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Chinese Residents in Japan Living in the Margins During the COVID-19 Outbreak: A consideration of their living conditions using the life story method

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Abstract

As infectious diseases caused by the COVID-19 virus have spread worldwide since January 2020, there have been time lags in the responses of national governments. In particular, compared to the Japanese government response, the Chinese government responder in a faster and tougher way. In the early days of the outbreak, with large numbers of infected people in China, Chinese residents in Japan received information from their home country and took preventive actions ahead of Japanese residents. In Japanese society during this time, the exclusionary attitudes toward Chinese people have become more obvious than before. In highlighting the thoughts and experiences of Chinese residents in Japan, who are living in the margins between the two nations during the COVID-19 outbreak, this study considers both current issues related to the COVID-19 outbreak and prospects for the future. Specifically, we conducted focus groups with Chinese international students living in Japan and collected the life stories of three Chinese individuals who work in Japan. The results indicate that Chinese residents in Japan have complex worries, that they have their own solutions in the midst of sudden changes, and that cognitive changes are occurring over time. Moreover, we found that the margin of Chinese residents in Japan was strengthened at the beginning, but later weakened over the course of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Key words: COVID-19; Chinese residents in Japan; margin; life story method

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1. Introduction

Various governments worldwide have imposed significant restrictions on people's activities in response to the novel coronavirus pandemic (referred to as COVID-19 or COVID-19 pandemic below). Wuhan, China was the first site of infection in January 2020. The sudden emergence of an invisible and endless risk has significantly impacted the economy, education, and people's lives in general.

This unprecedented situation has encouraged rapid research on COVID-19 in many fields outside the specialized areas directly related to treatment and prevention such as medical treatment and public health. On the macroscopic side, many studies have focused on international relations and national systems, discussing the issues around COVID-19 from a political science and economics perspective. For example, the national systems of Japan, China, and Europe have been compared according to the status of the COVID-19 pandemic and the relationship between individuals and the state examined (Kajitani, 2020); the Japanese government's response to the epidemic and its impact on Japan-China relations have been considered (Gao, 2020); and Japan-China relations have been studied in the context of private interaction in light of the COVID-19 pandemic (Han, 2020).

Furthermore, considering the world's state due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more studies have begun to focus on capturing individual daily lives rather than international relations. From this perspective, the practice of educational methods becoming more active during COVID-19 is discussed (Naruse, 2020). Some studies examine people's negative emotions during COVID-19: Hashimoto (2020) focuses on anxiety, stress, depression, and loneliness, and compares the changes before and after the pandemic. Toriumi, Sakai and Yoshida (2020) collected posts about COVID-19 on social media to analyze the emotional changes of users to clarify the mechanism of information dissemination. However, although research from micro perspectives such as individual interaction and small group studies is accumulating, all these studies are inclined toward behavioral science and focus on quantitative analysis, such as behaviorist psychology, cognitive theory, and measurement theory. Further, since the COVID-19 situation continues to change dynamically, studies publishing results in stages or parts emphasizing the importance of preliminary research are characteristic. These will likely change in the future, and it is extremely difficult to keep track of the ever-changing situation, forecasts, and minute details. Important here after the coining of the term "pandemic police," is that the COVID-19 issue is extremely sensitive from the perspective of a surveillance society, privacy, and human rights, and it is not easy to clarify the truth behind the phenomenon and inner workings of the mind.

Therefore, this study examines COVID-19 from the perspective of the inner workings of peoples' minds as related to their personal identity and daily consciousness, and the role of individuals as the bearers of social change. We attempt to reposition society by analyzing

individual life stories and interactive interviews conducted between the researchers and subjects. Specifically, we investigate Chinese people living in Japan as "people living in the margins" between China and Japan, with their risks and anxieties. We focus on their daily lives and mental states, taking advantage of one of the authors' experiences as Chinese individuals living in Japan. From the perspective of Chinese residents in Japan, there is a time lag in the two governments' responses to COVID-19. In China, the lifting of the Wuhan blockade on April 8 was considered the preliminary conclusion, while in Japan, the government finally began to take full-scale action and declared a state of emergency on April 16. In other words, although the Chinese people have been living in Japan, there was a tendency for foreigners to be ostracized as the infection spreads (Yamagata, Teraguchi and Miura, 2020), and Japanese society often regards them as the Chinese first infected with COVID-19.

On the other hand, they are also distant from Chinese society in their home country because they live in Japan, a late-infection area. Therefore, the marginalization of the Chinese living in Japan may become stronger or change, especially with their strong association with COVID-19 today. However, existing research on the daily lives of Chinese residents in Japan and their everyday perspective is scant. Akasaka and Wakisaka (2019) refers to the role of "people in the margins" who can go back and forth between "home" and "abroad" and create new ties between people, i.e., a worldview from a marginal perspective. This study also peripherally examines the COVID-19 pandemic society and describes important stories at the margins and intersections that transcend the dualism of inside/outside.

As such, this paper first describes the focus group interviews with Chinese students and stories of three working Chinese residents in Japan. With the situation of Sino-Japanese society as the background of the study, the paper clarifies issues faced by Chinese residents in Japan in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, how they survived the risks, and how society is being repositioned in this regard.

2. Situation in Japan and China, and the Life of Chinese Residents in Japan

2.1. History of the spread of COVID-19 in Japan and China and the responses of both governments

COVID-19 was first discovered in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, in early December 2019, and subsequently spread throughout China and then rapidly worldwide. Based on the macro social context of the situation in Japan and China during COVID-19, we first summarize the basic situation for the discussion of individual lives. Table 1 summarizes the history of the spread of infection in Japan and China, compared along a time axis. Figures 1 and 2 show the daily variation in the number of infected individuals in Japan and China over time.

TABLE 1.
China-Japan COVID-19 Timeline (created by the authors based on information released by People's Daily and NHK)

China-Japan COVID-19 Timeline		
China	**Date**	**Japan**
Hubei Provincial Hospital of Integrated Chinese and Western Medicine reported cases of pneumonia of unknown cause.	2019. Dec.27	
The Huanan Seafood Market was closed for cleaning and disinfection.	2020. Jan.1	
	Jan.14 **The WHO declared a global health emergency.**	
	Jan.16	Kanagawa Prefecture confirmed its first case of COVID-19 when a man in his 30s who had previously travelled to Wuhan tested positive for it, marking the first confirmed case in Japan.
An annual banquet is held in Wuhan Baiduting Community, which likely contributing to the spread of the virus.	Jan.18	
Human-to-human transmission of the novel coronavirus confirmed.	Jan.20	
China shuts down transport to and from Wuhan.	Jan.23	
China extended the Spring Festival holiday to Feb 2 and postponed school openings.	Jan.26	
Wuhan decided to build two makeshift hospitals to treat the new pneumonia patients.	Feb.3	The Diamond Princess arrived at Yokohama and was placed under quarantine by the Japanese government.
	Feb.5	The Japanese government announced that several passengers of the Diamond Princess had tested positive.
	Feb.11 **The WHO gives official name for the novel coronavirus disease as COVID-19.**	
	Feb.13	A woman in her 80s died in Kanagawa Prefecture on that same day, marking the first death from COVID-19 in Japan.
	Feb.27	Shinzo Abe requested the closure of all elementary, junior high, and high schools from 2 March to the end of spring vacations, which usually conclude in early April.
	Mar.5	Japan announced quarantine restrictions for all visitors arriving from China and South Korea.
Wuhan closed all of its 16 public facility-turned temporary hospitals amid a continuous drop of patients in the city.	Mar.10	
Wuhan reported no newly confirmed cases.	Mar.19	
	Mar.24	A one-year postponement of the 2020 Summer Olympics was announced.
	Apr.7	Abe proclaimed a state of emergency from 8 April to 6 May for 7 prefectures.
Wuhan lifts its lockdown, resumes all transportation.	Apr.8	
	Apr.16	The Japanese government expanded the state of emergency to include all 47 prefectures in Japan.
	May.4	The Japanese government decided to extend the nationwide state of emergency established in April until the end of May.
	May.14	Japanese government officials declared that they had decided to suspend the emergency of 39 prefectures, which are feared of collapse of medical system.
	May.25	Shinzo Abe has announced he's lifting the government's emergency declaration for the five prefectures where it's still in place.
	Jun.19	Japanese Authorities relieved some of the preventive requirement against contagious transmission.
	Jul.2	Tokyo reported 107 new cases of the novel coronavirus Thursday, an alarming uptick that residents fear may push the central government to declare another state of emergency.
	Jul.23	981 new confirmers appeared throughout the day

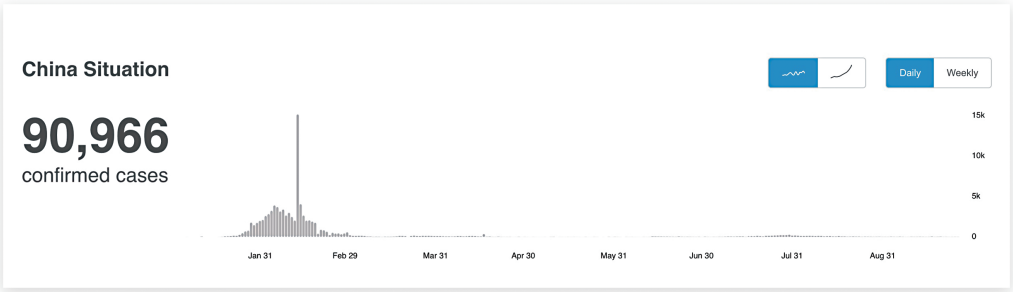

FIGURE 1.
Number of people infected with COVID-19 in mainland China (Source: WHO)

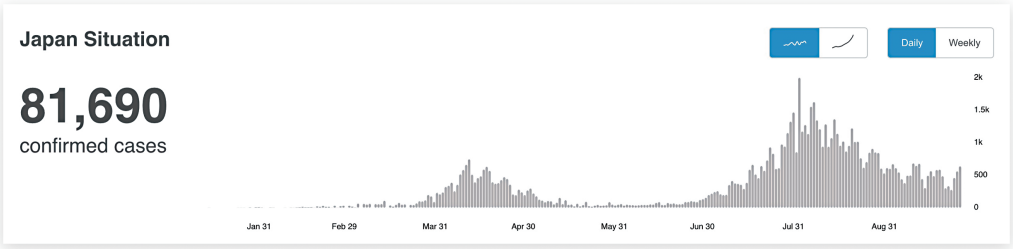

FIGURE 2.
Number of people infected with COVID-19 in Japan excluding cruise ships
(Source: WHO)

Table 1 shows that for China, the first report of pneumonia in Wuhan City at the end of 2019 triggered the COVID-19 outbreak. The subsequent blockade of Wuhan City, which was lifted on April 8, 2020, can be considered the first stage of convergence (the orange section in Table 1 indicates the time frame). In contrast, in Japan, Prime Minister Abe issued an administrative notice to refrain from large-scale events on February 27, 2020 and a state of emergency was declared for the whole country, which was not lifted until May 25. However, in July, the number of infected people in Japan rose again to signal the so-called second wave. At the time of writing, the situation is still not completely under control. The time frame for Japan's battle against COVID-19 in that period is briefly shown in Table 1 (the blue section). Comparing Figures 1 and 2, which show the number of infected people, indicates that the peak of infection in China was much earlier than in Japan, and the peak number of people infected was more than three times as high as the peak in Japan in August.

This comparison shows that the peaks of infection in Japan and China differed because the COVID-19 infection in China preceded that in Japan. Related to this, there was a time lag between the reaction and response of the Japanese and Chinese governments. Further, there was a significant difference in the national systems' enforcement of the pandemic control response to COVID-19.

2.2. The lives of Chinese people living in Japan during COVID-19 and the perspective of this study

Regular people living in the COVID-19 pandemic cannot decide which country is infected first or how the government responds, but they need to accept that like a barrier, our lives are always at the mercy of such things. It is not difficult to imagine, then, that the lives of Chinese people living in Japan were also affected by COVID-19, especially with the increasing discrimination against China and people of Chinese origin including Asian people who appear to be of Chinese origin as COVID-19 spread globally.

There have been discriminatory attacks on China using terms related to COVID-19 as the pandemic has spread. In a public speech, the President of the United States referred to the COVID-19 virus as the "Chinese virus," popularizing the inflammatory term[1]. Some Japanese politicians also stated that "the virus should be known as the 'Wuhan virus'"[2]. Many posts on the Internet referred to COVID-19 as "Wuhan pneumonia"[3]. Although the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the official name of "COVID-19" on February 11, 2020[4], these statements encouraging discrimination and rumor-mongering are common.

Further, people have been subjected to violent language in their daily lives. We discuss some examples here. In February, a postcard was sent to an elementary school in Kagawa Prefecture with the message, "Don't let people with Chinese parents attend school"[5]. In March, four shops in Yokohama's Chinatown were sent anonymous messages saying, "Chinese people are germs! Get out of Japan!"[6]. In early July, a Chinese man living in Tokyo went to a golf course with his relatives and shouted, "Nice play" in Chinese, as was his habit, and was verbally abused by angry Japanese customers who told him angrily to "Shut up and go back to China"[7].

These examples show how Chinese people living in Japan are viewed as the source of COVID-19 in Japan. However, since they received severe impressions of early COVID-19 from their native China, we believe that Chinese residents in Japan felt anxiety more strongly and earlier than the Japanese as the infection later spread in Japan. For example, on March 30, a mask distribution campaign was held in Shibuya by Chinese volunteers living in Japan. This campaign was aimed at helping with the mask scarcity in Japan and raising awareness of the need for vigilance against COVID-19 among Japanese people[8]. Based on this activity in Shibuya, various mask distribution campaigns were held by Chinese residents in Japan in various parts of the country[9].

Therefore, we can infer that during COVID-19, Chinese residents in Japan were not only affected by movement restrictions like the Japanese people, but were also aware of the lag between the Japanese and Chinese governments' response and the social situations. They also felt impatient and anxious about Japan's delay in its COVID-19 response. Thus, they were living in a complex situation under the discrimination becoming apparent in society.

Based on this, we consider it extremely important to deal with issues related to COVID-19

from a macroscopic perspective that encompasses international relations and national systems to understand the trends. However, the lives and perspectives of Chinese residents in Japan, who have been shaken by enormous changes in the world and international relations and who live between Japan and China, are generally overlooked. Therefore, it may be valuable to examine and give meaning to their individual memories, which cannot easily be captured as social memories of COVID-19. In other words, since an individual's "way of life" is both a social and personal attribute, and although ethnicity and other factors are gaining attention, complex experiences such as discrimination are rarely recorded or written down. Therefore, we thought that the contents of these interviews would be significant in securing their identities and recording their life practices.

Below, we describe the focus group interviews with Chinese students and results of analyzing the life histories of three working Chinese residents in Japan.

3. Voices of Chinese Students: Based on Focus Group Interviews

3.1. Research methods

We first surveyed Chinese students living in Japan to understand the impacts and changes they have experienced in Japanese society as university students in the months since the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan. We conducted focus group interviews hoping that the discussion would inspire the subjects, facilitate conversations through empathy, and evoke as vividly as possible the experiences and memories of COVID-19 that are difficult to see in their daily lives.

Specifically, we conducted an online focus interview via Zoom on August 31, 2020, at 1:30 pm for about 1.5 hours[10]. The topic was: "What I felt in my daily life as a Chinese student in Japan during the COVID-19 pandemic." The participants were eight Chinese students in Japan, including the authors. All participants are members of the same laboratory, all have lived in Japan since before COVID-19, and none had returned to China during this time. To facilitate the conversation, we conducted interviews in the Chinese language, the native language of the participants.

3.2. Direct impact of COVID-19

The rapid spread of COVID-19 meant that international movement between Japan and China was severely restricted from February 2020. Departures from China were banned, and entry into China from countries worldwide still—at the time of writing—requires a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test and two weeks of mandatory quarantine. Further, since April 2020, restrictions on activities within the university increased, and all lectures and classes were conducted online. Graduate students were prohibited from coming to the university campus in principle, but were allowed when it was necessary for research. The narratives of the Chinese students who participated in the group interviews indicate significant changes in academics due to the COVID-19 restrictions imposed at the university, which are described below in the interview quotes.

First, a disadvantage of online learning was noted as a lack of enthusiasm in discussions due to not being able to meet face-to-face:

> "(Since going online), I feel like the atmosphere of the workshop during class has become colder and we cannot sufficiently discuss things."

> "In classes that used to have many workshops, there are fewer opportunities for discussion, and it is difficult to develop the discussions that we have. Personally, I like face-to-face interaction, so I don't think I could get used to online seminars."

In addition, because of the restrictions on face-to-face interaction and international travel, international students of social science conducting fieldwork in China, such as the participants of this survey, found they were having much trouble implementing research methods such as participant observation and interviews in the field, which is the strength of these types of studies.

> "We can only do online interviews and no face-to-face interviews because we can no longer conduct field research, which is essential for social science research. When I speak with my research subjects online for the first time, I feel the conversation doesn't go smoothly and I can't deepen our relationship, so I am concerned about how to proceed."
>
> "In terms of research, it's not possible to conduct participant observation in China anymore, which would have allowed me to observe details such as the facial expressions and gestures of my research subjects in the field."

In addition to the inability to develop academic plans smoothly, we were told they were twice as nervous as usual about getting sick during the COVID-19 outbreak. Against this background, A had a fever for a week in early March, right around the time that the

COVID-19 pandemic began in Japan. Laboratory members were worried, and T, who lived in the same building as A, took care of her.

A described the experience of the illness as follows:

"(Before self-isolation), I thought it might be a cold because of the rain. Before the fever, I was quite scared and disinfected regularly, but after I actually got the fever, I felt fine. At that time, everyone was scared of me, so I stayed home. T made me food every day and placed it in front of the door, rang the bell, and ran away. T even gave me a stuffed animal to comfort me (laughs)... At the time, I did a lot of research on the Internet and felt it probably wasn't COVID-19 because my only symptom was a fever. But the people around me were worried about me... I didn't even go to the hospital at that time. I didn't even tell my parents. One of my friends in Japan is a doctor who gave aid in Wuhan, and when I asked him, he recommended not going to the hospital, staying home, and observing myself for a while. After that, it took about a week for the fever to go away."

T, who helped A, said:

> "When A got the fever, the timing was really bad, and I honestly didn't know whether she had COVID-19 or not, so I was worried. A's parents in China told me to help her because she is alone in Japan, and we're usually good friends, and I thought it would be wrong to panic and run away at such a time... Since I was cooking dinner anyway, I made more than enough for A as well. I thought she might need some emotional support, so I sent her favorite stuffed animal. Relatives were worried and reminded me several times to leave food at the door and keep a certain distance from A."

During this episode of fever, A chose self-isolation after considering the anxiety and safety of the people around her, and her friend T continued to support her, sending cooked food and a stuffed animal despite the associated anxiety. This shows the mutual support among international students affected by COVID-19 when the crisis of infection emerged in Japan. On an individual level, A decided to hide her situation from her family in China and to self-assess with the support of an international student like her, without relying on information from Japan.

3.3. Invisible exclusion of marginalized people in the COVID-19 pandemic

As evident above, since all the participants were in Japan before and after the initial outbreak of COVID-19, these international students' accounts revealed that although in their daily lives they are restricted and confined within their homes with online classes occupying most of their time, they still had many experiences of unpleasant looks and words in their limited public contact.

"I think it was at the beginning of the pandemic when I was still wearing thick clothes. When I was on the monorail and speaking with other Chinese people in Chinese, one guy glanced at me, looking displeased. Originally, he was on our line, but he then moved to another line. I felt it was rude."

"When I was still in Tokyo, a guy on the train noticed that my phone screen was in Chinese and quickly moved away."

Since the pandemic first began in Wuhan, China, with a 2–3 month time lag before it spread in Japan, Chinese students sometimes felt they were being recognized as being from China and felt uncomfortable stares. These unpleasant experiences were common during the time lag. In addition, during the Japan-China lag, international students working regular part-time jobs before the state of emergency was declared in Japan had even more unpleasant experiences at their jobs.

"When it was strict in China at the beginning, a customer at my part-time job asked me, 'Is your family close to Wuhan? Have you returned home recently?' When I said 'No,' they anxiously kept asking, 'Have you had any contact with your friends from China recently?' I had no choice but to tell them, 'I haven't been back home recently, and I wouldn't be able to go home even if I wanted to.' But that kind of thing has decreased since things settled down in China."

"Around mid-February, a customer at my part-time job proudly told me, the only Chinese person there, that he had gone to China at the end of January and was now safely back in Japan. I thought he was a strange person... Then, after the situation in Japan became more difficult, one of the customers worriedly asked me, 'Are you okay? Is your mother okay?' The worry was just for show, which made me angry. The situation was quite severe in Japan at the time, so why not worry about yourself instead of talking to me as if it was a concern for me? People say, 'I'm afraid of COVID-19, I'm afraid of taking the train,' but they don't wear masks properly. They take their stress out on us, or pass it onto us... I don't know why we're being forced to take responsibility for this."

"I've been in this laboratory since April, but when I was still working part-time at a pharmacy in Shinjuku, around the time of the Wuhan blockade, when checking out at the register, all the Chinese clerks were apprehensive about customers from Wuhan. One customer denied being from Wuhan, but the passport check revealed that this person was actually from Wuhan. The customers from Wuhan must have been scared, and we were scared too."

Thus, the international students' accounts reveal that they were hurt by the casual words and actions of the people they encountered in their daily lives. This included those who deliberately moved away when they found out they were Chinese, customers at their part-time jobs who repeatedly checked how recently they had returned to China, and overly attentive people concerned about other people's affairs. In addition, people in other countries have been avoiding Chinese people because of COVID-19, and as the infection spread further globally, there were calls to "impose responsibility" on China, where the pandemic originated. On one hand, similar to how Chinese people are avoided by people from other countries, there is a rising tendency in China for people outside Wuhan to avoid people from Wuhan, suggesting that there is now double avoidance.

Chinese people living in Japan have faced resentment not just from Japanese society but from China as well. Since COVID-19, the Chinese government has mandated that returnees be quarantined in designated hotels for two weeks immediately after entering the country to prevent cases of imported infection. The authors found that the common idea among Chinese students living in Japan is that they will return to China only if it is unavoidable, because the quarantine will take too much time. Further, in China, one of the measures implemented against importing COVID-19 infections is that if family members are overseas, the city government and ward government officers check to see if there are any plans for them to return to the country. This appears to be a perfect measure for quarantine, but in fact, during that time of the COVID-19 pandemic, the feelings of foreign students regarded by their home country, China, as "high-risk foreigners" were complicated. While they accepted the measures, the discussion about it was lively, as follows:

> "They have been taking strict measures so far (in China), so it seems to be under control now, but on the other hand, I feel that Japan is a little more lax now, which worries me a little. Recently, my local government sent 200 masks to my address in Japan to support me. But they said, 'Please don't come back' (laughs). (An officer from the ward government) calls my mom every day and says, 'Please tell your daughter not to come back, we'll send her some masks'."

> "I know, me too. People working in the civil service system should report on their own whether there are family members coming from Wuhan, from other high-risk areas, or from abroad."

> "The ward government or whatever contacted my mom and said, 'Please contact me as soon as your daughter comes back from abroad.' When she told them, 'She doesn't have plans to come back for a while,' they said, 'That's great'."

"Oh, I heard that from my mom as well."

In addition, there were attacks on Chinese students studying abroad on Chinese social media.

"Speaking of which, there is a lot of verbal abuse on social media. On Weibo, there were quite a few people saying that international students should not come back."

"Yeah. The other day, a returning student to Dalian refused to quarantine. That incident may have triggered such debate on the Internet."

International students abroad learned that their families had been contacted by the local government to confirm their safety, as mentioned. However, international students who want to conduct their field work in China for their research could only silently listen to comments like, "International students, don't come back" and whatever their government tells them. In addition, there was resistance to the arguments on the Internet. International students who are regarded as Chinese in their daily lives in Japan and looked down upon are not accepted in their home country either as "high-risk foreigners." This suggests that Chinese students find it difficult to establish an identity both in Japanese and Chinese society, and live on the margin between the two. In the current situation, this marginalization was further strengthened as they are easily excluded from the social situation in a way that is difficult to see.

3.4. Chinese students coping with the constant changes caused by COVID-19

The impact on academics, as noted above, was the adjustment to conducting face-to-face interviews online for research purposes and measures to promote research through literature reviews rather than field research. Some of the international students actively making efforts to conduct their research despite the movement restrictions said they were prepared to repeat a year, suggesting their concerns about changes to or the postponement of their research plans. Despite the disadvantage they have in terms of class discussions, as mentioned, the fact that all lessons are online because of COVID-19 is not all bad. As shown in the following account, the number of educational resources published for free on the Internet increased with COVID-19, and eliminating commuting time has been very convenient.

"COVID-19 has led to the release of many university courses for free, which may be good for educational reform."

"There has been a lot of discussion lately about how online classes might change traditional teaching methods. If all classes are online, people can attend them freely without wearing makeup, and the burden of lessons will be reduced."

> "Online classes have increased the amount of written materials, and you can prepare in advance."

Physically moving around is difficult during the pandemic, and positive and challenging ideas such as educational reform may come out of this predicament. Changing academic plans intentionally because one wants to is one thing, but there are difficult aspects regarding contact with others, as shown below.

> "I thought it was strange that we (Chinese people in Japan) were scared at the time, so we wore masks when we went out. The Japanese people seemed scared, but why didn't they wear masks?"

> "I met a Japanese professor on the day I left Tokyo in February, and he wasn't wearing a mask. I asked him if he had one, thinking he probably didn't, and he said, 'I have one, but it's too much trouble so I don't wear it.' I guess the Japanese never experienced SARS, so they don't care about it."

For Chinese students living in Japan, since the COVID-19 outbreak happened earlier in China, their awareness of and behavior regarding quarantine prevention also preceded the Japanese to a certain extent; hence, they voiced their dissatisfaction about the non-vigilance of Japanese people not wearing masks. This is an extension of the mask distribution campaign in Shibuya by the Chinese living in Japan described above.

However, even if they were dissatisfied or anxious, they tried to convince themselves by interpreting it as Japan's lack of experience with SARS. Similarly, from the earlier account of the international student who met a Japanese customer who returned safely from China, rather than complaining about what was said, the tendency is to interpret and try to rationalize the other person's behavior as, "Maybe the COVID-19 situation in China was tough at the time, but it was still better in Japan, so that person didn't think the situation was so dire. Maybe that's why he was bragging about how lucky he was." One way to deal with unpleasant feelings concerning COVID-19 is to try to understand other people's perspective and behavior rather than attacking them.

Further, under the circumstances of COVID-19 changing every day, an international student also said:

> "In the beginning, I checked the numbers of infected people every day, but I don't look anymore. The numbers are unreliable, so nobody looks at them. I think they're much higher than what is reported."

> "Recently, I joined an online group of Chinese people living in Japan on which debates about the COVID-19 situation between the countries were intensifying. At first, Japan's response was considered lax, and then, as the Japanese situation came under control, each country's response was believed to be effective in its own way. However, after the second wave hit, people think the response was insufficient after all.
> Ultimately, public opinion continues to change depending on the situation."

Thus, the credibility of the number of infected people disclosed by the government, Chinese residents' assessment of Japan's government response, and other factors change depending on how the situation shifts. International students are in a position to understand the existence of the changes while secondarily observing the trend. Further, although people on Chinese social media were verbally abusing international students, rather than vehemently reacting against it, the students were thinking calmly after learning about the incident that triggered the abuse. As the situation around COVID-19 is constantly changing, we learn from the experiences of these international students that to prevent confusion from the huge amount of information available, it is important to have the literacy to make calm judgments based on understanding the changing situation and origin of the abuse.

4. Life Stories of Chinese Residents in Japan as Working Adults

The focus group interviews conducted with Chinese students living in Japan in the previous section showed that even though there is a limited number of social situations where they are involved as international students, they are strongly aware of the changes that have taken place during this period and have been affected in various ways. In this section, we conduct a life story analysis of three working-age Chinese residents in Japan. They are considered more susceptible to the trends of Japanese society than students because they work in Japan. In addition, we focus on the changes in their individual thoughts due to the changing COVID-19 situation. As such, we will discuss to understand their chosen way of life while flexibly responding to the rapidly changing society.

4.1. Life story of C, who lives near a cruise ship

C is a 26-year-old woman who came to Japan to study in 2016, completed 2.5 years of graduate school, and started working for a major company in Yokohama in 2018.

4.1.1 Call for vigilance against COVID-19 in the "early days"

In January 2020, when COVID-19 was spreading in Wuhan and other parts of China, C was in Japan for work. Worried about her family's safety, she bought in Japan masks, disinfectant, and other supplies that were sold out in China, and sent them to China. She also started to

take preventive actions such as wearing a mask and disinfecting before others around her. In February, the situation in China became more serious, peaking in mid-February. Furthermore, the first fatalities due to the disease in Japan were discovered, and a cruise ship carrying infected passengers entered Yokohama Port. The ship was docked very close to where C works. The account below shows C's thoughts and how she coped with the situation at the time (account as of May 2020).

> "I was still going to work every day at the time. I was very alert when I commuted by train. I wore a mask and used disinfectant very often. I thought I was surrounded by germs. At the time, the Japanese government had not had much of a response, and I thought it was slow and weak compared to China's. The infected cruise ship, which was often mentioned in the news, was at a nearby port, and passengers were getting off the ship and dispersing, not knowing if there was a possibility of infection. I watched it from the top and saw people who should have been quarantined moving around in normal traffic. It really scared me to the point that truly, I thought even the air I was breathing was dirty."

> "Since then, my colleague, another Chinese person, and I started to spread awareness among other colleagues about the severity of COVID-19 when we had time. But our boss, an American, said, 'But it's just a flu. C, you're exaggerating.' This made me really angry. Other colleagues said, 'That's awful,' but did not take proper measures to prevent spread either. At the time, I was the angriest, and I felt impatient. Then, as the situation in Japan deteriorated and masks were sold out everywhere, people finally became serious. At the time, I left a box of the masks I had bought before to the office, prepared a disinfectant, and told the people who needed them to use them freely. The masks were insufficient even for personal use. But if everyone is safe, I'd be safe too."

This account shows that C had a different sense of time than Japanese society. "Early" to C was January and February, which were the early days of COVID-19 in China. Therefore, C, who had lived in Japan since before the outbreak, started taking infection prevention measures at the same time as China, before the rest of Japanese society.

The "early" in C's account shows the time lag between the Japanese and Chinese government responses because of the different situations between the countries. Also evident is the time difference in psychological aspects such as anxiety between the boss and superiors living in the lagging Japanese society compared to C, who was from China. The instance of voluntarily handing out masks in the company shows not just her awareness of the need for prevention as a Chinese person, but also her concern for the people around her as someone living in Japanese society. In C's case, the months of living with the time lag between the

two countries' responses were the most difficult, but as Japan's full-scale response started (declaration of the state of emergency), the psychological stress gradually seemed to ease. From this situation, we see that C's response to COVID-19 was both as that of a Chinese person with strong ties to her native China, and as a person living her daily life in Japan.

We conducted several interviews during this period regarding her memories in the early days of the pandemic, finding that C's impressions were gradually changing. The account above was from May 2020, but C's account about the "early days" as of August was as follows:

> "In the early days, my Japanese colleagues understood the situation in China and were attentive to me. I think they're all kind. Thinking about it now, I can understand the reaction of my Japanese colleagues and American boss at the time. At that time, my boss said, 'You're exaggerating.' I was angry, but it is impossible to change my boss' American way of thinking, and I wasn't trying to change it in the first place. In contrast, from his perspective, he might have respected my 'exaggeration' (laughs)... In the early days, as a Chinese person, I tried my best to convey the severity of COVID-19 in my own way. Some people were affected by what I said, but others were not. But compared to other departments, more people in our department were wearing masks, so I think my words were effective to an extent."

Thus, although C's account is that it was "impossible" to change the mind of her American boss, as a Chinese person living in Japan, she experienced suffering in common with her native country. At the early stage, we see that even though she was with her boss and colleagues daily, she felt helpless in sharing her anxiety, as though she were living in another dimension, or that she had a different level of risk perception about COVID-19. Thus, the results suggest that the "marginalized" existence between Japanese and Chinese societies was further strengthened by the influence of COVID-19.

4.1.2. Interpretation of a "shared destiny"

Here, we consider the interpretation of the "shared destiny"[11] that C speaks of.

> "In the 'early days' when the infection was at its peak in China, I read the news every day, and all I saw were stories and the numbers of death that were so cruel I was heartbroken and depressed. Even though I was abroad in Japan, I had a very strong feeling that I had a shared destiny with China."

> "Since then, the infections in China decreased and the number of infections in Japan began to increase (March–April). One day at the end of March, I was in a meeting when I received an internal phone call about the first infection in the company. After the

> call, we were all adjourned, and work from home started that day. After that, all social activities stopped and I felt strange. To remedy this, I had online dinner parties with my colleagues and cooked my own food to improve my mood. Since then, I didn't have to worry about the domestic situation (in China) in particular, so I felt that everyone here (in Japan) was having a harder time, and I believed that I had a shared destiny with everyone in Japan as well. However, it is also quite severe in the US and worldwide. As the situations world over are connected, we can't say that the pandemic is over unless it is over everywhere."

C referred to China and her Chinese colleagues in her company as having a "shared destiny" in the early days, but after work from home started and Japan began its response in earnest, she believed in her shared destiny with everyone in Japan as well. Further, the change in C's account was impressive, as she expanded the scope of the community, saying, "The COVID-19 situation world over is connected." This was because the psychological stress she was experiencing stemming from remote work and the COVID-19 situation in China had subsided, and it was possible for C to reconsider the issues more calmly as the situation changed day by day worldwide.

4.2. Life story of H, a new member of society who underwent PCR testing

H is a 26-year-old woman who has been in Japan for 3 years. She completed graduate school in Kanazawa in April this year, and got a job at a company in Kanazawa. However, she was transferred to Tokyo in July, when the number of COVID-19 patients was increasing in Tokyo. H, who moved to Tokyo, spoke of her experience.

4.2.1. From Kanazawa to Tokyo: New internal move

H started working at a local company in Kanazawa in April, and was happy to continue living in Kanazawa where she had lived for two and a half years. She said,

> "When COVID-19 was spreading (in China), I had been paying attention to it. I know it was difficult, but I didn't really feel it because Kanazawa is a rural area, and there aren't many people. Initially, I was following the public data on the local city hall website, but I soon stopped. I heard in the news that the situation was bad in Tokyo and Osaka, but it's different here."

However, the order for her to move to Tokyo was issued in May. H was not comfortable with moving to a big city because she dislikes crowded places and the COVID-19 situation was worse there. Thus, H contacted us anxiously about the move.

> "I said before that Kanazawa was my place. I have to move to Tokyo because it seems to be a company rule. At first, everyone was desperate to go to Tokyo or Osaka for job hunting, but I thought Kanazawa would be fine for me. There are so many people there... When they heard I was moving to Tokyo, my Japanese colleagues said, 'Tokyo is dangerous, be careful.' A senior colleague came back from a business trip to Tokyo recently, and the section chief said to him as a joke, 'Did you come from Tokyo? Go away, it's dangerous there' (laughs). Everyone seems to be afraid of Tokyo."

H's resistance and anxiety before moving to Tokyo became apparent.

When we contacted H, who officially moved to Tokyo in July, and asked her how she was doing, she told us the following:

> "I got used to it surprisingly quickly. My new apartment is nice and I like it. If the room you live in is comfortable, you can start in any new place. But the commute is hard. I commute to work on the busiest route, and was initially worried about being squeezed in with so many people every day, but now I think it cannot be helped and there's nothing I can do. I'm already tired and I've become desensitized."

H's story indicates that she was resistant to moving to the city because she was ordered to do so and because of COVID-19, but once she actually relocated to Tokyo where the risk of infection is high, she seemed to become desensitized to the disease. The difficulty of commuting and fact that she came into contact with so many people every day meant she felt "it's useless, it doesn't matter what I do." Another contributing factor is the mental fatigue of the long-term COVID-19 situation.

4.2.2. PCR test experience: What you cannot tell your family

On August 5, a case of a person infected with COVID-19 was found in the company, and everyone was adjourned immediately. H was asked to quarantine at home as she had come into indirect contact. H contacted the authors on the train on her way home.

> "I'm not okay now. An infected person had frequent contact with the lady sitting in front of me. Everyone at the company seemed calm, and when I wanted to do a PCR test, I was told there was no need for it. But even if I try to get tested, I'm afraid I will get infected on the way to the hospital. Also, the company said they would pay for the test. I just joined the company and I haven't done anything yet. How can I spend the company's money?"

The next day, we received a message from H saying, "I heard some of my (Japanese)

colleagues had been tested, but even if I wanted to ask, they wouldn't be able to say." On August 7, H finally decided to undergo a PCR test, and three days later, posted on social media: "I'm safe!"

A month earlier in July, H seemed desensitized to COVID-19. The stress and fatigue from work had taken precedence, hiding her fear of COVID-19, but when an infected person was found near her, her fear seemed to increase manifold. On the other hand, it is typical for Chinese people to want to undergo PCR testing as soon as an infected person is found, because the memory of the tragedy of infection in China is burned into their minds. However, H's account reveals some considerations unique to a new employee, such as payment for the test, which highlights some aspects of being a working adult living in Japanese society.

H, who now works from home every day, looked back on those days and said,

> "I was most frightened when I made that call on the train on my way home. That was really the only moment. When I got home, I was already calmly thinking about what to do... My colleagues were kind and told me to let them know if I had any problems, but I didn't want to ask them for advice regarding my life. Work is work, and it's best to keep a certain distance. I didn't even tell my parents, and still haven't. If I told them, they would worry about me and definitely tell me I should go home. I'd get about five phone calls every day. That wouldn't help me. It's just a burden."

H's life story revealed how she never consulted with her colleagues or family about her fear of infection, or whether she should undergo a PCR test, but asked her friends who were not with her for advice and made the decision on her own. H remembered the tragedy of the first wave in China and responded more sensitively than the Japanese when she realized the risk of infection. As for her subsequent response, she found it difficult to speak with her family, who were unaware of the situation in Japan, and did not talk about it with those near her because she unsure if she was infected or not. Thus, she relieved her stress with friends who were far away, assessed her own situation, and considered countermeasures. H, who is now safely back at work, was afraid to get on the train, and based on how she handled the situation afterward, was isolated and without support in a place where she had to rely on herself.

4.3. Life story of L, a Wuhan native

L is a 25-year-old woman from Wuhan, where the COVID-19 pandemic originated in China. She came to Japan in 2016, attended a Japanese-language vocational school for a year, and then went to graduate school in Kyoto. She planned to complete the program in March 2020 and begin working for a company in Kyoto in April. She returned to Wuhan temporarily on January 20, 2020, just before completing her master's course, was in the midst of preparing for her master's thesis defense, and had already received a job offer and planned to return to

Japan on February 2. However, the Wuhan city blockade from January 23 halted these plans.

The following summarizes L's life story about how she dealt with and adjusted in the midst of such drastic changes.

4.3.1. Wuhan's blockade of despair

On the Wuhan blockade, L said,

> "I didn't think I would have time to go home for a while after finishing graduate school, so I decided to go back to Wuhan even if just for a short time while I was free. At the time, I thought the COVID-19 situation would probably be okay, but I never imagined it would end up being a city blockade. It was awful. I was planning to be home for a week or so, so I didn't bring my computer or iPad. I was at my parent's house, so I didn't have a proper Wi-Fi connection either. I borrowed a computer from a friend to prepare for my master's thesis defense, but the security was very strict and it was difficult to move around normally. I asked the security guard several times to make an exception and managed to get the computer. All communications were done via email, the thesis defense was online, and the university professors were supportive, so I was able to complete it without a hitch. I also had to cancel the lease on my room in Japan, so I asked a friend there for help. I had to send the key to my room to tidy up my stuff, so I sent the key by overseas mail. They told me that the key was a metal product so it might not pass through customs, so I put a note on the box containing the key explaining my situation. At the end of the note, I wrote, "I am praying for the health of you and your family during this difficult time." This was around the time of my graduation, and while I had many things to do and procedures to follow, I was stuck at home and couldn't go anywhere. I was desperate at that time. "When all that settled down, I was a little tired of being at home. I couldn't go out after seeing the news, and by the end of March, I thought I would collapse. The blockade was lifted around that time. I was relieved, but scared again because I thought there was still risk out there."

L's story shows how the COVID-19 situation changed when she returned home temporarily. Although she was confined to her house during the Wuhan city blockade, she was making every effort to keep up with her schoolwork and cancel her room without delay. Rather than the risk of infection that COVID-19 poses, we saw an aspect of despair at the inability to cross national borders because of the pandemic, and the inability to develop plans even at critical times.

4.3.2. I wish to remain in my hometown

Even after the Wuhan blockade was lifted, restrictions on international movement were

strengthening, and L did not know when she would be able to return to Japan. Thus, she started working part-time at a state-owned company in Wuhan, thinking she would do something rather than just wait. When we interviewed her in May, L had been working part-time for another month, and was beginning to think about finding a job in Wuhan based on this experience.

> "The company in Japan informed me that they will extend my visa, but now I am actually debating whether I should return to Japan or not. Regardless of COVID-19, these changes (in China) are so drastic that I don't know what apps everyone is using in their daily lives. Everyone's pace is so fast, I feel like I can't keep up. I initially thought that I would work in Japan for a few years and then return to China with some overseas work experience, but looking at the current situation, I'm worried that in a few years I won't be able to keep up with the speed of development here. I spent a lot of time at home during this period, and sometimes thought that staying here would be nice. I don't want to stay in a place where I can't put down roots anymore. I miss home. My parents also want me to stay close to them."

L seems to be moving away from the idea of starting a job in Japan, but when we asked if she was thinking of looking for jobs in big Chinese cities like Beijing or Shanghai, she said,

> "I haven't thought about it. I heard that a friend of a friend was fired in Beijing the other day. Just because he is from Wuhan. I can't really put it into words, but I guess this is the 'pain of Hubei' (laughs). Hubei is a serious disaster, while other places are 'pure land.' It must be discrimination, although I don't really know for sure."

When we interviewed L again in August, she told us that she had quit her previous part-time job and had started working at a university in Wuhan in July.

> "It's been tough preparing for employment (in China) and I was tired. I also officially resigned from my job in Japan. I emailed them. Maybe they wanted me to tell them I was quitting. The rules are that I can't be fired, and I would end up becoming an employee who never actually returns to Japan. Everyone seems to be returning to Wuhan these days. Even people from overseas as well as from Beijing and Shanghai. I guess COVID-19 helped everyone understand. Private companies in Beijing and Shanghai are very risky. When the economy goes into recession, they immediately restructure. Everyone says state-owned companies in their hometowns are more stable."

L's story shows that her life choices changed drastically when she was forced to change jobs

during COVID-19. In other words, the sudden isolation when she temporarily returned home led her to stay in China for a long time, and looking at the environment at home again and getting indirect information about Japan, she considered her future career and place in life from the perspective of what was important to her during the COVID-19 pandemic. The fact that she chose her hometown after rescinding an offer of employment overseas may indicate that she felt she had no choice because of movement restrictions, but even so, I think we see her inner comfort and attachment brought about by the hardships she underwent in her hometown with COVID-19. On the other hand, we cannot discuss whether discrimination against Wuhan actually exists in other parts of China because it is not apparent. However, the fact that L, who is from Wuhan, believed that friends from her hometown had been discriminated against suggests that people therefrom feel guilty after the disaster. Here, the significant issue of the "involution of identity" is hidden, which we elaborate in the next section.

5. Chinese Residents in Japan During the COVID-19 Pandemic and their Boundaries

Chapters 3 and 4 described the various experiences and accounts of Chinese people living in Japan during COVID-19 based on the narratives of Chinese students in Japan and stories of working Chinese people in Japan. This section deepens the analysis of the perspective of Chinese residents in Japan, focusing on their lives during the pandemic and the social reality of COVID-19.

5.1. Marginalized nature of Chinese residents in Japan strengthened in the early days

As the risk of COVID-19 spread worldwide from its origin in Wuhan, China, this study reveals that the marginalization of Chinese residents in Japan living in the interstices of their respective societies intensified, especially during the time lag between the two governments' responses.

The focus group interviews with the international students revealed they were aware of unpleasant stares and overly kind attention daily. While they were living in the same Japanese society, their identity as being from China was being molded and suffocated from others' perspective because of the influence of COVID-19. On the other hand, there were growing arguments—administratively and online—in their home country that "international students should not come back," and their identity as an overseas resident was exaggerated and eliminated. For foreign students who before COVID-19 could move freely across the border and were supposed to be able to enjoy the best of both Japanese and Chinese societies simultaneously, COVID-19 restricted their mobility and thus stalled their academic progress, and caused their visible exclusion from both Japanese society, where they lived and studied, and their home country, China.

On the other hand, the life stories of the working adults, one from Yokohama and the other

from Wuhan who withdrew her job offer from the Japanese company, similarly reinforce the boundaries in the early stage. Although C tried to raise the awareness of those near her, feeling uneasy about the lag between the responses of Japan and China, she was disappointed when she received the reply that she was "exaggerating."

This suggests the psychological boundaries between the two countries were strengthened, because the memories of COVID-19 that preceded in their home country could not be shared with the people close to them in Japan. In the case of L, during the month-long blockade when she was unable to leave her house, even though her movement was restricted, she tried desperately to overcome the difficulties of studying and moving in Japan, both of which were very important to her. However, she ultimately decided to find a new job in Wuhan subsequent to her long-term physical and mental separation from Japan. In addition, she felt discriminated against on another level: Wuhan from other parts of China, and she could not feel a sense of belonging in Japan or in other parts of China. Thus, the movement restrictions due to COVID-19 strengthened physical and psychological boundaries, and the existence of a double margin was suggested and found to be complex in its inner reality.

Thus, there are three reasons the marginalized nature of Chinese residents in Japan became so pronounced, especially in the early days. First is the difference in government response due to differences in the national systems of Japan and China. In China, the rapid spread of COVID-19 was effectively controlled by introducing technology to identify infected persons and their contacts, and the government's thorough and forceful measures against the disease (Kajitani, 2020). In contrast, the Chinese residents in Japan, who were living under the vague and weak response of the Japanese government, felt a different level of anxiety compared to the Japanese people. On the other hand, in their home country, which was supposed to give them a sense of security, the government consistently implemented compulsory measures to control imported infections and discouraged the return of international students who were considered as overseas residents, expanding the boundary wall.

Second, the Chinese residents in Japan have a sense of fear and guilt because they are from the country where COVID-19 originated. Chinese residents in Japan have strong memories of the infection spreading in their home country before it reached Japan; thus, their fear began before that of Japanese people's. Moreover, like L who was born in Wuhan and initially felt guilt for being from the area of origin, Chinese residents in Japan may have felt some guilt before those from other countries including people in Japan. Therefore, they may have been more sensitive than usual to hostile looks and words.

Third, in the depressed atmosphere of the world due to the pandemic, a tendency has been observed of attacking the first country where COVID-19 was observed to relieve stress, although this may have been partly influenced by the international political discourse. However, remember that even the slightest individual aggressive action may have contributed to the eventual exclusion of the people who were marginalized.

5.2. Changes over time and relaxation of boundaries

The previous section discussed the strengthening of marginalization; however, at the time of writing, it has been nine months since the initial outbreak of COVID-19, and as time passes, the ideas of people are also gradually shifting. Amid these changes, this study has revealed a relaxation of the marginalization of Chinese residents in Japan.

As indicated by the international students' accounts, daily discomfort related to COVID-19 was concentrated in the early stages of the pandemic. Since May, Japan also took measures to stop activities and restrict movement, so the daily discomfort has almost disappeared. There was also an awareness that the targets of discrimination would change over time. C, a working adult, was extremely anxious during the early days, but since starting to work from home from April 2020 until now, her anxiety about COVID-19 has been suppressed and she could calmly reconsider and reflect on the reactions of the people around her in the early days and the Japanese government's response. Her interpretation of "shared destiny" seemed to have expanded from what was originally just Chinese people to those fighting COVID-19 worldwide. From this, the gradual change of the COVID-19 situation became clear, and as time passed, she could more information calmly as she received it and modify her thinking. On the other hand, H's psychological anxiety fluctuated with the series of events related to COVID-19, such as moving to Tokyo from the countryside and discovery of an infected person in her company. Rather than being influenced by the objective social infection situation, she changed according to the situation she encountered. In other words, the anxiety due to COVID-19 may dynamically shift, but does not necessarily follow a pattern. Rather, it develops in various ways according to each person's unique experience.

Amid these changes, the marginalization of the Chinese residents intensified during the early stages, but then gradually eased off. For example, despite their unpleasant feelings or complaints, when the international students shared their experiences in the interviews conducted in late August, they tried to rationalize the other person's behavior through semantic interpretations based on the social situation at the time, stating: "They have no experience of SARS" or "It was still better in Japan at the time." Further, C's shift in her interpretation of a "shared destiny" and reinterpretation after reflecting on the reactions of her American boss and her colleagues in the early days showed her efforts to understand their perspective and behavior. From this, noteworthy is that Chinese people living in Japan can alleviate their marginalization due to COVID-19 by devising ways to understand the behavior of the people near them, rather than considering which society they belong to.

For the Chinese living in Japanese, this easing of boundaries through understanding others may signify their adaptation to their own lives and environment in response to the long-lasting COVID-19 pandemic. In the early turmoil of COVID-19, attacks against each other due to impatience and anxiety may have been inevitable, but now, nine months later,

everyone wants to return to their lives as much as possible while living in the pandemic. From this reconsideration, by reinterpreting and rationalizing the behavior of the opponent, one can reduce one's mental burden and reconstruct a peaceful living environment through understanding others. This can be considered a manifestation of efforts to ease boundaries to survive the confines thereof, which COVID-19 has strengthened for Chinese residents in Japan. We should learn how to live wisely as a marginalized person by actively trying to understand others even during difficult times to regain a better life.

5.3. Involution of identity

Thus far, we have examined the experiences and memories of Chinese residents in Japan from the perspective of the strengthening and weakening of boundaries. Finally, we reconsider the involution of identity during COVID-19 seen in the life story of L from Wuhan. Involution is an academic term that refers to a situation where an individual's identity becomes internally more complex while outward development is limited.

As mentioned, natives of Wuhan saw the emergence and complexity of the double margin, an "Other" from the perspectives of Japan and China. In other words, we must focus on the fact that an identity is externally constructed in China that differs from that of other Chinese people—as "outsiders"—and they have an identity that differs from that of the Japanese. These boundaries will likely be resolved to a certain extent as COVID-19 becomes controlled, and in many cases, will be forgotten in the objective narratives of historical facts and people's social memories. However, the weight of personal memory will remain for those who will live through the major changes that will be forced upon them as they change their life choices as individuals. In other words, the desire to belong to a group of people outside oneself or exclusion from it sometimes leads to the fear of others. In general, it reminds us that there are things we can think of in a global society that are not covered by words such as discrimination and prejudice. In particular, the invisible and delicate sway of the mind is difficult to express clearly in numerical terms and tends to remain locked away in the back of the mind, and as such, is generally overlooked.

Here, I quote the following words by Lebanese-French author Amin Maalouf in *In the Name of Identity* (Maalouf, 2019):

All of us should be encouraged to embrace our own diversity and to envision our identity as the sum of our different attributes. We should not think that there is only one identity—it will be considered a supreme attribution and will become a tool of exclusion and sometimes of war. Especially for those whose culture of origin does not match the culture of the society in which they live, they should be able to accept this dual belonging without too much hardship. They must be able to maintain their connection to their culture of origin and not feel that they have to hide it as if it were a shameful disease, and at the same time, they must be open to the

culture of the host country" (Maalouf, 2019:185-186).

In these days of active international travel, people's identities are not limited to their countries of origin. However, there is a need to understand that each identity is diverse, variable, flexible, and complex for people who live in multiple countries, speak multiple languages, and live within the boundaries of multiple cultural backgrounds.

6. Conclusion

This paper focused on the lives and perspectives of the Chinese people living in Japan who are caught between the two countries to clarify the significance of the situation and understand their thoughts of risks and anxiety, which are difficult to express in words. Previous research on COVID-19 examined attitudes of avoidance toward foreigners (Yamagata, 2020), providing valuable data that presents a gradual trend. However, the present study revealed that the inner thoughts of each individual as well as the dynamic changes of mind and complex inner realities that sometimes contradict behavior underlie such regularity and lawfulness. Cultivating literacy in the ever-changing world of COVID-19 and deepening our understanding of others across cultures and social backgrounds will be an important key to resolving conflicts during the pandemic in a bottom-up manner from the individual to national level. At a time when the international situation around COVID-19 is yet to be resolved, the authors hope that people worldwide will live as having a "shared destiny" and the mental preparedness to coexist with COVID-19 in the long term. Furthermore, it is hoped people will try to understand the perspectives of "others" rather than opposing them, and overcome greater challenges by drawing on the COVID-19 experience.

In "A Sociological Study of the Individual" (Sociological Review, 32, 2-12 (1981)), Takashi Nakano states, "We must seek a new image of humanity. There is a concern that the future of mankind will be jeopardized if this trend continues, and I believe that a new typology and new sociology are needed to change the existing human typology and to present a new archetype of the individual. For this, we need to study actual individuals." When expanding the present study to understand "marginalized people" who survive while dealing with disasters, we will consider the significance of human lifestyles and individual life histories by examining various cases, remaining aware of the importance of the "unspoken."

Notes

1) BBC News Web Edition, "Trump says new virus is 'Chinese virus' - China protests," March 19, 2020.
2) Mainichi Shimbun Web Edition, "I don't mean to deny calling it the 'novel coronavirus',"

Mr. Aso explained, March 23, 2020.

3) The World Health Organization (WHO) has established guidelines to prevent attacks on specific regions and ethnic groups as well as the promotion of discrimination and prejudice by avoiding the use of country and place names in the naming of viruses. However, the authors realized that many comments like "Wuhan pneumonia" were seen in the comment sections of news reports about COVID-19.

4) On February 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the selection of COVID-19 as the official name for the new coronavirus disease spreading mainly in China. COVID-19 is a combination of the words "Corona," "Virus," and "Disease" and the year 2019, when it was first reported to WHO.

5) NHK News Web Edition: "Elementary school in Kagawa Prefecture receives anti-Chinese postcards." February 26, 2020.

6) NHK News Web Edition, "City investigates anti-China letters sent to multiple stores in Yokohama's Chinatown," March 5, 2020.

7) Yahoo News, "In response to 'Chinese, go home,' they continue to pick up trash in silence. Chinese living in Japan are quietly resolute in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic," August 26, 2020.

8) Yahoo News, "Japanese must be more vigilant against COVID-19! Chinese volunteers in Japan plead," April 11, 2020.

9) For the description of the distribution campaign, see the Japanese edition of People's Daily, "Pandas Giving Back: Overseas Chinese volunteers distribute masks on Tokyo streets," March 2, 2020, and Mainichi Shimbun Web Edition, "Novel pneumonia: Chinese woman distributes masks in Shibuya, Tokyo, giving back on behalf of Wuhan," February 27, 2020. Based on an article on February 27, 2020.

10) The interviews were conducted online to prevent more than three people gathering as a measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

11) The concept of the "shared destiny of mankind" was proposed at the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in November 2012. It emphasized that no individual or group of individuals can survive without mutual dependence and support, and that we should believe in the bonds between people and power of human beings: "Let us live together and laugh together." C's use of the term "shared destiny" may incorporate the positive nuances of these remarks by the Chinese government.

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