoshima is also infamous for the prevalence of a *danson-johi* ideology (respect for the male, contempt for the female). In



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middle school, the class president was automatically a male student, while the vice president was a female student unless someone insisted otherwise. When family members gathered at my grandparents' house, women usually stayed in the kitchen cooking and serving food while the men sat, talked, ate, and drank. My brother was not expected to do much of the house chores while my sister and I were supposed to keep the house clean, wash dishes, fold laundry, cook and serve food. I felt that gender inequality was part of my daily life.

One day, my kindergarten teacher introduced some English words with flashcards in class, unaware that this would truly change the course of my life. I went home and shared what I had learned with my mother. "This is amazing. I can communicate with people in different countries if I know how to speak English!" My mother found my enthusiasm remarkable and found English lessons with a young woman who spent some time in the United States. I entered the world of learning English as a five-year-old girl.

I continued English lessons on and off, and English became my hobby in a way. I would try to listen to English lessons on the radio in the morning, identify places on my globe that I wanted to travel to, listen to The Beatles, watch some of my favorite films in English multiple times to pick up phrases wherever I could. By the time I was in high school, I had set my mind on becoming a Japanese teacher outside of Japan since I wanted to use English and live somewhere else in the world. I started taking English conversation lessons with my future boss. Deborah was from Virginia and ran a small English conversation school with her Japanese husband. She looked, talked and acted differently from any other women I had met. She also challenged us when we tried to stay quiet during classes. She became my ideal image of a strong woman with several pierced earrings.

The fastest and cheapest way to achieve my goal was to study at a local women's two-year college and become fluent in English. Attending a women-only college, I felt free from expected gender roles for the first time living in Kagoshima. All the classes were taught in English by teachers from Australia, the United States, Japan, England, and New Zealand. The students participated in a six-week homestay program in Australia at the end of the language pledge experience. I enjoyed my time at my host family's home in Perth, Australia, especially when I observed and assisted Japanese classes.

After returning, I sought ways to work in Australia, but I did not have enough money or connections, so I got a job in Kagoshima and saved up

money. After working as an OL (office lady) in a small company for a few months, I received a phone call from a former professor in my college about an opportunity to be an assistant Japanese teacher in Ipswich, Queensland, Australia. My parents encouraged me to take the chance since it was apparent that I was not enjoying my current job. The female workers were expected to come thirty minutes earlier than men to clean and serve tea. By the time I resigned from this full-time job, I had severe stomach ulcers due to stress. I returned to Australia and served as an assistant teacher of three Australian female teachers in Japanese classes in the fifth to twelfth grades.

I get nostalgic thinking about how inconvenient (yet fruitful) life was without the Internet, computers, and smartphones. I was the only Japanese person in the small town, and I depended on others to get by. When we had an open day event at school, I served Japanese matcha tea in the *sadō* style. I had only taken a few lessons and hoped that nobody knew the proper manners of the traditional tea ceremony. I was very nervous when a Japanese family showed up out of nowhere. Fortunately, they kindly overlooked my amateurism and thanked me for sharing Japanese culture with their community. This experience made me realize that simply being Japanese is not enough to teach the Japanese language and culture. After returning to Japan, I started taking *sadō* tea lessons and re-educating myself in Japanese cultural practices.

I hoped to go back to college to earn a four-year degree and teaching license, but my parents were not happy with the idea of bearing the financial burden of tuition since I was the youngest in the family. Luckily, my former English teacher, Deborah, offered me a job to teach children English conversation and do some office work. I commuted from my parents' house and saved every penny while studying and teaching English simultaneously. During the pre-Internet era, I completed my undergraduate degree via *tsūshin kyōiku* (traditional distance learning) via mail at Nihon University and earned an English teaching license at the same time.

Thanks to a generous scholarship from Kagoshima Ikuei Zaidan, I came to Georgia to earn my master's degree in teaching English as a second language. I was fascinated with all the students who began learning Japanese because of their interest in pop culture, especially anime and games. As the result of my interest, I conducted a qualitative interview study as a master's thesis. Initially, I intended to complete a master's degree in two years and become an instructor of Japanese. However, my

advisor, Dr. Betsy Rymes, suggested earning a Ph. D. degree by continuing my research on language learners' identity, motivation, and popular culture, which would create more opportunities, including applying for tenure-track positions. My father said "Why? What for? Just come home," but my mother was supportive of the idea. Thanks to the assistance of Dr. Rymes and others, I was able to obtain a graduate teaching assistantship that allowed me to teach Japanese as a graduate student with complete tuition remission for six years. During my studies, my advisor and other teachers who recognized my efforts in teaching and research offered encouragement. While my new life in the United States freed me from the restraints of gender discrimination and mistreatment in Japan, I simultaneously became more conscious of racial discrimination in the Deep South.

Becoming a Woman Leader in the United States

What does a Ph. D. do to an educator? It opens up many opportunities in the United States. The idea of "having choices" as a racial and gender minority in the United States was one of the biggest reasons I endured the long struggle of being a broke and overworked Ph. D. student. Once I finished writing my dissertation, I accepted a tenure-track position as an assistant professor of Japanese and the coordinator of the Japanese program at Marshall University. My primary duty was to establish a new program with a minor and a major in Japanese in West Virginia. With my appreciation for all the non-Japanese teachers and friends whom I met in Kagoshima, I chose to come to a small city with the mission of sharing my joy for learning foreign languages.

Department Politics

During the first three years, I was busy creating new classes, devising the curriculum, advising all Japanese students, working with graduate teaching assistants who taught Japanese with me every semester, and learning how to get by in higher education. I did not miss a day of work and dedicated myself to completing the never-ending tasks. One day, a faculty member came to my office and abruptly said, "Not everyone is happy to have a Japanese professor here. I know you are working hard, but you are going to burn out pretty soon, so watch out." I was thankful that he was honest with me, but I was genuinely shocked and at a loss for words. I realized I had entered the realm of academic department politics.

In the Department of Modern Languages (MDL), there have been French, German, and Spanish majors and two-year language sequences of Arabic, Chinese, Italian, and Japanese for several years before I started working. Due to high demand, a Japanese major was added in 2007, one year after I joined the department, while Arabic, Chinese, Italian were discontinued due to budget constraints and a lack of qualified instructors. Adding a new tenure-track line resulted from taking a position from other language programs, which created tension and rivalries within the department. Showing positive results was the only way to prove that adding a Japanese major was the right decision. Within five years, the number of Japanese majors successfully reached the highest in our department.

To promote the Japanese program, it was necessary to increase Japan-related events and cultural learning opportunities on campus and local communities in West Virginia and increase library resources. To do so, I applied for several grants. The successful acquisition of external funding and the execution of events were made possible by relentless communication and collaboration with Marshall University administrators, the Japan Foundation, the Consulate General of Japan of New York, West Virginia Department of Education, K-12 public schools and libraries, and Japanese business communities such as Toyota in West Virginia. What has been particularly successful is the Japanese outreach coordinator position, which has been sustained for more than a decade. The Laurasian Institute offers a Japan Outreach Initiative (JOI) program which sends a cultural coordinator from Japan to a U. S. host site for two years. We had the first on-campus JOI coordinator in 2010 and have continued to secure a coordinator in the surrounding area for the next ten years. Eventually, Marshall University was able to establish its own Japanese outreach coordinator position.

“Live to Work” or “Work to Live”

Soon into my appointment, the department chair stopped me in the hallway, asking, “Are you okay? You look pale.” I had severe pain in my lower abdomen, but I said, “My stomach is bugging me, but I am fine.” She insisted that I see a doctor right away, so I had to leave. The doctor told me I would have to be hospitalized and have surgery that day. Later that day, I had an emergency surgery to remove an ectopic pregnancy. My surgery turned out fine, but it forced me to take a hard look at my life. This experience taught me how to balance my desire to achieve with my

nascent desires to have a life of my own. My husband would frequently offer tough-love advice, saying, “Do you live to work or work to live?” “Nobody says ‘I wish I would’ve worked more’ on their deathbed,” and “Don’t be a workaholic.” Admittedly, it took the birth of our two daughters for me to truly take his words seriously. I am now aware that I cannot do everything, so I must keep my priorities straight. Thankfully, I love my work and my family. With many friends and my family’s help, we have survived as a double-income family sharing all the duties fifty percent during our children’s early childhood.

Art of Adapting Communication and Leadership Style

In 2018, I was elected to serve as the chair of MDL after our former department chair retired. Many faculty members, including myself, were not interested in serving as department chair and taking up that leadership role. While there are advantages to being able to make decisions and influence policy, it is challenging to navigate relations with opinionated professors from diverse backgrounds and schools of thought, each with conflicting goals. While I could focus more on my own aspirations in the past, in a leadership role I have to balance the divergent aspirations of many with those of the institution. Historically, there have been tensions between European and Latin American faculty members, and our current members are more diverse than ever, hailing from Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Poland, Puerto Rico, Spain, Russia, and the continental United States. I am the only faculty member from Asia, which brings with it its own series of challenges in obtaining mutual understanding despite differences in communication styles.

At first, I made conscious efforts to send detailed emails, avoiding confusion and misunderstanding. To my surprise, while some responded with “Thank you for taking the time to write this out,” others would reply, “Too long. I don’t feel like reading this.” A separate challenge was dealing with how faculty members differed widely in their average expected response times. Over the weekend, some do not check emails while others reply and expect immediate responses. Setting a shared work ethic is an essential yet incredibly challenging task unique to leadership roles.

Making final, consequential decisions was a challenge for me, in part because I have tried to listen to everyone and come up with the best solution. Saying “no” was also challenging since I prefer avoiding conflicts. When I think about past exchanges of emails and communication as a chair of MDL, there are times I should have talked with individual

faculty members on the phone or in-person instead of solely depending on email exchanges during the COVID-19 pandemic. I have realized that being a leader requires problem-solving strategies and the ability to adapt one's communication and leadership style to the situation as it changes.

Technology

Computer and technology skills are one of the unwritten qualifications as a leader in the post-COVID-19 society. I do not consider myself the most tech-savvy person, but to my surprise I found myself sharing tips on technology with other faculty members. Some displayed “tech anxiety,” but university leadership and I helped them to overcome these challenges with multiple workshops, certifications, virtual meetings, and emails. We converted all the classes into an online/virtual format, and thanks to the tremendous effort of each faculty member and on-campus technology service personnel, and the patience and diligence of our students, we were able to provide choices between different delivery modes during the pandemic to meet students' needs.

This technology adaptation has, unfortunately, brought back health issues. I identified unhealthy habits, like constantly having my smartphone and checking emails 24/7. I ended up suffering from Heberden's nodes with hardened joints on my fingers because of intense keyboard and smartphone use. Many middle-aged women worldwide suffer from different types of premenopausal and menopausal symptoms, including physical and mental issues. They are part of aging that we cannot ignore as working women. This topic has also become a bonding opportunity for our female faculty members in MDL. As a woman in a leadership role, I can openly discuss women's health issues and exchange helpful information.

Since the beginning of COVID-19, we have spent long hours using technology at work and at home. Our daughters spend much time with classwork on their school iPad, and watch YouTube on their phones. As a family, we recently started doing meditations at night twice a week. It encourages us to wind down and unplug ourselves from technology—a small effort for a better work-life balance.

Conclusion: Finding a Place to Shine

A few years after the bubble economy burst in the early 1990s in Japan, second baby-boomers entered the job market with fewer opportunities. Many young Japanese felt hopeless after enduring extremely competitive

entrance exams, *ijime* (bullying), and rising suicide rates. I tried to take the expected role of a responsible full-time worker, *shakaijin*, but I was never comfortable doing so. I made many mistakes in my life, but I was determined to follow my future vision and I did not fail to do so. Nobody told me to study English or made me go to graduate school, but I chose my path. When I encounter difficulties, I tell myself, “I decided to be here and do this job. If I cannot tolerate it, I can pick up everything and leave anytime.” This feeling of not being bound to any one place and having many choices open to me helps me stay afloat when I feel down.

The field of foreign language education in the United States is one area in which women are well-represented. Many department chairs are women, including the last two chairs in my current department, making it undoubtedly easier to picture a woman as a leader compared to a similar position in Japan. However, Asian women leaders are a minority since most women leaders are white. It is my hope to encourage future Asian leaders by sharing our stories and experiences.

There are different pathways for success to be a foreign language educator in the United States. If you wish to teach in K–12 settings, you need to earn an undergraduate degree in education. If you have a master’s degree, you can teach in K–12 and colleges. Earning a Ph. D. will also expand the choices of teaching and taking a leadership role in K–12, community colleges, and universities. I strongly recommend taking advantage of the graduate assistantship (GA/TA) system in higher education in the United States since earning a graduate degree can be more affordable and more accessible than earning an undergraduate degree as an international student. As a graduate student, you have the freedom to focus on what you want to study while also gaining needed experience teaching. I realized later in my life that qualifications and education cannot be taken away from you whether you are poor, a woman, or a non-native English speaker. As I shared in this essay, I was a poor international graduate student full of ideas and determination. I appreciate all the hardships I encountered since I grew personally and professionally from them. As I have been the benefactor of assistance from many before me, I strive to provide an example for women in the coming generation of leaders in academia.

Japanese Language and Literature

Journal of the American Association of Teachers of Japanese

jll.pitt.edu | Vol. 56 | Number 1 | April 2022 | DOI: 10.5195/jll.2022.254

ISSN 1536-7827 (print) 2326-4586 (online)

Learning to Lead

Kiri Lee

I am a professor of Japanese in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures (MLL) at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania. I was the director of the Asian Studies Program from 2012 to 2021, and I was the MLL department chair from 2015 to 2021. I came to Lehigh to take a non-tenure track position in the mid-1990s when I was still ABD, and I took a meandering path to get to where I am now. It is my hope that through my positionality as a foreign-born female of color in American higher education, my essay will give some perspective to young female Asian academicians who are or will be in leadership positions.

Where I Began

After I finished college in Japan, I came to the United States to study at a graduate school. At the time, I was not planning to have an academic career. I just wanted to get out of Japan, see the world, and become fluent in English. My desire to go beyond Japan had a lot to do with my background. I was born in Osaka to a Japanese mother and a *Zainichi* Korean father.

My mother was very supportive when it came to my education. In fact, she really encouraged me to find a career that would be transferable internationally. In a way, her reasons were very ironic: she thought I was not marriage material because of my half *Zainichi* Korean background and my bookishness. I don't think she imagined I would find a partner outside of Japan, either. My father spoke English pretty well. He once told me that his English teacher told his students they should know their enemy through learning English. It was during the Pacific War, and English classes were banned in most schools in Japan. So, this was very unusual. After the war, my father did not take over his family business as he was expected to do as the first-born son. Instead, he became a jazz musician. He had a jazz band and performed on the US bases in Japan during the US occupation. I had a chance to talk with his musician friends when I was in college. They



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told me they got more gigs than other bands because my father spoke English. He thought knowing English was crucial in the postwar world. He sent me to a private elementary school where they taught English from the second grade. My parents had no objections to my coming to the United States to study after I graduated from college with a degree in English linguistics.

The first master's degree I received was a professional degree in cross-cultural communication. Somewhere in my mind, I wanted to be involved in supporting young people who were caught in a multicultural situation, specifically *kikokushijo* "returnees." Actually, about twenty years ago, I returned to my passion for supporting bi/multilingual young people, and Japanese heritage language education became another field of my research. After my first master's degree, I taught the Japanese language for several years at the college level. During that time, I met academics who encouraged me to go on to a doctoral program in linguistics.

I cannot talk about my life in the United States without mentioning the people who had faith in me at crucial moments. To name just a few: my partner in life; my mentors at Harvard graduate school, Professors Susumu Kuno and the late Tazuko Monane; and at Lehigh, the chair who hired me, the Japanese-American provost when I received tenure, and the first openly gay dean, who saw something in me and appointed me to leadership positions. Without their support, I could not have accomplished what I did. I feel extremely fortunate. At the same time, there were numerous episodes where I felt that I was excluded and stereotyped. Some of them were simply based on gender, but some were more specifically because of my status as foreign-born, female, and Asian faculty.

What I Encountered in My Workplace

At Lehigh, all the languages are taught in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, and the Japanese language was the last addition to a very Eurocentric department. When I joined, I was the first Asian non-tenure-track full-time faculty member. I am not certain, but when my position became tenure-track later on, I may even have been the first female Asian to hold a tenure-track position in the humanities there. As is probably characteristic of language departments, my department has been predominantly occupied by female faculty. However, culturally and racially insensitive comments come from people regardless of their gender. While it is human nature to be threatened by the "unknown," it is not excusable to be insensitive or rude to them/us.

Once when I was cleaning up loose tea in my tea pot, for example, a white female professor told me to make sure I cleaned up the sink because “it looks disgusting.” In addition, I was often profiled because of my Japanese accent. One time I called HR for some benefit clarification. When a staff member answered the phone, I hesitated a bit. Immediately after they recognized that I spoke English with an accent, they said, “You are an adjunct, and a non-US citizen.” When I told them, “No. I am an assistant professor and a US citizen,” they just said, “Oh.”

Sometimes people don’t realize they have unconscious biases. One of the associate deans said to my Japanese colleague and me, “I want to know your culture.” I am certain they meant well, but the comment made it clear to me that language and culture courses were not taken seriously as academic subjects. We are not teaching “our culture” or “our language.” In fact, there are several faculty members in the department who are not “native” speakers of the target languages.

I also encountered many instances of male dominance. Here is a classic example. I met with a curriculum committee as chair to present our department’s proposal for reinstating language requirements for undergraduate students. My associate chair, who was older than me, non-Asian, and male, accompanied me. Throughout the meeting, senior male members of the committee dominated the conversation, and whenever they had questions, they directed them to the associate chair, not to me.

How I Responded to Challenges in My Leadership Roles

I became the director of the Asian Studies Program in Fall 2012, and that was my first leadership position at Lehigh. I held that position for nine years. I should also mention that I was the first Asian person to be the director. The Asian Studies Program was a very comfortable and safe place for me. It is an interdisciplinary program that transcends departmental boundaries, with faculty members from the Departments of International Relations, Religion Studies, Sociology, Music, and Modern Languages and Literatures. We are all united in promoting Asian Studies. As director, I attempted to foster a safe space for those who are interested in and have connections to Asia on campus. We already had a major and minor in Asian studies, but its requirements consisted of mostly language (Chinese or Japanese) courses. The Chinese major was established around 2010, and the Japanese major in 2016. Before that, students who would have majored in Chinese or Japanese otherwise only had the option of majoring in Asian Studies. So, I initiated changes in the requirements for

the Asian Studies major so that it would be more of an “area studies” major, distinct from the language majors.

While I was serving as director of the Asian Studies Program, I concurrently served as chair for my department from 2015 to 2021. This was a lot harder than being the director of the Asian Studies Program. The MLL department offers Spanish, French, German, Russian, Chinese, and Japanese. These languages each have majors and minors. In addition, we offer Arabic and Hebrew language courses. Every year we have about 1,200 students studying languages in our department, and half of them are usually taking Spanish. That means the Spanish program constitutes about half of the department, and the five other language programs constitute the rest. As you may all know, enrollment in language courses has been declining in the past decade, especially in French, German, and Russian, and that trend has led to insecurity in some language programs.

Before I became the chair, several conflicts arose between the European and non-European language lines. For example, the first time I had a chance to request a second tenure-track Japanese position, there also happened to be a sudden retirement in one of the European language programs. The chair at the time was from the same language program, and the dean gave us one position and asked the chair to decide which language program it should go to. At that time, the Japanese program had much better enrollment numbers and I was the only full-time faculty member, while the other program had three full-time faculty members and declining enrollment numbers. However, the chair decided to fill the position in her own language, and most of the faculty in European languages went along with the decision, despite strong protest from the faculty in non-European languages asking for more transparency. After that incident, the department was very dysfunctional for several years.

There was another chair, a professor of Spanish, who served for one term (three years) before I took the position. Under his calm management style, our department had time to heal. I was able to work with him and successfully argued for a tenure-track position in Japanese. In fact, he was the one who strongly recommended me to the dean to be the next chair.

When I started my chairship in 2015, I felt the department was ready to be active again. I wanted to create a departmental culture in which everything we did in our department was everyone’s business. I created a five-year strategic plan so that everyone was on the same page, especially about hiring. I filled all the positions that had been left vacant by retirement or resignation. I successfully added two new full-time

positions: one tenure-track position in German and one non-tenure track position in Japanese. Whenever we asked for any position, I thoroughly prepared by assembling data to justify the request and to maintain transparency. The two new faculty members hired in Spanish and German during my chairship told me several times that, unlike modern languages departments they knew at other institutions, in our department, “the faculty members are talking to one another!”—and they gave me the credit for that.

I also tried to foster equality among the faculty members regardless of their rank. I hosted a social gathering at the beginning of each academic year to welcome not only new full-time faculty members, but also adjunct faculty. In a language department, it is often the case that adjunct faculty members do much of the heavy lifting, and we should never dismiss their contributions.

Of course, there are some colleagues with whom one would rather not have any contact if it were possible to avoid. But if you are the chair, that is not an option. That was probably the most difficult thing I had to overcome. There was a male colleague who easily got emotional and tended to lash out. Every time I had to communicate with him as chair, I took a deep breath and reminded myself not to be reactive. I also imagined and prepared for all the possible reactions I might get from him before meeting with him. When he got loud and started shouting, I would say to him, “I cannot talk to you if you raise your voice.” This sometimes worked, but other times, he just stormed out of my office. When such things happen, don’t take it personally! And when it gets out of hand, don’t hesitate to get help. I eventually ended up involving the dean to deal with this colleague’s unprofessional behavior.

Interestingly, the first tenure case I oversaw as chair was for the faculty member who had been hired for the European language instead of for Japanese several years before (as I mentioned earlier). Although the file left our department with full endorsement, it was negatively reviewed at the dean’s level. The biggest problem the promotion committee had was that most of the candidate’s publications were written in a language other than English. Although the candidate had published in highly reputable venues in their field, the committee did not see the value of academia outside of the Anglophone world. In our department, we all write in the languages of our research fields as well as in English, and the negative review felt like an insult to the integrity of all of the faculty in the department. Everyone in our department felt the same. I mobilized all the

senior faculty members in our department and wrote a strong response letter. I requested meetings with the dean and the provost, and all of my senior colleagues were present at the meetings. I had to admit that at the beginning of the review process, I really had to convince myself to set aside my mixed feelings towards this position, and to focus on advocating for the candidate. After all went well, the previous chair who had hired this person thanked me for my professionalism.

Another episode that required a lot of patience was when I worked with the Global Studies Program to establish a joint major in Global Studies and MLL. Their own major only required an intermediate level of language proficiency, but the proposed joint major would require more advanced language proficiency. Because Lehigh does not have language requirements, we have to grab any opportunity to advance language studies. It took me three semesters of negotiation among our department faculty to reach consensus because of strong opposition from the Spanish faculty members. Although they were half of the department in many respects, they were worried that the new joint major would steal minors from Spanish. The faculty in the Global Studies Program became a bit impatient, but I wanted to have a proposal that everyone in our department was happy with. In the end, it was voted on in a general faculty meeting, and now students can choose the MLL-Global Studies major.

What I Have Learned

During the six years of my chairship, I learned a lot about myself and being a leader. It was very stressful and kept me on my toes all the time. However, I feel that I have grown as a human because of these experiences. Here are the mottos I have developed for myself, which may be useful to others in any leadership position. And of course, there are many things you will learn on the spot.

- Be rational, not reactionary: when you receive comments or encounter behaviors that elicit strong feelings, take a deep breath and focus on what you want to accomplish. If it can wait, sleep on it.
- Be transparent: you have to be able to account for all of your actions.
- Be fair: don't treat anybody differently based on the position they hold.
- Be consistent: don't make any exception that you cannot defend.
- Be patient: forcing somebody to do something never leads to a good outcome. Work with them to find a way.
- Get help: when you exhaust your options for solutions, don't hesitate to get help.

During my longer than a quarter century career at Lehigh, I have seen positive changes in academia. Younger faculty members have more sophisticated and nuanced ways of looking at the world. They grew up with people who are racially, ethnically, and culturally different from themselves. They engage in more interdisciplinary research. I see more diversity on campus now, both visible and invisible. There is even a 2021 television show, “The Chair,” with Sandra Oh playing the role of the first female Asian chair in an English department! We just have to be on the watch and support the leaders who embrace diversity and foster dialogue among us. I have high hopes for young female Asian academics.

Japanese Language and Literature

Journal of the American Association of Teachers of Japanese

jll.pitt.edu | Vol. 56 | Number 1 | April 2022 | DOI: 10.5195/jll.2022.259

ISSN 1536-7827 (print) 2326-4586 (online)

Find Your Role Model

Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase

I teach Japanese language and literature at Vassar College, located in New York State. My specialization is Japanese literature with a special focus on girls' magazine culture and literature. My research interests have recently expanded to *shōjo* manga, and I am currently working on a research project that examines women's history and culture viewed through manga. When I was invited to contribute an essay to this special section, I was unsure if I was a suitable person to write about female leadership, as I do not consider myself a typical leader type. I am timid and a worrywart. However, I read a research article which explains that the "superstar role model" is not always positive; it can pressure people and affect their self-esteem (Hoyt and Simon 2011: 154). My story is full of struggles. However, I would like to share two pieces of advice with readers: (1) Find your mentors and learn from them and (2) Be critical of Japan's colonial past. I would be happy if the readers could take away something from my story.

Find Your Mentors and Learn from Them

I was born in Tokyo in the late 1960s and grew up in Osaka. I went to a local girls' high school and entered a women's college affiliated with the high school. I was a typical *joshidaisei* (female college student) who dreamed about becoming fluent in English. In the late 1980s, Japan was enjoying the "bubble economy." There was a type of TV drama called "trendy drama," in which stylish career women appeared as central characters; they spoke good English, had business careers, and, of course, were involved in romantic relationships. I yearned for the world of trendy drama. In fashion magazines, the word *ryūgaku* (study abroad) was ubiquitous. Without deep consideration about my future plans, I majored in British and American literature at college simply because I wanted to be able to speak English.



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During my junior year, I studied in the United States. The school that I chose was located in a town called Alliance, Ohio. I loved the small-town atmosphere and people's hospitality there. However, I found classes difficult. My English level was not high enough to take college-level courses. I thus always felt inferior and also found myself an outsider. While I was there, I read *Winesburg, Ohio* by Sherwood Anderson (1919), the early twentieth-century novelist. This book was one of the first full-length English language books I read in the original language, and I enjoyed reading it. *Winesburg, Ohio* consists of short stories about the residents of a small town. All the characters are dealing with trauma from past experiences, suffer from inferiority complexes, and have difficulty in communicating with others. They are nevertheless likable. Somehow, the characters were relatable to me and comforted me. After I returned to Japan, I purchased a collection of Anderson literature to read his other works.

In the early 1990s, I decided to pursue the study of American literature. I chose Illinois State University, where an expert on Anderson, Professor Lewis White, was teaching. By then, I could read and write fairly well but struggled with understanding lectures and expressing my opinions in class. I hated discussion-based classes because I could not participate. On the other hand, I enjoyed giving presentations and was good at it. It was around that time that I became interested in becoming a teacher in higher education.

For the Ph. D. program, I chose Purdue University in Indiana. I belonged to the Comparative Literature Program. Initially, I was going to study Sherwood Anderson and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke from a comparative perspective. However, my research focus shifted in an unpredictable way: I read Yoshiya Nobuko's short story "Suzuran" (Lily of the valley, 1916) in one of the classes I took. Immediately I fell in love with this piece. It is a story about a schoolgirl who witnesses a mysterious Italian girl playing piano at night. The story has no climax but is beautifully written in ornate language peppered with western imagery. I was surprised to find that such an easily enjoyable piece could be a subject of study. For my Ph. D. dissertation, I compared Yoshiya Nobuko with Louisa May Alcott, the author of *Little Women* (known in Japan by its translated title *Wakakusa monogatari*). They share many similarities; not only did they both write stories for young girls but they both were also feminists. They wove their feminist messages into their works. My journey through girls' literary studies had, thus, started.

I received a two-year research scholarship from Purdue, which released me from my teaching assistantship. I was away from school and lived in Chicago with my husband, whom I married around that time. I received (and continue to receive) so much support from him. He proofread my dissertation and pointed out logical flaws, and we read it over and over to make a final polish-up together. Writing a dissertation is a lonely and difficult process for anyone (I felt that it would never end). But constant effort makes a big difference. It is important to make progress—even if each step is small.

In 2003, Japanese popular culture was thriving. My research topic—girls' literature and also *shōjo* manga—was favorably viewed in academia. Luckily, I found a job at Vassar College and we moved to Poughkeepsie, New York. It is conventional for faculty members in Japanese programs at liberal arts colleges to teach language and literature/culture courses. My experience of working as a teaching assistant in Japanese language and literature at Purdue was a significant advantage. The year after I came to Vassar, the Chinese and Japanese department became independent from the Asian Studies Program. I was fortunate to be involved in many initiatives to help grow the Japanese program. My first mission was to look for exchange schools in Japan. My senior colleague, Professor Peipei Qiu (specialist in premodern literature and known for her study of Chinese comfort women) and I visited Japan together, and ultimately Ochanomizu University and Ritsumeikan University became our partner schools. Since then, we have had close institutional partnerships, especially with Ochanomizu: we held many collaborative projects, including a two-month summer Japanese language program at the Ochanomizu campus (which was unfortunately discontinued in 2010), Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) projects, the annual international students' forum, researcher exchanges, and so on. When we had our summer program, my colleague Yuko Matsubara and I took twenty students to Ochanomizu every year and stayed there as directors. I was still un-tenured at that time, so some senior faculty members in other departments/programs told me that I should focus on research. However, as a Japanese language teacher, I felt that this program was an indispensable opportunity for my students. So, I was determined to commit myself to the director's role. In the end, the program was successful, flourished, and continued for four years until the world financial crisis occurred.

The four summers that I spent in Japan brought me valuable connections and friendships. I am, in particular, grateful to the kindness of Professor Kan Satoko, professor of Japanese literature at Ochanomizu University. Professor Kan's research interest was very similar to mine. She shared information that I could not obtain in the United States. She gave me many opportunities to write essays and articles and to present my research. Regrettably, she passed away in 2011. Professor Kan was and still is my role model. She was active in interacting with researchers overseas and cared for students and junior faculty members. I am sure that I am not the only one who admired her and wanted to become like her. My work ethic and ideas about leadership come from Professor Kan.

Thanks to many friends and colleagues' support, I managed to get tenure in 2010. Since then, I have been involved in college committee work, including serving as the department chair. However, I often feel nervous around people and constantly wonder if I am fitting in and not disappointing others. Lack of confidence has always plagued me. One of the major reasons for my lack of confidence is the fact that I am a non-native speaker. Research shows that a "clear marker that draws a line between white and non-white, citizens and immigrants, competency and non-competency, and mainstream and periphery" is attributed to one's accent in English (Hoyt and Simon 2011: 169). The number of non-native Asian women leaders in the arena of American higher education is small. My colleague, Peipei Qiu is one of a few Asian female leaders on campus. I feel fortunate to be able to work with her and, more importantly, learn from her. I always tell myself that as long as I do what she does, nothing will go wrong. Of course, mere copying is not always good, but we can grow only through learning from others. You can eventually cultivate your own style. It is, therefore, important to find a role model near you from whom you can learn.

Although I have always suffered from insecurity, lately I feel myself slowly overcoming it. Fifteen years after I completed my dissertation, I finally published a book, *Age of Shōjo: The Emergence, Evolution, and Power of Japanese Girls' Magazine Fiction* (SUNY Press 2019). This is a diachronic study of girls' magazine culture, examining the birth of *shōjo shōsetsu* (girls' stories) and following the development of this genre. I discuss women writers' resistance against male-centered society and female gender norms presented via the voices of girl characters. There were always stereotypes associated with girls' story writers—their stories are viewed as immature and only for children—but they as feminists

fought against male critics who trivialized them by pulling their female readers to their side as their allies.

Some people may consider that girls' magazine stories are commercial products and, therefore, their readers are passive consumers. However, the authors constantly encouraged readers and taught them to believe in their potential. I am one of the readers who grew up reading girls' stories and was empowered by them. Encouragement by the female writers—sometimes optimistic and sometimes unrealistic—is a manifestation of feminism. I believe in the positive energy and power residing in girls' culture.

After I completed this book, I arrived at one realization: I do not have to be constantly worried about people's opinions about me, but I should secure my own community in which I feel comfortable. My job now is to offer a healthy and non-hostile academic space where young scholars can feel safe, encouraged, and motivated, just like my role models have always done for me.

Be Critical of Japan's Colonial Past

Since the fall of 2021, I have been serving as the director of the Asian Studies Program at Vassar College. Before I came to Vassar, I did not have many opportunities to interact with those who are in the Asian Studies field because I always belonged to the Foreign Language Department, English Department, and Comparative Literature Program. After coming to Vassar, I was suddenly surrounded by colleagues and faculty members who specialize in East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia. Lately, I feel a strong need to learn more about Asia and think about myself as an Asian.

An incident made me realize how indifferent I had been to Japan's colonial history and its residue embedded in today's culture. When I became in charge of the fourth-year Japanese-language course, I introduced material about Yamakawa Sutematsu, one of the five girls who came to the United States as *ryūgakusei* (study abroad students) in 1872; Sutematsu studied at Vassar. Upon graduation, she returned to Japan, helped Tsuda Umeko, a graduate of Bryn Mawr College, establish her English school, raised funds to establish a nursing school, and also got married to Ōyama Iwao, a general in the army. As teaching material, I used an episode of a TV show called *Rekishi hiwa historia* which focused on Sutematsu. Her support of her husband during the Russo-Japanese war (1904–1905) is described thus:

In 1904, the Russo-Japanese war broke out.... When Ōyama Iwao was sent to continental China as the supreme commander of the Japanese army forces, his wife, Sutematsu, took it upon herself to support the Japanese war effort (*koko de katsuyaku shita no ga Sutematsu desu*). She advocated for Japanese interests abroad. Sutematsu actively sought media coverage using her position as the wife of an army commander and her English language skills, appearing in media worldwide to promote international support and understanding for Japan.... As a result, the Japanese were able to end the war as victors (*kono kekka Nihon no shōri to iu katachi de sensō o oeru koto ga dekita no desu*). (Ōyama Sutematsu 2012)

Sutematsu's contribution is glorified, which is evident from the terms that are used, *katsuyaku* (contribution) and *shōri* (victory). But one Chinese student in my class pointed out: Yamakawa's *katsuyaku* is *katan* (to be accomplice) for the invasion of the Chinese continent. Indeed, the Russo-Japan war took place in Manchuria, northern China (Ōyama Iwao served as a commander in the Sino-Japanese war [1894-1895] as well and captured Port Arthur). After the war in 1905, Korea was made a Japanese protectorate. "The Russo-Japan war" and the word "invasion" for the first time were linked in my mind.

Because of the influence of popular historical novels, films, and TV dramas, Meiji figures, including those involved in wars, are often portrayed as brave and respectable hard workers who devoted themselves to the modernization of Japan. However, it is dangerous that this popularized and dramatized world is taken as truth without broader colonial historical context. The positive portrayals of the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo Japanese War in NHK's 2009–2011 TV drama *Clouds above the Slope* (*Saka no ue no kumo*), which is based on Shiba Ryōtarō's novel, for instance, have been criticized (Daigo 2010). These views toward the Meiji era parallel the national rhetoric of the government (Gluck 2020: 11). Abe Shinzō's 2018 New Year's Day address compared the gravity of Japan's economic crisis today with conditions in the Meiji era when Japan faced an increase of foreign power in the region and asserted that, just as the Meiji people built a modern nation in response to their problem, Japanese citizens should face this new situation with "a sense of urgency" (Abe 2018) and strive to rebuild the nation. The wars of the Meiji era were legitimized and transformed into positive historical memories, where the idea of Japan as colonizer is absent. Historian Keiichi Fujiwara (2006) states: "War memories...have been highly selective and significantly different from neighboring Asian countries. The disparate historical

memory has become an area of contention” (145). Today, it is crucial to examine the history of your own country in context and be the most critical person of Japan’s colonial history. This might sound obvious, but we should be aware of the fact that there are still many issues that have not been resolved since the war. Indifference to and ignorance of our own country’s past is disrespectful to others. Now I often incorporate readings on Japan’s colonial history into my language class.

I often ponder why teaching a language is important. I teach Japanese not because I want to teach Japanese culture or to increase the number of “fans of Japan” but because I want students to understand the importance of diversity and respect others’ opinions. In upper-level language classes, I treat Japanese as “a lingua franca”: Just like English, Japanese can be a common linguistic means through which people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds can communicate and exchange opinions. The annual student forum, part of the COIL project, initiated by Professor Moriyama Shin (Ochanomizu University), is held based on this belief (Moriyama 2021: 4). The participating students, using English and/or Japanese, collaboratively research pressing global issues (environmental, climate, racial, and geopolitical issues, for example) and discuss how they can work together to create a better future. Through this experience, I have learned how important it is for us to develop cultural sensitivity and an understanding of other cultures, which are essential tools for conducting harmonious yet robust global communication.

Final Remarks

The Asian Studies program at Vassar has over thirty years of history and over twenty faculty members. Serving as the director of this program is a significant challenge for me. But I am at the same time excited about learning new things. I struggled a good deal over the course of my academic career. Before getting tenure, I was always worried about my research and publications and sometimes neglected other important aspects such as socialization and fulfillment of my private life. I realize that harmony between people creates a healthy academic environment. Now, I am making an effort to participate in the college community more actively.

I hope that my pieces of advice—finding a role model, belonging to a community where you feel protected, being critical of Japan’s colonial past, and nurturing cultural sensitivity—will be beneficial to you, future Asian leaders. Just like I did, you might encounter some hardships on the

course of your academic career: publishing scholarly articles, for example, is not an easy task. However, struggles only make people strong. If you fail, you only need to correct your mistakes. You don't need to make all your achievements at once. The most important thing is to make constant progress while aspiring to become like your role models.

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Japanese Language and Literature

Journal of the American Association of Teachers of Japanese

jll.pitt.edu | Vol. 56 | Number 1 | April 2022 | DOI: 10.5195/jll.2022.257

ISSN 1536-7827 (print) 2326-4586 (online)

Chance, Choice, and Cheerful Chaos: A Journey to Leadership

Ayako Kano

The Parental Game of Chance

I usually think of myself as coming from a rather ordinary middle-class Japanese family. Ordinary middle-class can mean different things at different times, but around me, it meant a father who was employed full-time at a large corporation and a mother who stayed at home to take care of the kids. What was not so ordinary—and affected dozens of women my age, perhaps hundreds if you think of my decade or generation—is that my father’s job took the family outside Japan, first to Germany, and then to the United States.

A recent phrase making the rounds in Japanese social as well as mainstream media is *oya gacha*. It combines the words for “parent” and *gacha-gacha*, the onomatopoeic name for the toy-capsule vending machines ubiquitous in shopping malls. The idea is that you cannot choose your parents—as with these capsule toys, it is all a matter of luck whether you end up with excellent parents, or shitty ones. The phrase has also come to stand in for a sense of social inequity and lack of social mobility. One cannot choose the social class and family circumstance one is born into, and these factors seem to play an increasingly determinative role in one’s own educational and employment prospects. The phrase “parent *gacha*” bluntly encapsulates the idea that one might be lucky or unlucky in where one is born, and that this is the end of the story. It denotes resignation about social mobility, which is no doubt in decline in twenty-first century Japan.

By contrast, it was my parents’ generation, born in the 1930s and coming to adulthood in the postwar decades, that probably had the most mobility in modern Japanese history, both upward and downward. Specifically, this was the historical moment when a boy born to humble circumstances could aspire to get into a good college by working hard, and then get a good job and become economically comfortable. That was the



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case with my father, who was born in the northern hinterlands of Japan, and whose family's business had gone bankrupt when he was still a child, but who was able to attend a national university on a scholarship and then was hired by one of the big banks that eventually sent him abroad.

Being born as his daughter was my good luck. But as other observers have pointed out, “parent *gacha*” tells only part of the story.¹ We must also talk of “nation *gacha*” and “generation *gacha*.” The fact that I was born as a child in Japan in the 1960s to a set of parents whose trajectory matched the social mobility of the postwar years, and that my father was part of the generation of worker bees being sent abroad on the wave of Japanese economic expansion—it is not an exaggeration to say that this determined where I ended up today.

I bring this up because when we speak of leadership or career paths, it is tempting to speak primarily of our individual choices. I have decided to emphasize the generational nature of my own experience, although it goes against how it “felt” to go through it: I have felt like an oddball and outlier for much of my career, a minority among minorities. It is only in the last few years that I have come to see my own career within the larger story of postwar Japan. (There is also a story of postwar U. S. higher education and its gender and racial dynamics that plays an important role, but I am going to set those aside for the sake of brevity.)

Dreaming of Equal Employment

I became a freshman at a co-educational Japanese private university in 1985, the year the Equal Employment Opportunity Law was passed. This law made it illegal, but not really punishable, to discriminate in the hiring and promotion of female versus male employees. As most Japan observers know, this did not exactly result in doors to corporate management and top government positions flying open to welcome women (see for example Nemoto 2016).

I had arrived at Keio University because it was one of several that had started accepting graduates of foreign high schools through a special exam. And I had graduated from a high school in the suburbs of New York City because my father had been assigned to a job in New York by his company. Earlier he had been assigned to a job in Frankfurt, so I had spent kindergarten and part of elementary school in Germany. If it were not for this set of circumstances, I do not know whether I would have ended up at one of the highly ranked Japanese universities, and I also doubt I would

have landed there with a firm sense that women deserved to be treated as equals of men.

But despite that belief, and despite the recently passed law, all around me were women who assumed the path to a career was narrow and perilous. Most assumed that they would work in an office of some kind for a few years, then marry and have children. They might continue working if circumstances allowed, but they might also quit, and then return to work later, creating a so-called M-curve of employment. Nearly 70% of women of my generation quit work by the time their first child was born. Most did not return to the same kind of full-time position even after the children were older.²

Nonetheless, it is probably also true that in the mid-1980s, at the beginning of the EEOL era, female college students like myself were allowed to dream of having careers in a wider range of fields than ever before, and that we were not yet jaded from decades of mere lip-service being paid to the idea of gender equality and women's empowerment. The ideas were still a bit new, and the energies of the women's liberation movement could still be felt in certain pockets of society. It was also the beginning of the era of feminist scholarship, and the presence of charismatic and articulate women scholars in the classroom and on the pages of an increasing number of books.³ This surge in feminist scholarship would eventually face a backlash, as I have described elsewhere (Kano 2011). But the 1980s and early 1990s was still a heady time for feminist scholarship.

It must also be said that our generation of female college students was receiving an ambivalent message about women's roles in society. Although we might dream of having careers, the greatest source of a woman's happiness and social belonging was supposed to be marriage and motherhood. Combining these with careers was understood to be extremely difficult. No one knew of a high-profile female politician, or female business leader, who had managed to combine these roles. There was Ogata Sadako, who would eventually become the head of the UNHCR, but at that time she was not yet well-known. In 1980 Takahashi Nobuko was appointed as the first female ambassador from Japan (to Denmark). But these were rare exceptions.

On the one hand, my generation was strangely ambitious. And it was materialistic, in direct correlation with the bubbly economic climate. But on the other hand, it was a generation that had been actively demobilized from the student movement of the previous years. I can remember from

experience how much the “deprogramming” of students took place through the warning of our professors to avoid any political activities that might harm our future. And I want to remember that for female students at the time, this “future” was only recently made to include a potential future *career*, under the banner of equal employment. In the 1980s we had more to lose perhaps, than female students in the 1960s and 1970s who courageously demonstrated in the streets and barricaded themselves inside campus buildings. *We* might have a chance at a career, and we did not want to jeopardize it through involvement in political activism. That this was a generational experience is also something I have been learning through scholarship of experts of the 1960s and 1970s (Schieder 2021, Steinhoff 2018).

But instead of activism, and instead of a career in Japan, or marriage and motherhood in Japan, I launched myself side-ways into an academic career in the United States. This also was not unique, but a little less usual, and is related to my being an oddball. But here I must acknowledge that what allowed this side-ways launch was precisely the cultural capital (English, German, knowledge of European literature and culture) that was gained through my lucky “parent *gacha*” and growing up near the financial capitals of the world. In other words, without fluency in these languages, and a deep interest in comparative literature that included German and British theater as well as Japanese, I would not have landed in a Ph. D. program in the United States.

Academic Career and Challenges

Landing at Cornell University was probably the most consequential good luck of my academic career. I chose it over six other programs for a number of reasons, but I had never talked to a single person there. It turned out that Cornell was at the time one of the most interesting places to do Japan Studies anywhere in the world. And I was lucky to be able to find three feminist professors (one each in German, English, and Japanese) to serve on my dissertation committee, and several people I would go on to consider important mentors and internal interlocutors.

When I landed at the University of Pennsylvania in January of 1995, having defended my dissertation just the previous month, I was naively fearless. Youth and naive fearlessness are wonderful things—I cannot imagine anyone now being hired for a tenure-track position who knows as little as I knew back then, but I also wonder how much more pressure someone starting out now must experience.

To cut twenty-six years into a few sentences: I finished my first book (2001) and got tenure (2002). And then I decided I was ready to have a baby (2004). And then another baby decided to join the fun (2006). And before I knew it, ten years had passed since my first book, and I needed to decide whether or not to climb the mountain of writing a second book, which at my institution is considered essential for being promoted to full professor.

This is where this story becomes a story connected to leadership. For a good while, I was not sure whether I wanted to aim for the promotion. It would come with very few concrete perks, as far as I could see. I would stay in the same office and do the same amount of teaching and research. I would probably serve on more and more committees and spend more and more time on administrative work. I had already been undergraduate chair for a number of years as an associate professor. As a full professor I could, and would at some point be expected to, become graduate chair or department chair, two leadership positions at the departmental level traditionally open only to full professors. But who in their right minds wanted to take on those roles?

In the end, I decided that the consequences of my not being a full professor were serious enough that I was willing to climb the mountain (or move the mountain, which is what it felt like at times) to write the second book and go through the process of applying for promotion. I needed to be able to speak up as a full professor in some situations. And I wanted to put an end to feeling beneath others in rank. Writing the second book and going up for promotion was one of the hardest things I have ever done. It felt harder in some ways than the first book and going up for tenure, because I had been in my institution for almost twenty years by that point, and I was no longer young, naive, or fearless.

But I wrote, and I got promoted. I believe I am the first Asian woman to be promoted to full professor in my department. Meanwhile I was raising two young boys. Raising them is of course *the* hardest thing I have ever done, but also the most cheerful chaos possible. I was living the juggling life that I could only vaguely imagine when I was in college. One consequence of how hard it has been to get to this stage is that I have lacked the bandwidth to be very active in our local community of Philadelphia, in the children's schools, and so forth. But at the university, I have sought out friendship beyond my department, and have found opportunities to create connections in many places.

One of the larger communities I have taken a lead in sustaining is an annual faculty writing retreat. It takes place during the first week of June, and about 20–30 faculty members from a number of different departments at Penn gather in one space and write from 9 am to 5 pm. We break for lunch and conversation in the middle of the day. Free coffee, snacks, and some editorial consultation is provided as well. This program was initially started by two senior faculty members in 2012, and I signed up out of curiosity. It turned out to be so helpful that I decided to make sure that it would happen the following year, and the year after, and the year after. At some point I pulled together a grant proposal and received funding from several different administrative offices on campus. We have continued now for nine more years, including the last two years in online format because of the pandemic. Helping colleagues enjoy writing has been for me a deeply meaningful exercise in leadership, because this is part of our job that we tend to do alone. Seeing a large group of other faculty members writing intently hour after hour, day after day, and then sharing struggles and strategies about writing, building a loose but life-sustaining sense of connection year after year—this has changed the way I view my profession and my university.

Half-Baked Advice

I have been Graduate Chair of my department (East Asian Languages and Civilizations) for the last three years, which came with the promotion to full professorship. Our graduate program has about a dozen Ph. D. students and 20–30 M. A. students. It is a complex organism with many challenges, and I am still trying to figure out how to lead and manage the program in the best possible way. Perhaps in another decade I will be able to reflect and distill the lessons.

But because I have been advising graduate students for many years, perhaps I can pass on some general advice about leadership from that perspective. Most graduate students enter academia not because they want to become leaders, but because they love to read, think and write, and sometimes to teach. Teamwork and leadership are often not the forte of graduate students, and because I recognize the lack of training in these areas in my own career, I would urge students to seek out opportunities during their early graduate years. At Penn, our department's graduate students have organized graduate conferences for the last few years. It requires a lot of negotiating with each other, with faculty members, and with university bureaucracy, but I heartily encourage the effort. I would

encourage students everywhere to become involved in these types of activities early.

Finding good role models is also crucial. I was lucky in having many women leaders as role models throughout my academic career. I met extraordinary female professors at Keio and Cornell and at the University of Pennsylvania. As I write this, our university president, Amy Gutman, is close to the end of her term. Her predecessor, Judith Rodin, was president when I first started teaching here. Her soon-to-be successor M. Elizabeth Magill, will assume the presidency on July 1, 2022. There have been multiple female deans and associate deans throughout the School of Arts and Sciences. Not many Asian or Japanese women have been in leadership roles, but I have found it relatively easy to identify with women of other races (typically White, but also increasingly Black and Latino women) who have navigated the various challenges of leadership in academic environments.

I remember reading a few years ago that women leaders find it easier to exert their power on behalf of others, than to wield it for themselves (Amanatullah and Moris 2010 cited in Sandberg 2013). I don't know if this is always true, but I have found it rings true for myself: I made a conscious decision to step up, rather than side-step the promotion process, when I felt like I might be able to help other people, specifically junior faculty colleagues, by having more power.

So, be open to the idea of helping others through leadership—I think if I could go back to dispense advice to my younger self, that is what I would say. Be open, be prepared, and try to keep a sense of humor in the cheerful chaos.

NOTES

¹ Doi Takayoshi, interviewed by Inagaki Naoto, “‘Oya gacha denaku, kuni gacha’: Ronsō no hitsukeyaku ga kataru seditan gyappu” (‘It’s not parental luck but national luck’: The instigator of the debate discusses generational gaps), *Asahi shinbun dejitaru*, October 7, 2021, <https://www.asahi.com>

² On obstacles facing women’s continued participation in the labor force after marriage and childbirth, see Nemoto (2016).

³ For my own formation as a scholar, the most inspiring were sociologists Ehara Yumiko and Ueno Chizuko, as well as philosopher Kanai Yoshiko (Kano 2002).

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Japanese Language and Literature

Journal of the American Association of Teachers of Japanese

jll.pitt.edu | Vol. 56 | Number 1 | April 2022 | DOI: 10.5195/jll.2022.250

ISSN 1536-7827 (print) 2326-4586 (online)

The Two Faces of the “Ocean”

Misumi Sadler

Introduction

Growing up in a tiny seaside town in Kōchi, I always had an ambivalent relationship with the ocean. The sounds and smells of the waves, the rocky beaches, and the sea breezes could make me feel tranquil or uneasy. Once I left my hometown, I thought I had lost touch with the sea. Yet as I contemplate my journey—from my arrival in the United States, through my public high school—teaching days, summer teacher-training programs, and graduate school, and to my current academic life as a professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (“Illinois” hereafter)—I realize that the ocean has always been an important part of my life and shaped me into who I am now. The “ocean” I’m referring to here is rather metaphorical. It comes and goes with different voices and in different forms or shapes, just like each type of ocean wave is distinct. Sometimes it appears as my grad school advisor or a faculty mentor, and sometimes as a challenge such as the constant struggle of balancing the multiple roles I play—researcher, teacher, and administrator. This essay describes how a rather timid and introverted person looked beyond what she thought was the horizon, and how this metaphorical “ocean” has been instrumental in my continuing professional journey.

Journey to My Current Position: Leaving My Sanctuary

My acquaintances are often mildly surprised to learn that I am a shy person, and a homebody. I thrive on routine and prefer to stay in my comfort zone. During the current pandemic, unlike many of my colleagues and students, I’ve enjoyed working from home. Nevertheless, my current comfort zone is quite different from the one I inhabited when I started my job as an assistant professor at Illinois eighteen years ago, which consisted of teaching Japanese, coordinating the Japanese language program, and supervising and training graduate student teachers (GSTs). That was the



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place I felt safe and confident; it was where I knew I could make a contribution and could tell what worked and what did not. During my pre-tenure days, however, this safe space was often threatened by the raging ocean waves of the pressure to publish and teach courses outside of my expertise, as well as constant worries that Japanese-language classes would be cut due to chronic shortages of GSTs and funding. Each angry wave attacked my self-confidence and tried to pull me down. Yet even in the midst of such difficult moments, I found I could still hear the calm voice of a peaceful sea—especially when I listened to the guidance of others such as my husband, my research mentor, my department head, and my friends—which encouraged me and kept me sane and healthy.

It was a great relief when I finally got tenure after six long, agonizing years; it was one of my happiest moments, and my stress levels decreased significantly. Once again, I felt quite safe and cozy, and I thought, “Now I can do the things I always wanted to do!” Then *it* happened; *it* was something I hadn’t expected or prepared for. I lost all my motivation and passion for teaching, researching, or, really, doing anything. Even the things I used to do for fun weren’t fun anymore, as waves of mental exhaustion battered me. It took some time for me to realize that I was experiencing a classic case of the *post-tenure slump*. Looking back now, I understand that I needed a break, which is the point of sabbaticals—however, for a variety of reasons, a sabbatical was not possible for me at that time.

During my post-tenure blues, I desperately sought a way to regain my confidence, energy, and enthusiasm. After some trial and error, I eventually bestirred myself to make some changes. I, Misumi Sadler, who loved to be in my regular groove, decided to tackle something new—something I had never done before. I first dove into the unfamiliar territory of research outside of my field, beginning a study on the intercultural competence of first-year Japanese-language students and newly appointed GSTs of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean language programs. My new research project required me to read different sorts of books and articles, learn new methodologies, and attend workshops to become certified as a tester for intercultural competence.

I also signed up for a project on the professional development of GSTs aided by the reflective teaching framework of “Exploratory Practice” developed by Dick Allwright in the early 1990s (2003, 2006). Exploratory practice has seven main principles:

1. Put “quality of life” first.
2. Work primarily to understand language classroom life.
3. Involve everybody.
4. Work to bring people together.
5. Work also for mutual development.
6. Integrate the work for understanding into classroom practice.
7. Make the work a continuous enterprise. (Allwright 2003:128–130)

These guiding principles bring attention to “the *quality of classroom life* and *mutual understanding* between teachers and learners,” and underscore “educational values of inclusivity, collegiality, and sustainability” (Crane, Sadler, Ha, and Ojiambo 2011:110; my italics). The principles didn’t fully resonate with me at the time, but as I discuss in the next section, my sense of their relevance and significance has grown during my current leadership role, and they have become my core values of life in general.

This project also allowed me to work closely with foreign language coordinators, supervisors, and GSTs from other departments, which was rather a drastic change for me because I had always preferred to work alone, whether doing research or teaching. Not having full control has always scared me, and I felt easily lost in a group. So I was a little apprehensive, but it soon became apparent that this was exactly the kind of experience I needed to break free from the “port of safety” I had become trapped in. I learned the importance of collaboration, and of recognizing and valuing diverse voices and opinions. In addition, the interaction with other foreign language coordinators and GSTs on campus led me to reflect on and improve not just my own language program but myself, as a language educator and human being.

Around the same time, I was tackling these new projects, other waves surged in when I took on a new administrative duty as departmental undergraduate advisor. I was reluctant to take the position, thinking that I wasn’t qualified or competent enough, but I didn’t know how to say no, and I unwillingly ended up accepting it. It was a struggle to learn the new job, from advising students and monitoring their progress toward degree completion to understanding the related policies, regulations, graduation requirements, course articulation system, study-abroad course approvals, and so on, and it brought an endless sea of paperwork. So many emails from students, so many meetings with them, and so many days without time to eat lunch. The first year was quite bumpy, but by the end of the year, I had started enjoying the work; I particularly relished the time interacting with undergraduate majors and minors, listening to their life

stories and dreams, hearing about their study abroad experiences, and sharing my personal experiences of learning English. Over my seven years as the undergraduate advisor, I learned to listen carefully to each student's needs and to become more compassionate and patient.

All these experiences during my post-tenure slump days helped me go beyond the horizon, pushed me from my cozy safe place, and shaped me into the person I am now. It was a time for self-rediscovery and self-reflection on my own passions, motivations, strengths, limits, and fears.

Challenges and Triumphs in My Current Position

My role as the Director of the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies (CEAPS) at Illinois came about rather unexpectedly, though I arrived at it gradually through what I refer to as a “slide, step, and jump” process. The first time I was asked if I would be interested in the position, the idea terrified me due to my self-perceived lack of competence and confidence, and the five-year commitment. I declined, happily choosing to serve another year as my department's undergraduate advisor instead. A year later, I was asked to serve as the *acting* director of CEAPS for one academic year while the current director was on leave. “I can do it for just one year,” I thought, and decided to slide just one toe into this new ocean. It turned out to be the most mentally and physically exhausting year I had ever had.

In retrospect, I still can hardly believe that I accepted the position. I lacked pretty much everything required to be a successful director of an area-studies center; I didn't have much institutional knowledge beyond what I had gained in my capacity as my department's undergraduate advisor, and I knew little of fields other than linguistics and pedagogy, or of the people beyond my own department. I felt I had no leadership skills, no vision, no charisma, and no skill at communication. I suppose I thought I could get by without any of this as merely the “acting” director, but I was wrong. Whether you're a substitute or the real thing, people expect you to be the director, and you have to act accordingly; I had a lot to learn.

Many of the challenges I faced that year were largely because I had underestimated the scope of my role as the acting director. The number of emails I received and sent increased dramatically. The number of events and meetings was overwhelming; I constantly felt tossed around by the waves of my public engagements. And as soon as one event was over, we would start preparing for the next, with no time to feel relieved or reflect on what had gone well and what had not. I was also running around

campus, crossing from one meeting at building A, to another—which would start in five minutes!—at building B, and then back to building A to teach a class or attend yet another meeting.

The *tsunami* of emails, events, and meetings crashed over me and nearly pushed me out to sea all semester long, but the biggest and strongest *tsunami* was, without a doubt, the process of writing CEAPS's Title VI grant proposal. The Title VI International Educational Programs, a key component of the congressional Higher Education Act, are intended to enhance and promote the instruction of area studies and modern foreign languages to create and maintain a pool of international and area studies experts who can fulfill national needs. These eight grant programs are housed in the U. S. Department of Education. CEAPS, along with other area centers, focuses on the National Resource Center and Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowship grant programs. This once-every-four-year competition is the primary source of funding for area centers' research, teaching, programming, and outreach activities. CEAPS and its consortium partner, the East Asian Studies Center at Indiana University, had been jointly awarded Title VI funding for the last three cycles (twelve years). The pressure of expectations created enormous waves that crashed around me through many sleepless nights. I literally knew nothing about this type of grant proposal writing and had to learn everything from scratch. Not knowing what to do terrified me, and I asked myself over and over why I had taken on this task and how I could possibly do it all alone.

In what was undoubtedly my most challenging year yet, Allwright's exploratory practice (EP) suddenly became much more relevant to me. Although EP was proposed to support ongoing teacher reflection and avoid teacher burnout, I found it incredibly useful in my role as acting director, particularly as we prepared the grant proposal. In fact, at my worst moment, when I thought I was about to be pushed into unknown depths by raging waters, reflecting on the EP principles helped me understand that my most important job was to develop a community where each of us—center director, associate director, office manager, and graduate assistants—could trust and understand each other, work together to maintain healthy, constructive, and harmonious lives, and become active participants in our mutual development and success. I learned that I could listen to, trust, and respect my highly competent co-workers' decisions and opinions. Realizing that I didn't have to do it all alone was a tremendous relief. The energy, tenacity, and resilience of my team were so contagious that I eventually became eager and enthusiastic myself.

On a daily basis, we held bootcamp-like sessions to develop our proposal. We would carefully read the Center's previous proposal and the reviewers' comments side-by-side to identify its strengths and weaknesses, color-coding and taking meticulous notes as we went along. We also read other institutes' successful past proposals to learn about their programming and projects, as well as the campus-level, regional, national, and international impacts. We visited our faculty members in their offices to ensure we understood their needs. We met with faculty who had requested Title VI funding to learn about their proposed projects and to discuss ways in which the Center could help them achieve their goals. We also visited our consortium partner at Indiana University for a Title VI session to discuss possible joint activities such as the National Dissertation Workshop and the Illinois-Indiana Faculty Exchange Talk Series. As the deadline came closer and closer, our "bootcamp" sessions got longer and longer. We literally wrote the proposal together word-by-word while discussing things such as how each initiative requested by a group of faculty members was aligned with our goals and how effectively our quantitative and qualitative data supported these goals. We listened to and supported each other as we exchanged ideas and concerns. We worked hard, but our daily sessions were also full of laughter and human connection, and occasional personal stories we all could identify with—about conflicts with friends and co-workers, successful and unsuccessful job interviews, hits and misses in our foreign language learning experiences, and so on.

In the end, our proposal was successful, and we were awarded four more years of funding (2018–2022). Despite the frenzy of that year and the loss of research time, I was truly content, and I appreciated all the experiences the acting directorship had brought me. I had no hesitation then to take the next "step," when I was again asked to take the interim director position for the academic year of 2019–2020. The following year, I took the final "jump" when I formally accepted the position of the Director of CEAPS, and I am now in the second year of my five-year term, still working closely with the same Center staff as well as new members, and still working hard for mutual understanding and development. We are now preparing our Title VI grant proposal for 2022–2026.

Advice to Future Leaders

My advice to future leaders is quite simple. First, don't be afraid of looking beyond the horizon. I must admit that new things can still be scary and daunting for me. As described throughout this essay, sometimes changes in my life have been my own choice, and at other times I have felt tossed

around by the waves of the unknown. All things considered, however, I now always try to think about how a little “slide” will push me to my current limit and perhaps help me depart from my norm, and how that could lead me to take the next “step,” which might turn into a “jump” down the road. That first little slide can be something easy, like attending a talk on a subject that is not within your expertise, having a chat with someone sitting next to you during the talk, or reaching out to a newly hired faculty member in your department. Second, make time for self-discovery and self-reflection. Most of us are so busy with day-to-day service and teaching that we hardly ever take the time to step back and contemplate what’s going on in our lives and our work. A few minutes a day of reflection can do the trick. Even noting down your thoughts and feelings at the end of the week can help you evaluate if you are happy with what happened that week and if you see a need for modifications moving forward. In my case, such self-reflection during the most demanding year of my academic life steered me to Allwright’s (2003, 2006) guiding principles.

As I close this essay, I ask myself: Am I a good leader? I don’t know, but I can say this: as an active participant in the CEAPS community, I am proud of my efforts to maintain a healthy, harmonious, and constructive community, and to continue to involve everyone as we work together toward mutual goals and development. Although my relationship with the “ocean” has had its ups and downs, these are the experiences that have led me to who I am now.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Satoko Suzuki and Junko Mori for conceiving of and organizing this special section. Both editors provided much needed guidance and feedback on various iterations of this manuscript. Many thanks to my husband, Randall W. Sadler, for proofreading the initial draft. I cannot express my gratitude enough to Laurie Durand. Her careful, thoughtful, and meticulous editing and proofreading were an indispensable part of the completion of my work.

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Japanese Language and Literature

Journal of the American Association of Teachers of Japanese

jll.pitt.edu | Vol. 56 | Number 1 | April 2022 | DOI: 10.5195/jll.2022.251

ISSN 1536-7827 (print) 2326-4586 (online)

A Story of an Associate Dean in Higher Education in Uncertain and Challenging Times

Kimi Kondo-Brown

Journey to the Current Position

I was born and grew up in Tokushima, Japan. When I was a high school senior, I wanted to get out of my hometown and go to a university in Tokyo to pursue my dreams. Unfortunately, that year my father passed away tragically, and it changed everything. I had to put my dreams on hold and do what I thought I should do: attending a low-cost national university in my hometown while taking care of my mother, who was a total wreck at that time. In the years that followed, she hoped that I would never leave her, but I knew that sooner or later, I had to live my own life and redefine my personal and professional identities.¹ A decade after my father's passing, I ended up in Hawaii. As of fall 2021, I have completed thirty-three years of service at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM), the flagship campus of the University of Hawai'i System. UHM has provided me with great educational and professional opportunities to grow as a teacher, researcher, and administrator.

My career at UHM started in 1988 as a full-time Instructor of Japanese in the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures (EALL). My responsibilities were primarily teaching and service to the department then. In August 2001, an opportunity to apply for the position of tenure-track Assistant Professor in Japanese pedagogy in EALL opened up, so I applied and got the job. After that, I spent approximately half of my time on research and the other half on teaching and service. I have taught everything from beginning-level Japanese-language classes to advanced graduate seminar courses on pedagogy, language education, and research methods for M. A. and Ph. D. students in the department while actively engaging in research endeavors. I also provided service at the institutional, national, and international levels. In 2006, I was awarded tenure and



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promotion to Associate Professor, and in 2011, I was promoted to Professor.

Between 2008 and 2020, I also served as Associate Dean of the College of Languages, Linguistics and Literature (CLLL) that housed six academic departments and several funded centers or programs such as the National Foreign Language Resource Center and the Language Flagship programs. I started as an “interim” associate dean, and in 2016, I had the opportunity to apply for a “permanent” associate dean position, and so I applied and got the job. In July 2021, I was appointed as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the College of Arts, Languages and Letters (CALL), following the merger of the College of Arts and Humanities, CLLL, and the School of Pacific and Asian Studies. With over 300 faculty members and 2,400 undergraduate and graduate majors in seventeen academic departments, CALL is one of the largest units at UHM, encompassing the study of the arts, humanities, languages, and area studies, with an emphasis on Hawaii, the Pacific, and Asia. An organizational merger of this scale in the middle of the pandemic has proven to be a challenge, to say the least. However, we are not alone, of course. For all of us in higher education, the past couple of years have required us to adjust our teaching, assessments/evaluations, and other educational activities to meet changing COVID conditions (Kondo-Brown 2021).

Challenges and Triumphs in a Leadership Role

Triumphs are rare in administrative work, but there were some incremental successes that have given me a sense of accomplishment as a leader. In this section, I will discuss a few such accomplishments.

Initiating a College-Wide Project as a New Administrator

When I was an active and engaged faculty member in the department of EALL, it never crossed my mind that I would one day become an associate dean. I had not even served as a department chair. So, in 2008, when the CLLL dean contacted me and asked if I would be interested in serving as an “interim” associate dean, my initial reaction was NO WAY. However, my colleagues advised me that this would be a rare opportunity to learn how the university operates and that my Asian and international backgrounds would add diversity to the UHM administration, which is a good thing.² Also, there were other colleagues who said that I would be suited for the job and encouraged me to seriously consider the offer.

So, after giving some thought, I responded to the Dean that I would indeed be interested in the position. Since one of my specializations is

assessment/evaluation, I was particularly interested in working with departments to build evaluation capacity. In fact, a few years earlier, I led CLLL's efforts to assess the Hawaiian/Second language requirements (Kondo-Brown 2004). I told the Dean that if I were to accept the offer, I would want to initiate a new evaluation project. Specifically, I wanted to develop exit surveys to systematically get student feedback at the program-level across CLLL departments. In general, faculty are interested in student feedback on their programs, but in those days, none of the twenty-five B. A., M. A., and Ph. D. programs in CLLL had systematic procedures for getting student feedback at the program-level. Needless to say, a survey cannot evaluate all aspects of a given program, and the project I had in mind was not intended to do so.

The Dean agreed to support my interest (among other conditions that I discussed), so I accepted the offer. Shortly after being appointed as the interim associate dean, I started a conversation about the exit survey project with the department chairs. To get their buy-in, I explained to them how the project would benefit the departments. I also explained the logistics, i. e., how to gather and analyze evaluation data from their graduating majors (e. g., feedback on the program, student accomplishments, future plans, etc.) without excessively increasing faculty workloads (for details about this initiative, see Kondo-Brown, Davis, and Watanabe 2014).

I should note that this project was initiated when the university created a so-called "prioritization committee" to conduct a university-wide audit to reorganize or possibly terminate programs. Department chairs and program directors seemed extremely frustrated by the process, and their distrust of the administration seemed to be growing. So, to gain faculty buy-in for the CLLL evaluation project, we needed to make it clear to CLLL department leaders that the exit survey project had nothing to do with the university's prioritization process and that it was intended to support, not penalize programs in our College. Today, the exit survey system that started in CLLL remains a regular element of the program evaluation. After the organizational merger, this practice was expanded to other academic programs in the merged College (CALL) for program improvement and promotion.

Surviving Budget Crisis and Fostering New Developments

During my thirteen years as a key member of the Dean's leadership and management team, I have worked closely with five different deans in making programmatic, budgetary, personnel, and many other decisions for

the College. During my time as a college administrator, UHM has undergone various state budget cuts, and those budgetary restrictions hit hard in colleges like ours, in which almost all of the budget is dedicated to salaries for our employees. For example, until the fiscal year 2011, CLLL had been in the black, but during the subsequent fiscal years, we were forced to draw down on the reserves to make up for shortfalls in general funds. At some point, CLLL had exhausted our carry-forward cash and ended up having a substantial negative net balance. Then, at the beginning of the fiscal year 2015, there was a change in the CLLL deanship. The new interim dean, the fiscal officer, and I had to continue working hard to balance the budget by taking some painful cost-saving measures.

None of those challenges was easy, but our efforts helped CLLL make significant budgetary progress. When the College's financial situation improved, we could not only fill some vacant positions but also set aside a modest amount of "Dean's Special Educational and Professional Development Funds" to support students and faculty in CLLL departments. We also created several research awards for faculty and graduate students to celebrate their research accomplishments and support future research endeavors. There was other notable progress as well. For example, our language programs have many faculty employees whose titles are "Instructor (I2)" in the University of Hawai'i faculty classification. They typically teach full-time and also provide various services to the department such as advising and curriculum development. However, even if they had taught full-time for a number of years (some for decades), they did not have promotion opportunities as "Senior Instructors" that come with a pay increase. In 2014, after having researched promotional systems for full-time language teachers at other universities, I discussed a possible in-rank promotion idea with the CLLL dean, who then reached out to other relevant deans as well as Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Personnel. They were supportive of our idea, which led to a few years of negotiations between the university and the faculty union. In 2018, I was thrilled by the news that the new contract for Instructors at UHM finally included a 4-step, in-rank promotion system that comes with a salary increase.

Advice for Future Leaders

Today, higher education faces unprecedented challenges because of changing COVID conditions and financial constraints (Finley 2021). So, no matter which higher education institution one works for, the leaders are facing daunting challenges. My experience was no exception. In the past

two years, we have gone through the aforementioned large-scale organizational merger in the middle of the pandemic. The “harmonization” process of the merged college was made even more difficult by the subsequent system-wide budget shortfall, a hiring freeze, and curricular recommendations and suggestions imposed by the UHM’s budget committee.

Clearly, future challenges will continue, and current and future leaders will need to continue providing a supportive climate for our students, faculty, and staff as much as we can in these changing circumstances. To be an effective leader in an educational institution, especially during these uncertain and challenging years, we will need to build and maintain mutual trust and collegiality with our colleagues. Without them, it is impossible to maintain good working relationships with various stakeholders in tackling various academic, personnel, and budgetary issues and difficult conflict situations. Naturally, being a good team player is another essential condition for being an effective leader. I do not know any good leaders who are not good team players. All leaders are part of a wider leadership team that needs to work together to achieve common institutional goals through responsible practices.

Like many other associate and assistant deans in higher education, my job as an associate dean has been intense and extensive throughout the year (see, for example, Stone and Coussons-Read 2011). However, at the same time, it has been highly rewarding. For example, I have gained satisfaction from students and colleagues providing positive feedback on my service. I have also felt great pleasure in promoting and congratulating their successes. Of course, there are times when critical feedback from colleagues may hurt. As leaders, we all want our work to be evaluated positively. Nobody likes to be criticized for what they do. (That’s just human nature.) However, all leaders, including those perceived as the most successful leaders, sometimes have to make difficult decisions that do not make everyone happy. I would be surprised if there were any leaders who have never received criticism about something they did at some point in their careers. So, it is essential to learn to take criticism and manage to use it constructively. Also, it helps to have a support group with whom to share concerns and seek support when needed.

I conclude my story by talking about professional identity. Those who transition from a department faculty position to an administrative position at the college or university level inevitably need to cope with professional identity transformation. For example, White, whose study focused on

faculty transitioning to associate deans, stated that they “must also deal with their own professional identity as administrator versus faculty member” (2014: 3). For many of us who begin with faculty appointments and later join the administration, being an administrator may not be a professional goal, at least initially. After I joined the administration, my identity as professor in EALL and an academic scholar in the field has remained important. My administrative position did not stop me from publishing books and research articles, giving talks at conferences, and providing other professional services that faculty usually do. I would not have continued my administrative work this long if I had to stop my academic career or felt completely alienated from my home department or scholarly field of expertise.

However, I admit that, like many other associate deans, my research or scholarly productivity has declined due to demanding administrative work (see Saylor, Pedersen, Smith, and Cutright 2019). I do not regret my career choice, but at the same time, I do know that I could have contributed more to my field as a teacher and researcher if I did not accept the offer as an associate dean thirteen years ago. That said, for those who are currently considering a managerial or executive administrative position beyond your home department, it is important to know that it will profoundly affect your professional life and identity. I recommend that you pursue it only if you know that it will help achieve your long-term career goals.

NOTES

¹ My personal narrative (Kondo-Brown 2007) describes in more detail the transformation of my personal and professional identities in those days.

² For example, according to the American Council on Education website, white people represent the vast majority of all administrative positions in American colleges and universities.

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Japanese Language and Literature

Journal of the American Association of Teachers of Japanese

jll.pitt.edu | Vol. 56 | Number 1 | April 2022 | DOI: 10.5195/jll.2022.248

ISSN 1536-7827 (print) 2326-4586 (online)

Beyond Performing Ethnicity

Junko Mori

Who Am I?—Performing or Downplaying Ethnicity

“Where are you from?” Asking Asian Americans this question can be considered a form of microaggression—an observation that has been so widely circulated that, unfortunately, it is now almost a cliché. While I am not an Asian American and not necessarily offended by this question, it still gives me pause. I was born in Tokyo, but lived in Okayama, Ibaraki, Kyoto, and back in Tokyo before moving to Wisconsin more than thirty years ago. Legally, I am a Japanese national and a permanent resident alien of the United States. I have lived longer in Madison than any other city, and as a taxpayer and homeowner, I consider myself a full-fledged Madisonian. In the eyes (and ears) of others, however, this may not always be the case.

A memorable event that served as a reminder of this reality occurred several years ago when I was interviewed for a student newspaper. In the interview request, the student writer explained that she was working on a feature about professors of foreign languages. Her email message included the following sample questions:

- How do nonnative speakers compare with native speakers in terms of teaching quality, student preference, and overall performance?
- What is it about our university’s language programs that attracts foreign language teachers like you?
- In America, are the foreign teachers blending in? Any challenges?

As I wanted to support this student’s initiative, I agreed to be interviewed. During the days leading up to our appointment, however, I contemplated how I could answer these sample questions, and “which me” I should foreground in the process. As an applied linguist, who has often adopted *membership categorization analysis* (Sacks 1992) as a conceptual framework for research, I could not help but notice a range of



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categorization terms that appeared in the interview request and sample questions. Among them, those that might be applicable to me included “native speakers,” “foreign language teachers,” and “foreign teachers.”

At the interview, the student’s opening question was: “What brought you here?” This gave me an opportunity to objectify and historicize my own story, discussing how language education tends to be shaped by the social, political, and economic dynamics of a given time and place. I came to the United States at the peak of the Japanese economic bubble, when the teaching of Japanese language and culture was being heavily promoted on both sides of the Pacific. It was the late 1980s, and I had been working at a private firm in Tokyo but felt discouraged by a workplace climate that showed little impact from the Equal Employment Opportunity Law of 1985. So, I was longing for a change when I stumbled across an internship program developed by the State of Wisconsin to promote Japanese language education, and I joined the first cohort of thirteen Japanese dispatched to public schools throughout the state. The internship experience ignited my interest in Japanese language education. To solidify my qualifications to pursue a career in this area, I decided to embark on graduate study in Japanese linguistics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW, hereafter). The student writer, a journalism major originally from China, appeared to be intrigued by my story.

Her subsequent questions, however, often made me derail, as I felt it necessary to challenge the assumptions behind her requests to compare native versus nonnative speakers, or foreign-born versus American professors. In my lengthy answers, I tried to underscore the diversity among the people these monolithic binary categories lump together and to encourage appreciation of the different sets of qualifications each individual can bring to the profession. I did so with the hope that she would consider reframing the discussion in her writing.

To my disappointment, however, the resulting article began with a portrayal of me as a “foreign” teacher, and included the following summation: “Like Mori, many other scholars from foreign countries come to UW to teach their native languages. These instructors bring an authenticity to the classroom that students highly value.” In her defense, the writer attempted to incorporate many of the ideas I had tried to convey. Nevertheless, what her article foregrounded was the “authenticity” associated with “foreign teachers,” or their ability to *perform ethnicity* in the classroom rather than their achievements as transnational, multilingual

scholars. This experience reminded me of the following observation shared by Kramsch and Zhang (2015: 89):

Foreign-born, native speaker (NS) teachers enjoy a great deal of *de facto* symbolic capital. They are hired precisely because of their NSship and the contacts they maintain with the target country. . . . They are not seen as the scholars and professionals that many of them are, but as “mere” native speakers. . . . The fact that they are multilingual, cosmopolitan individuals, often with a high level of education, global connections, double vision, and with a deep understanding and tolerance of paradox, remains to a large extent unrecognized or undervalued.

When I first landed in the United States, my J-1 (Exchange Visitor) visa was indeed justified by *de facto* symbolic capital. As an intern for the Japanese Language and Culture Assistant Program, I visited a number of elementary and secondary classrooms, often wearing kimono or yukata on request and demonstrating origami, calligraphy, or proper use of chopsticks in not so fluent English. Performing ethnicity was precisely my *raison d'être* in my first year in the U. S.

However, as I have gained more competence and confidence in English, received graduate training and degrees, and eventually earned tenure, my desire to perform my ethnicity has worn off, for several reasons. First, for scholars to obtain and maintain a faculty position at an American institution, and to solidify our footing in academia, it is critical to be recognized by others for our professional identities—achievements gained through years of painstaking work—first and foremost. Second, when I began my graduate study in linguistics in the early 1990s, studies in comparative pragmatics that enhanced *Nihonjin-ron* “theories of Japanese uniqueness” were prevalent. Terms such as discernment, indirectness, *enryo* “restraint,” and *sasshi* “emphatic guesswork,” were (and still are to a degree) frequently used to describe idealized norms. As an individual who had always valued the ability to articulate one’s viewpoint clearly, even to the extent of being considered “a nail that stuck out,” I was rather bewildered by these static, essentialist descriptions of Japanese ways of communication. Third, as will be discussed further in the following section, as I began to assume leadership roles in which I coordinated and represented academic units larger than the Japanese program, I sometimes felt my Japanese identity—performed, ascribed, or perceived—getting in the way of developing trust and rapport. Nevertheless, given that my professional title—professor of Japanese language and linguistics—

subsumes a term that coincides with my ethnicity, it has not always been easy to deemphasize that part of me. Consequently, I have always wondered what kinds of assumptions others might make of me based on my title, name, and physical appearance as an Asian woman. The last three decades thus have been a journey in which I have constantly striven for a fine balance between the need to perform ethnicity and the need and desire to downplay it.

What Can I and Should I Do?—Contributing to a Departmental Restructuring Process

After holding my first faculty position at the University of Iowa for three years, I returned to my alma mater in 1999 and obtained tenure there in 2002. Since the late 2000s, I have held several leadership positions on campus, including chair of the Department of East Asian Languages and Literature (2008–2011); interim director of the Language Institute, whose mission is to promote language education and research on campus and beyond (2011–2013); and director of the Doctoral Program in Second Language Acquisition (SLA; 2014–2016). Among my various administrative experiences during this time, one of the most memorable was the restructuring of the academic units related to Asian studies.

In the late 2000s, campus leaders began to urge faculty to reexamine how we conducted our research and education in order to meet the demands of a changing society and the needs of a new generation of students. The directive to identify ways to increase efficiency and effectiveness was particularly pertinent to smaller departments, which were considered to have experienced disproportionate burdens of administration and possible difficulties in faculty governance. Under these circumstances, the need for two separate departments concerning Asia, the Department of East Asian Languages and Literature and the Department of Languages and Cultures of Asia, which covered the rest of Asia, began to be questioned. In fall 2014, the Associate Dean of Arts and Humanities formed a committee charged with developing recommendations regarding the future of Asian studies on campus. Thirteen members from nine different campus units were appointed to the committee, and Dr. Thongchai Winichakul, a Thai historian who had the experience of presiding over the Association of Asian Studies (AAS), served as its chair.

When I received the invitation to join this committee as one of the two language specialists, I asked myself my usual two questions: “Can I?” and “Should I?” Learning when and how to say no is one of the most important

lessons for anyone in any profession, but I know that I am a slow learner in this area. My internal dialogue at the time went like this:

“Can I take on this responsibility while I am still directing the SLA program?—Maybe, but adding one more task means that I’ll need to give up some family/personal time and/or some aspects of my teaching and/or research related activities.”

“Should I take on this responsibility?—Probably yes, because the recommendations produced by this committee will likely have a major impact on my own future life on campus.”

To me, the most salient aspect of my identities for this particular committee was my disciplinary background rather than my ethnicity or gender. The significance of participating in the discussion and sharing my voice on the centrality of language education in area studies seemed to outweigh the possible burden. I have never regretted the decision. Indeed, I was pleased to see that the committee’s final report included a section on the significance of language, which read as follows:

The study of Asian languages is central to and inseparable from the scholarly and educational missions of this department.... As Asia becomes a significant partner and destination for our students in the future, UW Asian studies should facilitate the development of multilingual and transcultural competence which enables students to operate between languages and cultures as well as to reflect on their own roots through the lens of another language and culture.

Participating in this committee significantly broadened and deepened my perspectives on the intricate dynamics among academic disciplines and among different regions within Asia and beyond. It was also a refreshing experience to be part of a committee led by Dr. Winichakul, who skillfully balanced asserting his own vision and valuing others’ viewpoints. Subsequently, a new committee was formed and charged with developing a restructuring proposal based on the 2014 committee’s recommendations, and I was appointed its chair. While I knew it would be a challenging project, I did not hesitate to accept the assignment because I wanted to make sure that the language programs would come out well in the end. I also wanted to continue to prove that I am not a “mere” native speaker.

With the blueprint developed by the 2014 committee in hand, I led the new committee, which consisted of the chairs of the two academic departments concerned and the directors and associate directors of the three area studies centers responsible for East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia. While the 2014 committee's task had been to explore conceptual frameworks and ideal (within reason) scenarios, the 2015 committee had to articulate the exact structure of the newly proposed department, including a detailed outline of the governance structure and precise lists of the required personnel, physical facilities, and financial resources.

As the idiom says, "The devil is in the details." One of the most challenging deliberations in the process, for instance, was to determine where to draw the boundaries of Asia and which languages should be housed in the new department. Previously, when I had become the chair of the Department of East Asian Languages and Literature, I had had to alter my frame of mind from focusing on the well-being of the Japanese program to appreciating the intricate dynamics of the three East Asian language programs. In hindsight, however, managing that transition was relatively straightforward because of the similarities among Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, which are the three most frequently taught Asian languages and are spoken in relatively affluent nations. Despite the recent push to recognize the multilingual and multicultural reality of every nation, for better or worse, the ideology of "one language, one nation, and one people" developed during the last century is still prevalent in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean societies. In contrast, languages spoken in other parts of Asia present much more complex conditions—both in reality and in ideology, these languages and their speakers are not neatly confined within national or regional boundaries. Where does Asia end and the Middle East or Eastern Europe begin? Indeed, this was one of the questions in which the new department envisioned engaging as we began to undertake transdisciplinary inquiries into the regions' past and present in our research and teaching. However, quite ironically, creating a departmental unit meant that we had to draw an arbitrary line for the sake of administrative efficiency. The final version of the proposal stated that the new department would house nine less commonly taught languages in addition to the three East Asian languages: Filipino, Indonesian, Hmong, Vietnamese, Thai, Tibetan, Hindi, Urdu, and Persian. Turkish, on the other hand, would move to a different department that included German, Nordic, and Slavic languages and beyond. This decision was supported by the

majority, but not by all the voting members, some of whom filed a dissenting opinion. Being a leader sometimes involves navigating a tough decision-making process and being the deliverer of bad news.

In addition to this decision concerning the languages, many other details had to be worked out with stakeholders who had many different interests and perspectives. UW underscores the notion of “shared governance,” which “gives representation to academic staff, university staff, faculty and students, who all take part in making significant decisions concerning the operation of the university” (<https://www.wisc.edu/governance/>). This means that the restructuring proposal needed to be communicated to all who might be affected by the change to secure their support. We held a number of listening sessions to answer any questions they might have on the core ideas of the proposal.

Any major change can induce fear. In the listening sessions, we had to convince many skeptics, who strongly associated restructuring with budget reduction and/or loss of personnel. It was essential that we hold such sessions, make necessary modifications to the proposal, and gain the members’ buy-in, but we also were constrained by the timeline proposed by the deans. The approval of the proposal by a series of decision-making bodies had to be secured in a timely manner so that the launch of the new department would align with the beginning of the new academic year. To ensure timely progress, I thought it was important to present a clear vision and concrete ideas to which stakeholders could respond, and then to listen to their viewpoints with care and empathy. We eventually succeeded in gaining more than a three-fourths majority vote in support of the restructuring proposal.

This proposal development process sometimes made me self-conscious about others’ perceptions of me. Would they view me as a Japanese trying to take over Asia—like a repeat of colonial history?! The fact that the Japanese program had the largest number of tenured faculty at the time contributed to this apprehension. No one explicitly made such a comment, but I consciously downplayed my ethnicity and the stability of the Japanese program.

Shortly after the submission of the proposal, I ran into a member of the 2015 committee at a social event. When he was introducing me to his spouse, I heard him saying to her, “She’s the benevolent dictator!” He said it in a joking fashion, and later apologized to me for using the epithet. I smiled back at him, as I liked this description of how I conducted myself in the project. It encapsulated my strengths and weaknesses as a leader and

recognized my achievements rather than my “authenticity” as a native-speaking Japanese instructor.

The new department is now in its sixth year, and in my view, it has grown stronger each year by adding new faculty, working out further details, and developing a new collective identity among its members. I can say with full conviction that the versatility established by the current departmental structure has enabled us to survive and thrive during the COVID-19 pandemic. Witnessing how the seeds planted by the two committees on which I served have taken root and flourished gives me a strong sense of accomplishment.

Who Are You? What Can You and Should You Do?—Advice to Future Leaders

After more than thirty years in the United States, I continue to ask myself, “Who am I?” and “What can I and should I do?” If you ask my husband, he might reveal that I often say negative things about myself. Reflecting back on what I did or didn’t do, or what I said or didn’t say, on a given day, I always find something that I wish I had done differently. But after talking things over with my husband and taking our dogs for a walk, I regain the courage to move on. Writing this article and thinking about what I could share with future leaders reminded me of some fundamentals of life.

First, engage in thorough self-reflection whenever an opportunity to lead (or even just participate in) a project presents itself. Before saying “yes” or “no” to the invitation, ask yourself the following questions: What are your strengths and weaknesses relevant to the particular project? How might you position yourself (or be positioned by others) in the project team? And what are possible burdens and rewards associated with the project? Asking yourself these questions and owning whatever decision you have made, I think, are essential.

Second, become observant of others’ strengths and weaknesses, and their potential. This also helps you to determine which projects or tasks you are uniquely qualified for, and which projects or tasks you should pass up or delegate to others. In retrospect, I probably should have delegated more responsibilities to others when I was working on the restructuring project. For fear of missing the deadline, I kept things on a rather tight leash and this might have given the people around me the impression I was a bit of a “dictator,” albeit a “benevolent” one.

Third, from time to time, remind yourself and your colleagues to step back and examine broader contexts, including the institutional context, the

fields of study, and the society in general, to evaluate whatever you are doing at the moment. Where are we heading? What will our world be like in five years, or ten years? Unexpected major events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, may throw us off track, but it is important to keep the big picture in mind, as the saying 木を見て森を見ず “You cannot see the woods for the trees” warns.

Last, but not least, establish support mechanisms and take care of yourself. To me, participating in multiple communities/affinity groups within my profession (e. g., the networks of UW alumni, the American Association of Teachers of Japanese, and the American Association of Applied Linguistics) as well as outside of the profession (e. g., a local dog agility group) helped me develop different perspectives and reevaluate my priorities in life. Further, as touched upon earlier, I must acknowledge that without the support of my understanding husband and my sweet dogs, I could not have made it this far. How one establishes support mechanisms will vary from one individual to another, but surely everyone needs professional and emotional support to lead one’s life and to become a leader.

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