

A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of People who are Homeless in Japan.

by

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Abstract

In this paper based dissertation, experiences of people who are/were homeless in Japan were explored using narrative inquiry. Treating narratives as storied phenomena under study, narrative inquiry is considered both as a research methodology and as a way of understanding human experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Through engaging in weekly face-to-face conversations over three months in Japan, the participants and I slowly co-created a relational space where we traveled to each other's worlds (Lugones, 1987), and co-composed stories of us and our relationship. As we lived in the midst of our lives and in our relationship, our stories intersected and interacted by shaping ways to inquire into experiences. Drawing on the life stories of three participants whose name are Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama, the complexity and the multiplicity entailed within their experiences of being homeless in Japan were revealed. Their experiences of being homeless in Japan bring forward important insights into resistance to the dominant narratives about homelessness in Japan. Their stories also call forth attentiveness to their untold sufferings caught by difficulties of living on the streets, and to their strength and generosity they have nourished amidst their experiences of being homeless. Their bodies, which appear in public places can be further understood as a political stance to articulate their lives to others and summon up human connectedness underpinned by caring and respectful recognitions.

This study involves multi-layered considerations of homelessness in Japan, while I keep in mind the relational ways of living with the stories of Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama. From a methodological point of view, I inquired into my role as a researcher in relation to Yoshi, Ama, and Apapane to explore relational ethics in narrative inquiry. Through retelling and reflecting on the stories they shared in our conversations, I identified four narrative threads that illuminate both the diversity of their experiences and the links that weave through their experiences. From a

philosophical point of view, I engaged in thinking about the implications of the body of people who are homeless in Japan as a political stance to bring about changes in recognition and to reconsider the concepts of human right and citizenship. Attending closely to their lives, their stories did not only invite me to understand their experiences, but also to inquire into my experiences of working as a nurse in Japan and of coming to Canada. This dissertation closed with implications for advancing nursing knowledge and practice, and an encouragement to work towards an equitable society and ethical attitudes of care.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Hiroko Kubota. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name: “A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of People in Japan who are Homeless or Precariously Housed”, Study ID. Pro00053089, January 7th, 2015.

This thesis takes a paper-based format. Three papers will be, or have been submitted as journal articles. Chapter 1 is the introduction of the research including the researcher’s background stories, the research puzzles. Chapter 2 is the literature review of homelessness in Japan. Chapter 3 provides an overview of narrative inquiry applied as a research methodology in this study. This is followed by Chapter 4 in which I reflected on my experiences of entering into and situating myself as a researcher in the field, including an introduction of how I met three participants, Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama. Chapter 5, 6, and 7 are the narrative accounts of Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama. In Chapter 8, I wrote about my experience of exiting the field.

Chapter 9, 10, and 11 are papers which are or will be submitted for publication. Chapter 9 of this dissertation, titled “Embracing tensions: Thinking about relational ethics through narrative inquiry into experiences of people who are homeless in Japan”, has been submitted as a book chapter to a book, *The Relational Ethics of Narrative Inquiry*, edited by Dr. Jean Clandinin, Dr. Sean Lessard, and Dr. Vera Caine. This chapter focuses on the consideration of relational ethics in narrative inquiry through attending to relational tensions. Chapter 10 is entitled as ““I hope one more flower will bloom in my life”: Retelling the stories of being homeless in Japan through narrative inquiry”. This chapter presents key findings from conversations with Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama in which I highlighted four narrative threads shaping the diversity of their experiences of being homeless in Japan. This manuscript has been submitted to *Social & Cultural Geography*

in July 2017. Chapter 11 of the dissertation is submitted as “Recognizing the body as being political: Considering Arendt’s concepts in the context of homelessness in Japan” to a journal, *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, in June 2017. In this paper I pay close attention to philosophical contemplation of the body of people who are homeless in Japan as a political stance, drawing on the work of the German political philosopher Hannah Arendt.

This dissertation is closed by Chapter 12 which is a conclusion of the study. In this chapter, I think about the implications of the study in term of personal, practical, and social significances and connect the study with the field of nursing, in terms of knowledge development and practice improvement.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my family in Japan who devote their abundant love and care to my study and life regardless of the distance and create a home where I can always return to.

おじいちゃん、おばあちゃん、お母さん、愛ちゃん、離れていてもいつも支えてくれて、私が帰ることのできる場所を作ってくれてありがとう。

I dedicate this work to my husband, Hiroshi, who generously and patiently supported me during the program and always stays alongside me to make our life more fun, happier, and brighter.

I appreciate all the people who I came across in my life and who shared their love, grace, care, teachings, and stories with me. All of these memories have shaped me and will guide my life and soul that continue to strive and grow in a good way.

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I am deeply grateful to Yoshi, Ama, and Apapane for trusting our relationships and for sharing their life stories with me. I will forever embrace and honor their lives and experiences.

My work was possible because of the support I received from many people. First, I want to recognize the Catholic Social Action Center in Kobe, which accepted me as a researcher and a volunteer. They supported my study in various ways, such as through assisting me in the recruitment of participants and arranging a place where we could have conversations. Thank you for taking the time to understand the study and for creating a space for me. I deeply appreciate the people whom I met at the Catholic Social Action Center; they always welcomed me and generously included me to a part of their community. カトリック社会活動神戸センターの皆さま、研究を受け入れ、サポートをしていただき本当にありがとうございました。

I appreciate my supervisory committee, Dr. Vera Caine, Dr. D. Jean Clandinin, Dr. Solina Richter, and Dr. Lynette Shultz for their continuous guidance and support to my study. Their advice and encouragement gave me an assurance and taught me to think deeper about what it means to engage with people in research. Throughout my study, their support always embodied a sense of community and care, which helped me see who I am and who I am becoming. I am also thankful for Dr. Susan Sommerfeldt for being the chair during my final oral defense.

I would like to acknowledge my external examiners, Dr. Helen Kohlen and Dr. Gary Harfitt. I want to thank Dr. Helen Kohlen, who inspired me to view things from different aspects and who taught me the importance of asking questions. I also want to express my appreciation to Dr. Gary Harfitt who, with his heartfelt acknowledgement of my study, helped me build

confidence in what I have done, and become more motivated to think about how I want to take this study forward.

I want to thank my colleagues in the office and my friends for their counsel and support. My experiences during my doctoral study would be very different if I did not have these wonderful friends in my life. Also, I cannot express enough how much I am thankful for the support given by my husband, Hiroshi, and my family in Japan. 裕さん、日本からいつも支えてくれた母、妹、祖父母に深く感謝しています。

Lastly but most importantly, I want to extend my deep appreciation to Dr. Vera Caine for her support and care. When I felt lost in the beginning of my master program, she was the one who willingly offered her helping hand and became my academic adviser. She helped me navigate through my master's and doctoral program and opened up new possibilities in my life. The intensive nine years of graduate studies were made possible by thoughtful support and guidance from Dr. Vera Caine, who taught me, through her body and life, how to live with others in relational and compassionate ways. With her genuine support, I have grown in my academic work and in my personal life. Thank you very much for always believing in me.

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Prologue

Human beings...should say something to others. I should not keep quiet. If we speak, we can build a connection with others...I have never had a chance to talk with a young person like you.

Now, I feel young and feel like coming back to my hopeful days.

(From Yoshi's story)

人間はな...こないして物でも喋っとかないとね。やっぱり黙ってたんではアカンわ。やっぱりね、人と人の繋がりが出来てね。僕はね、あの
-あんたらみたいな若い子とね、話することが全然なかったからね。やっぱりな、自分も若くなって。気持ちが若くなって、また前向きに戻れ
るようにね。またなれるしね。

Chapter 1: Introduction

Narrative Beginnings

Perception of Silence: A Big Crosswalk¹

When I got off the train at the *Imamiya* station, I felt nervous because I noticed the air drifting from the town into the platform was different, somehow cold and stiff. After I went through a long dark passage to go outside the station building, I saw a big crosswalk in front of me. In the dazzling sunshine, I saw it as a really huge crosswalk and an entrance to a new world. After I uneasily finished walking this big crosswalk, I clearly felt that I just entered a different world: a world to which I have never been and a world I have never seen before. In front of me, there was a cold cement building with a big open entrance where some people were sitting or sleeping under ragged blankets or cardboards. I swiftly walked besides this huge building. Unconsciously, I looked down on my walking feet and avoided looking at people's faces. Most of the people I saw were middle to older age men with worn clothes; some people were even walking with bare feet. I saw only a few older women and did not notice any children in my sight. While sneaking a glance of people and the landscape, I did notice that many people were staring at me.

Walking in an unfamiliar alley, I gradually sensed that I did not fit this place; it seemed that others already knew that I was an outsider just after I passed over the crosswalk. The misalignment of my body among people and the environment became undeniable and made me

¹ I moved to Canada in 2008 from Japan to undertake my graduate work in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta. Since I came to Canada, I have gone back to Japan several times to visit my family. In this visit to Japan in the summer of 2013, I visited several homeless support organizations to learn about the reality of supports for people living in precarious housing situations in Japan. Among these organizations, I was particularly struck by one visit to the well-known slum town in Osaka called *Kamagasaki*. What I saw, heard, and felt in the town of *Kamagasaki* made an impression on me and gave me an important opportunity to contemplate a life without a house and perhaps also without a home.

feel awkward and alert amidst everything unaccustomed. I found myself standing within a new place, a new world, and a new context of my life. I looked back and saw the street that extended straight from the crosswalk. Many men were sitting on the streets with their own belongings or sleeping inside their handmade shelters made of cardboard or blue sheets. I saw many people walking on the streets; more precisely, they were wandering around the streets because it did not seem like they were heading to a destination or rushing to an appointment. They were walking slowly and aimlessly. Within a new place, I realized everything is different from what I knew in my life. Rusty, antique signboards and old-fashioned buildings reminded me of the sceneries of Japan 50 or 60 years ago which I have only seen in photographs. It felt as if the town was dwelling in a forgotten period of time. Being surprised by these images, at the same time, I was astonished that I did not know anything about this town, even though I knew the name of this town from a long time ago.

My intuitive feelings of not fitting in further discerned that this feeling was not simply coming from my unfamiliarity with the town, it also come from a reaction to the precariousness and the vulnerability exposed and embodied to unspecified eyes. Within the uncommon views of the visible precariousness, I saw and felt the power of life in this town. The town gently embraced all sorts of peoples, emotions, problems, memories, and life stories. I sensed that people living there tried very hard to sustain their lives and their stories in the face of harsh living conditions. A power of resistance seemed to characterize and energize the air in the town. The crude air of desperate survival and resistance that I felt here was further reinforced when I saw an old frail man lying helplessly on a street and a man spreading a small open-air market on a street to sell second-hand magazines and one pair of shoes. Behind these thrusting energies, I could also sense the fragility of their lives and also my fragility of taking in these views.

Thinking about life as an ongoing composition, I wonder what stories have shaped and sustained the lives of people living here.

After walking about three blocks, I entered an old two-story building, which looked like a small wooden hut. There I met a man with whom I had an appointment. He was a service coordinator at a homeless support center located in this building. While I was introducing myself to the coordinator, I heard noisy footsteps approaching us; a well-built middle-age man was going up the squeaking wooden stairs to talk with the coordinator. Lifting his boot with a ripped sole, he shouted "*How can I work with these shoes tomorrow!*" and gave a big laugh. The man seemed very joyful to have a conversation with the coordinator, but once the coordinator left the place to take a phone call, he suddenly seemed nervous and stopped talking. Standing next to him, I felt nervous, too. To mitigate this shaky climate, I tried to speak to him with a casual question, but he did not even make eye contact with me. Then, he hastily lit a cigarette and started smoking. Awkward silence and the smell of cigarette surrounded us. Later, the coordinator told me that he could only speak with a person whom he was familiar with because he was afraid of strangers. I felt badly for unmindfully intruding into his space and wondered what experiences made him afraid of strangers.

Later, another small gentleman came to the center and he looked like he was in his late 60s with short grey hair; he struck me as a cheerful man. The coordinator told me that he often comes to the support center and offers to volunteer with cleaning up the office. As soon as he got to the center, he started cleaning the small cramped office vigorously in an accustomed manner. After the coordinator introduced me to him, he welcomed me with a big smile. His name was Sumi. I felt relieved that he did not seem uncomfortable with my presence. With a cheerful greeting, Sumi even offered to become a tour guide for me in this town. I took up his offer and

we went outside of the building. He told me that he has been living here for more than 50 years, so he knew the town well. He walked swiftly from one block to another while explaining the buildings in the town. I noticed that this town is a place of ease for him. I had to walk quickly to follow him. Within a few hours, he took me many places: The *Sankaku* (meaning ‘triangle’ in Japanese) Park, a temporary shelter, a motel, a support center run by a church, the police station, a job-support center etc. While being careful not to lose sight of him, I kept looking around the streets. The town smelled of human waste due to the drainage system. Many people were walking or riding their bicycles on the roadway, not on a sidewalk. The fee for one night in the motel was about 30 dollars, which is very cheap by Japanese standards. Vending machines were located everywhere, with a can of pop priced at an extremely cheap price. The *Sankaku* Park literally had a shape of a small triangle and was packed with numerous blue-sheet tents and cardboard shacks, which seemed to have stood there for several decades. I saw many people playing cards, sitting, or walking in the park, but it was strangely silent. When I looked around the alleys extending from the triangle park, it was even more silent and dark. In shadowy alleys, I saw some men standing in front of buildings at even intervals, facing the road. I even felt a chilly wind coming from these darker alleys and I felt many gazes upon me.

Across the *Sankaku* park, there was another support centre. Sumi encouraged me to go inside and I followed him. There, a male staff member was hastily putting numerous *Onigiri* (a rice ball in Japanese, which is a typical portable meal in Japan) into steamers for a coming meal service. The steamers were diligently working while making hissing sounds. In the midst of the smoky and heated air, I introduced myself to him. Constantly putting *Onigiri* into steamers, he shared many stories about the history of the town. Then, he too talked about the Japanese politics enthusiastically and loudly so that his voice was not drowned out by the hissing of the steamers.

His voice was persuasive and aggressive as if he was fighting against something invisible and gigantic. While he was speaking, many men continuously walked beside him to enter the centre for the meal service, but they were silent as though they were automatically drawn into the building. All of sudden, I realized I lost Sumi. I looked for him and found him quietly waiting as he sat next to me.

Sumi continued to guide me to many places in the town. Accommodations were very different from what I knew. Beds at the temporary shelter were overwhelmingly crammed; many rusty metal bunk beds were tiered 3 layers and tightly squeezed in a large room. This room was surrounded by cold thick cement walls with small ceiling fans fixed at each corner. I was taken to another kind of accommodation called a 'welfare apartment' which offers rooms for people who receive the welfare support from the government. The apartment rooms were surprisingly small to me: there was barely a space for a small TV and a bed with a small window in each room. Both managers of the temporary shelter and the welfare apartment similarly told me that rooms were always full and people who cannot obtain a place there have to sleep outside. There was another temporary shelter, but people had to wait for a long time to obtain a ticket distributed in the evening and they need to leave their accommodation in the early morning. The accommodations here were quite unstable and temporary; I was imagining that people must try so hard to obtain a place to sleep for a night. I wondered if, in this town, 'home' may imply a physical shelter to sleep at night or if 'home' may be substituted by something other than a physical shelter. I wondered if the town already accommodates the function of 'home' for people here, like Sumi might find this town as a place of ease. I wondered how people experience and understand their sense of home and house.

Before we went back to the centre, Sumi told me, like he was making an important announcement to me, that he wanted to take me to one more place. I agreeably followed him. It was an old small barn. He proudly said he is a member of an organization located in the barn. In front of the barn, I saw a number of signs and banners attached to the gate and wall, each of which showed various protests against the inequitable social and political structures. I felt strong emotions of resentment whirling around this small barn: resentment toward inequities and injustices that forced people to live unstable lives and in endless poverty. I wondered if Sumi and people living in this town might be the ones who were most aware of these inequities and injustices that are present in our lives. I recalled what the coordinator told me; people who seek a job in this town are frequently exploited with extremely low wages and often have to engage in unsafe jobs. However, most of them have no choice but to engage in these exploitive employments to obtain money and maintain their daily survival. While I was standing in front of the small barn, people's resentments to inequitable social arrangements were powerful and palpable in the signs and banners; their resistance were quietly but clearly expressed on the wall of the small barn.

In my first visit to the town, my strong impression was of a deep silence drifting through and engulfing the town. There were many people, mostly older men, walking on the streets as if it was in the middle of a busy urban city. Yet, I recall it as remarkably noiseless. Perhaps, I heard some voices and noises, but there were no sounds remaining in my memory about the town. An atmosphere of tension characterized by the pervading force of silence was obvious and people lived as if they suppress their voices so that they do not break this tension-filled silence. The tension, caused by uneasiness, uncertainty, and dilemma, disempowers their voices and imposes on people a sense of vulnerability, abandonment, or frustration that is externalized as silence.

However, within the silence, I also perceived their breath, resistance, and vigor for life. Through my visit to *Kamagasaki*, I became more interested to attend to this silence and carefully listen to the voices that may be hidden behind and within the silence.

When we returned to the support centre, the coordinator looked worried and was waiting for us outside in front of the office building. I thanked Sumi for taking me through the town and the coordinator for accepting me. As I left the support center, they waved their hands to me and smiled by saying “*Please come back and visit us anytime!*” I left there with the hope that I could see them again and spend more time with them. On my way back, I realized that I perceive the sceneries, people, and alleys slightly different and less incongruous from when I saw them a few hours ago. When I finished walking the huge crosswalk, I briefly looked back to the town and then went into the train station. After walking through the dark tunnel to the platform, the sound of trains and chatting voices of people vividly came back to my ears.

My Experience of Home in Transition

The silence of midnight. As I reflected upon my visit in *Kamagasaki* and the perception of the silence, I recollect one moment in my life, which was also characterized by the silence that I had never experienced in my life. What should I do? Who can I talk to? Where do I belong? These were questions I recurrently asked myself at that moment. It was in the middle of the night in January 2008 when deep darkness and snow absorbed every sound that I came across. It was a few days after I first arrived in Edmonton from Japan.

When I arrived at the airport in Edmonton after a long trip from Japan, I found out that my two suitcases were lost. In my suitcases, I had put everything which I needed until my life settled down. I put clothes, towels, socks, snacks, books, photos, and even soap bars in my

suitcases because I did not know where I could buy them. When I found out my suitcases were lost, I immediately felt afraid and did not know what to do. Eventually, I became the only one at the luggage lane, waiting for my two suitcases. Once I figured out that I could not find them, I jumped out of the airport to distract my growing anxiety. In a cold snowy evening which I have never experienced in my life before, I headed to an address where I had rented a basement suite. A family living on the main floor was surprised to see me, as I only carried a small shoulder bag all the way from Japan. From the very first day in Canada, I had to live without anything familiar to me and without things that connected me with the memory of Japan and the memory of my home. Entering the basement, I clearly remember that the basement felt very cold and empty.

A few days later, I attended the first class in my master's program at the University of Alberta. In my first experience of Canadian education, I felt deeply discouraged because I did not understand the class at all. I was overwhelmed by the fast pace of speech in the class and puzzled by the academic usages of language I had never heard before. Above all, I was disappointed by my own English language skills. After the class, I talked to an instructor and decided to drop all the courses. I no longer had the confidence to continue the courses. Discouraged at that moment, I was vaguely thinking that maybe I had to quit my program and go back to Japan.

After my first class, I went back to my basement. In dismay, I went to bed. What should I do? Why am I here? Uncontrollable emotions had nowhere to go and started to swirl inside my head. At midnight, I was wide awake in a bed. What should I do? I recalled the smiling faces of my mother, my sister, and my grandparents who gave me big cheers and hugs while waving their hands at the airport in Japan. I was very excited to start off my new journey in Canada, but after a few days, I realized I was at a loss; I had no luggage, no classes, no family to ask for help, no

friends to talk to, and no place to belong. In the silence of midnight, I was confronted by a strong sense of fear and anxiety of being alone in this unfamiliar place. I started to perceive the strange sweat in my hands and hear my heart beating so fast. I drank a glass of water, but it did not help. Finally, I realized that I had gone too far from my family and my home. I tried to make a phone call to my mother, but gave up, concerned about the time difference. Who can I talk to? Where do I belong? I felt a deep sense of isolation and helplessness. I started roaming around in my basement to distract myself from the constant attack of fear. I could not even cry. All I could hear was the silence of midnight. What I wanted to hear were the sounds of living, which would confirm that at least I was not alone. In my confusion, I was quietly walking in the basement. If I had someone beside me, I would have burst into tears. However, at that moment, my cry was firmly engulfed in the silence. This speechless fear and anxiety was sharply penetrating and distressing my body. After aimlessly walking for a while, I opened my laptop and started typing an email to nobody. Soaked in isolation and confusion, I tried to take a distance from my fear by putting it into words. In the silence of midnight, feeble typing sounds were echoing in the basement. I waited for the morning.

Changing landscapes - Changing views of home. Each morning brought lights and sounds into my silence. My two suitcases were returned after a week and I could finally start to live with my familiar belongings. Instead of starting the master's program, I made a decision to take English language programs during the days and evenings to improve my English skills. I also made a few friends there to share my struggles and build some fun memories in Canada. My days slowly gained momentum. During the summer break of my first year in Canada, I decided to volunteer at a hospital to meet more people and practice conversations in English. I was desperate to find a reason to come to Canada. Because of this hope I embraced within myself, I

struggled so hard. As I became more familiar with the new environment, culture, and language and built more relationships in Canada, I eventually felt positive enough to go back to the master's program with motivations to learn.

Within the silence of midnight that I experienced in 2008, I missed my home where I grew up and I missed spending time with my family. Until I left my home in Japan, I did not pay particular attention to the value of home and how meaningfully my stories of home had shaped my understanding of who I am. However, it was after experiencing various uncertainties and unfamiliarity since I moved to Canada that I started to think in more profound ways about the significance of home that shaped my stories, life, and identity. In my transition into a life in Canada, I felt vulnerable. I was struggling to pull my new life together amidst feelings of displacement and disruption. Yet, this perceived vulnerability and my struggles have revealed what is unknown about myself. This experience helped me realize that my stories to live by, a narrative term for identity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), and made me aware of how deeply my stories of home are situated within contexts, landscapes, and relationships of my past, present, and future stories (Clandinin, 2013). My experiences of the silence characterized by loneliness and vulnerability had disclosed the interconnectedness of my life, home, and identity.

Since my experiences of coming to Canada, I was deeply drawn into understanding the experiences of people who are homeless or precariously housed in Japan. I wonder how an experience of losing home transforms their stories of life, home, and identity. I wondered how people who are homeless in Japan recognize and disclose their stories to live by, which have been nurtured through their past experiences into their present experiences of being homeless and their prospects for the future.

Again, I live in the reminiscence of the sceneries, people, and the silence I saw and perceived in *Kamagasaki*. How would they have responded if I had stayed beside them and listened to their life stories? I also imagine the lives of people sleeping in the three-tiered metal bunk beds crammed in the cold cement room and people waiting in a long line-up to secure accommodations for a night. Do they get enough sleep and rest comfortably? How do they feel if they cannot obtain a bed for a night after waiting in a long line-up? Where are/is their ‘home(s)’? Is home linked with a physical place for rest or a psychological feeling of belonging? What stories do they tell about their understanding of home in relation to their life and identity? How are these stories of home and identity shaped by the unique social, cultural, and institutional contexts in which they are embedded? I also wondered what kind of stories Sumi would have told me if we had built a relationship and how he would describe his experiences of home. The more I call back the memories and think of people in *Kamagasaki*, the more questions and wonders came.

The silence which I perceived in *Kamagasaki* remains in my head. The uncomfortable incongruity between seeing many people and my perception of silence is still perplexing my senses. I also clearly remember Sumi’s cheerful greeting, the hissing sound of steamers, and the enthusiastic voices of a male staff member who were handling *Onigiri*. I wonder if this silence may hide a yelling of people who live in isolation and vulnerability, like my cries were concealed by the silence of midnight. It is a kind of silence, which may suppress voices of sufferings and struggles, and, as a result, drives people’s callings to be neglected. This was a noisy silence; perhaps it is a silence of ignorance. Beyond this silence, I want to carefully listen to every subtle sound which would be expressed by people who are homeless in Japan. Eventually, these sounds might add to “the roar that lies on the other side of silence” (Eliot, 1985,

p.238), through which I may see the reality of their lives. In such a way, I hope that people who are homeless or precariously housed in Japan are not only listened to, but also obtain a space to make each of them more visible and audible.

Research Puzzle

Thinking about Experiences of People who are Homeless in Japan

Soaking myself again within the silence in *Kamagasaki* which remains vivid in my memories, I am more intrigued to carefully perceive the silence, while thinking and imagining the lives of people living there. What causes or contributes to my perception of the silence? What does the silence allow me to see and call me to respond to? My emerging wonders toward the silence in *Kamagasaki* also take me back to my own vision of myself and my life. As I am about to take a step forward into my inquiry, I wonder who I am, who is someone I am still coming to know. I came to realize this shifting, ambiguous ‘who I am’ may help me to meaningfully build a space where I hope to inquire into the experiences of people who are homeless or precariously housed in Japan² (Carr, 1986). In Japan, there is a silencing of voices surrounding homelessness and this silence drives the voices of people who are homeless into sites of ignorance. Voices of people who are homeless in Japan are often represented in narrow sociopolitical terms, but not in diverse personal terms. Absence of consideration of the voices undermine the lives of people

² Regarding the condition of being homeless and precariously housed in this study, I refer to the typology that defines a range of housing situations relevant to homelessness. Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter and Gulliver (2013) establishes the definition of homeless as 1) *unsheltered* which signifies people living in places not intended for human habitation, 2) *emergency sheltered* which signifies people staying in overnight shelters, 3) *provisionally accommodated* which signifies people who are couch surfing or living in motels, hospitals or other transitional housing, and 4) *at risk of homelessness* which signifies people whose current economic or housing conditions threaten their ability to maintain current living arrangements. Yet, a state of being homeless involves fluid experiences and people experiencing different housing circumstances. I did not adhere to these definitions throughout the study, but I used them as an initial step to understand and approach people who are homeless in Japan. In Japan, the condition of being homeless is considered under absolute homelessness and defined by the government as “performing their daily living activities in parks, riverbeds, streets, stations, or other facilities (Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare [MHLW], 2016a).

who are homeless and leaves a serious gap within the knowledge of homelessness and supporting structures. Like the big crosswalk into *Kamagasaki*, the silence around homelessness in Japan creates a palpable distance, marking an invisible boundary of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ or ‘center’ and ‘margin’.

The etymology of the word ‘silence’ states that silence is rooted in an expression of interrupted action and also entails a protest against the way things are (Prochnik, 2011). Symbolically, the silence as a form of ignorance interrupts the stories of people who are homeless or precariously housed in Japan by absorbing the voices of people. The imposed silence may simultaneously produce emotions such as anger, sorrow, and perplexities. After the post-war period of World War II, Japan has successfully enhanced the living standards of people through various measures of economic, political, and social reforms, and achieved the international reputation of a middle class and affluent society (Kennett & Iwata, 2003; Obinger, 2009). However, people living in homelessness or precarious housing conditions in Japan are exposed to daily dangers, hunger, pain, sorrow, and isolation without guarantees for the future. Their voices and actions are often hidden. There are people who are homeless, who become victims of random violence, or who freeze or starve to death. It is an unimaginable situation in Japan where the majority of people achieve financial and material wealth and there is an abundance of food and goods. The lives of people who are homeless or precariously housed in Japan are literally ‘interrupted’ by the silence of ignorance that frequently shapes the current social discourses of homelessness. Furthermore, this silence also interrupts people’s attentions and understandings toward people experiencing homelessness in Japan.

In closely looking into the silences around homelessness in Japan, I believe my stories of visiting *Kamagasaki* and coming to Canada give me unique ways and aspects in attending to the

experiences of people who are homeless in Japan. I wonder how my stories of visiting *Kamagasaki* and coming to Canada will be transformed at the intersection of my life and the lives of participants. How will my perception of the silence in *Kamagasaki*, as well as my experiences of vulnerability and loneliness when coming to Canada, call forth new stories and resonances alongside stories of participants? I wonder how their stories of life and experiences of being homeless will unfolded and be co-composed within our emerging relational spaces. I wonder how their stories and my stories will uniquely shape us and our relationships, as we will live out our relationship while living in the midst of our respective lives. Where will my stories, their stories, and our stories of a relationship take us across time, places, and relationships (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000)?

Understanding People through ‘World-Travelling’ by Lugones

In understanding experiences through a relational inquiry that marks narrative inquiry, I use the concept of world-travelling elaborated by Lugones (1987) as a guide to offer viewpoints into relational ways of knowing. Lugones (1987) speaks of acknowledging the plurality of one’s existence across different worlds and through relationships that allow people to travel to each other’s worlds. The concept of world-traveling involves what Lugones (1987) calls “loving perception” (p. 7) whereby one identifies another in one’s world and also sees oneself in another’s world. According to Lugones (1987), loving perceptions invite attitudes of integration which is to welcome others in one’s world without dominating or erasing them, and to recognize oneself also dwelling in others’ worlds through sharing common relational grounds. World-travelling is a wilful exercise to awaken to the fact that people are essentially dependent on each other. As Lugones (1987), a woman of color in a White/Anglo organization of the world, disclosed, “I am incomplete and unreal without other women. I am profoundly dependent on

others without having to be their subordinate, their slave, their servant” (p. 8). The view of dependence requires mutual ways of knowing where one also sees oneself and another in their eyes and in their worlds. This way of interactive knowing entails a call for relational living, which inspires the loving perceptions that reveals the interconnectedness of our bodies, existence, and the world.

Realization of impartiality or incompleteness of one’s existence underpinned by the view of dependence also points to the attribute of ‘playfulness’ in world-travelling (Lugones, 1987). As Lugones (1987) says, “Playfulness is, in part, an openness to being a fool, which is a combination of not worrying about competence, not being self-important, not taking norm as sacred and finding ambiguity and double edges a source of wisdom and delight” (p. 17). In relation to playfulness, Lugones (1987) illuminates the plurality of oneself across different worlds, through which one travels from one world to another world while knowingly or unknowingly seeing one’s identity constructed differently. For Lugones (1987), being playful is admitting a plurality of selves in one’s identity across different worlds, even when one finds one’s selves is being contradictory at times. Playfulness is experienced through dwelling in the world where one feels at ease, through which one is recognized in his/her multi-dimensionality, in ambiguity, and by reciprocal ways of knowing (Lugones, 1987).

World-travelling signifies fully situating oneself within the shared time, place and context of oneself and others, while allowing oneself and others to be open to the multiplicity across different worlds (Lugones, 1987). As Lugones (1987) revealed through her work, world-travelling is a skilful exercise integrating critical awareness, reflection, insights, and actions towards shaping the worlds where people are respected in their plurality and co-construct each other in relational ways. In addition, with loving perceptions through world-travelling, people are

loved, cared for and respected as one unique individual situated in a web of relationships (Lugones, 1987). I believe Lugones's conception of world-travelling is meaningful in this study, in that it facilitates relational conversations and to establish the world, where both participants and I are playful, while feeling at ease, free from various constructions of identities imposed from the outside. Through world-travelling, I hope participants and I will come to understand ourselves in relation to each other and build a world where both of us become visible and uniquely identified by our voices, presence, and stories. Through our conversations, I hope to realize the world(s) where participants "shines as a creative being" (Lugones, 1987, p. 18).

In travelling to the worlds of people who are homeless in Japan, I hope to build a relational space where people who are homeless in Japan feel safe, in contrast with the world that stereotypically construct and reduces them as being homeless. From within my wish to build a relational space I wonder: How are the experiences of becoming and being homelessness expressed in their life stories? How have their experiences of being homeless been shifting over time? How might becoming homeless contribute to continuities or discontinuities of their life experiences? How do/did their experiences of becoming homeless contribute to shaping their perceptions of their life and identity? Where is/was their 'home'? I also wonder how they describe and compose narrative coherence within their shifting stories of past, present, and future. What other stories do they tell and embrace about their lives besides homelessness? What relationships do/did they live in and how do these relationships influence their living, telling, and retelling and reliving of their stories?

Considering Human Conditions by Arendt

Engaging in a narrative inquiry into the experiences of people who are homeless in Japan, I also hope to consider homelessness from broader viewpoints. I wonder, how will stories of

people who are homeless be disclosed within sociopolitical contexts? What repercussions will their voices bring forward to the marginalizing forces and structures in society? How will their stories work on changing the current understandings of homelessness in Japan? How are the concepts of human rights and citizenship understood and enacted in relation to people who are homeless in Japan? Referring to the argumentations of human conditions elaborated by German political philosopher Hannah Arendt, I explore the modern constructions and transformations of human rights and citizenship of people who are homeless in Japan.

Through reviewing the historical, political, and cultural background of homelessness in Japan, it can be assumed that people who are homeless are often made invisible in the current Japanese society. This imposed invisibility represents the critical marginalization of people who are homeless in Japan from various public discourses. Ultimately, this marginalization can be transformed into the silence surrounding people who are homeless in Japan. In this study, I considered homelessness in Japan along with contemplations of political theorist, Hannah Arendt. I incorporate philosophical and political aspects into the understanding of the silence which might affect experiences of people who are homeless in Japan. These considerations allowed more critical reflections on voices of people who are homeless in Japan and situated their voices within broader political and social contexts. These conceptions by Arendt may help to initiate new political or philosophical discourses rooted in the specific contexts of homelessness in Japan.

The discussions made by Arendt were derived from her unique background as she was born and raised in Germany as a Jewish person. Her life was shaped by the movements of German politics under Nazi rules. Under these extreme circumstances, she engaged in thinking about human beings and human conditions, which brought light to the values and the perplexities within human rights, human thought and action, and the human worlds. In my understanding, her

thinking was initially rooted in the specific sociopolitical contexts of Germany, but her thoughtfulness conceived of more universal phenomena such as stateless people and various forms of marginalization taking place in the modern worlds. Arendt's philosophical arguments about human conditions can be understood within various global contexts. When her philosophical arguments are situated in diverse contexts, another layer or dimension brought by her thoughts may possibly be illuminated into the existing knowledge, which could inspire people to more deeply see and reflect. As far as I know, there is no study which particularly connects Arendt's ideas with homelessness and nursing within a Japanese context.

Arendt put forward many original and critical insights, not only through deconstructing the prevailing discussions of politics, but also through connecting politics with the human condition. The discussions by Arendt are profound because she discloses the duality of human beings as animal species and as unique individuals situated in the polis. Arendt (1958) describes the polis as an organization of people arising out of acting and speaking together. Arendt's contemplation calls forth the existential vulnerabilities of human beings, which are situated in a gap between the inimitability and conditionality of human nature.

In her book, *The Human Condition* (1958), Arendt begins her contemplation of human conditions by delineating three kinds of human activities: labour, work, and action. These three activities are indispensable to each other and represent the multiplicity of human conditions. First, labour is defined as the activity necessary for sustaining biological needs of human beings. Second, work is the activity related to creating the artificial surroundings of the human world, which brings about the permanence and the durability to the transitory nature of human life. Thirdly, action is expressed as the activity that corresponds to neither bodily survival nor habitation of physical world; and action is only made possible by being situated among others in

order to allow people to express and understand one's individuality (Arendt, 1958). According to Arendt (1958), action significantly constitutes the political dimension of human activity, which creates the conditions for establishing a continuous history of a transitory human world. Arendt (1958) puts an emphasis on this political human activity of 'action', which characterizes the plurality of human beings and human lives.

The idea of plurality of human beings may be one standpoint in understanding Arendt's deliberation of 'action'. Arendt mentions "[p]lurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live" (Arendt, 1958, p. 8). By saying so, Arendt unveils the unique human condition of equality and distinction. According to Arendt (1958), human beings are equal because they can understand each other, share a history, and plan for the future, which is based on the fact we belong to the same animal species. Yet, at the same time, human beings are distinct because they live their individual lives with distinct identities, backgrounds, and life stories from birth to death. No single life story is identical, and with this statement, mortality becomes the hallmark of human beings (Arendt, 1958).

Human beings are the mortal existence who obtain an ability to strive for immortality. Indeed, all other animals are also mortal much the same as human beings, but what makes human beings different from other animals is that each human being can attain a degree of perpetuity arising from their mortal lives through "work and deeds and words" (Arendt, 1958, p. 19). Arendt (1958) identifies this coexistence of mortality and immortality as an attribute of human beings. At the intersection of mortality and immortality, the activity of 'action' turns into being in meaningful and effective ways. Thus, political action is the unique human activity, which can be exclusively performed by human beings. These qualities of equality and distinction of human

beings provide important explanations for human plurality, which sets the ground for 'action' as a unique human activity.

Arendt (1958) emphasizes that human plurality is actualized by action and speech, which makes each human being unique and distinct. In other words, as Arendt states, "A life without speech and without action...is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men" (Arendt, 1958, p. 176). Furthermore, Arendt (1958) maintains that action and speech importantly lead the way toward the space of appearance where human beings appear to each other as equal and distinct beings within human relationships. Arendt speaks of the outcasts of a society, such as slaves and barbarians, that they are not deprived of the capability of speech, but deprived of a life context where their speech makes sense and receives attention from others (Arendt, 1958). Through action and speech situated in a space of appearance, human beings disclose and confirm a unique personal identity of 'who they are' to other humans, while they appear within shared worlds.

The structure of marginalization powerfully results in mistreating certain groups of people and dishonouring their human plurality. In a denial of human plurality, people's speech and action have less impact and are ignored, which ultimately creates the silence. In thinking about people who I saw in the slum town in *Kamagasaki*, I recognized that people were quietly living under harsh and precarious living conditions. I also recalled the small hut where Sumi took me as part of his protesting activities. Even though they speak up for making changes, their voices of protests are likely driven to the edge of society. The space of appearance accompanied by the means of action and speech should be extended to people who experience homelessness so that they can truly present themselves as equal but distinct human beings within the horizon of human togetherness. I hope for an opportunity where their voices of protest will appear in public

space and be respectfully listened to. I wonder how this might influence their lives and the lives of others who live outside of homelessness.

In Chapter 11, I pay close attention to how Arendt talks about human rights and citizenship, and consider how her discussions considers people who are homeless in Japan in detail. In the modern era, human rights have been transformed from the universal entitlement of all human beings into the exclusive privilege attached to the right of citizen (Arendt, 1958). This ambiguous entity of human rights and the contemporary construction of citizenship shape a new discourse of rationality which employs power over a range of behaviours, values, decisions, and perceptions among people. As Arendt (1958) emphasises in *The Human Condition*, human beings need to obtain freedom and equity through their action and speech in a space of appearance since each human existence has a unique meaning to the world. We need to return to an attention of who we are as a human being, not of an entity shaped and defined by external discourses. It is significant to attend thoughtfully to our internal voices and actions as well as those of others, so that we can set ourselves free to create a new discourse, a new context, and a new beginning emerging from unexpectedness and uncertainty inherent in human conditions.

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Chapter 2: Background of Homelessness in Japan

The Japanese government conducts an annual survey on people who are homeless in Japan; according to the survey, the number across Japan has been constantly declining from 25,296 in 2003 to 6,235 people in 2016 (Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare [MHLW], 2016a; MHLW, 2003). The number of people who are homeless has decreased by almost a quarter within 14 years. However, the issues of precarious housing conditions, unemployment, and poverty do not seem to be resolved; rather they have been growing into more serious issues. Among people who are homeless, it was reported that almost 95% are male with the average age was 60 years old (MHLW, 2012). Furthermore, there are also growing concerns for youth and women who live under precarious housing conditions in Japan. Despite the decline in the number of people who are homeless, there is growing diversity and complexity of poverty and homelessness in Japan. The Japanese government uses a definition of people who are homeless by referring to people who perform their daily living activities in parks, riverbeds, streets, stations, or other facilities (MHLW, 2016a). As the official definition of homelessness in Japan focuses on the state of absolute homelessness, it excludes people who experience invisible homelessness from the political discourses of homelessness. In the next section, I briefly review 1) the history of homelessness, 2) the current situation, 3) the political context, and 4) the cultural background of homelessness in Japan. At the end of this section, I will point out the gap in the current understandings of homelessness in Japan.

Historical Context of Homelessness in Japan

In Japan, the number of homeless people first dramatically increased immediately after World War II (Aoki, 2006; Hasegawa, 2006; Okamoto, 2007). World War II destroyed almost 80% of housing properties by intensive attacks aimed at the most urban cities (Hasegawa, 2006).

Because of the war, many people lost their homes, jobs, and families and had to sleep outside in poverty. For example, in Tokyo, it was estimated that more than 300,000 people slept on streets during the post-war period (Hasegawa, 2006). People in the post-war period lived in a condition characterized by the damage from war, severe poverty, and homelessness. In the post-war era, a growing number of people regained employment as day labourers (Hasegawa, 2006).

Before the concept of homelessness was introduced in Japan, people who were homeless were mainly associated with day labourers (Ezawa, 2002). Mostly, day labourers lived in the segregated districts, called *yoseba*, which were known as day labour markets in Japan. The day-labour markets are usually accompanied with cheap flophouse ghettos for sleeping over nights. Living in *yoseba* implicitly signified the segregation from mainstream society; these districts were established within the slum towns from the pre-war period and others were newly built in the post-war period apart from other communities in response to the labour needs for reconstruction of the war-damaged areas (Aoki, 2006; Ikuta, 2007). Generally, hiring companies came to employ day labourers at *yoseba* in the morning, through which day labourers obtained jobs mostly in manufacturing and construction industries (Aoki, 2003; Okamoto, 2007). If they found a job, they could afford to sleep in a flophouse for a night. If they could not find a job, they had to sleep outside within or around *yoseba*. Not guaranteed a stable income and a place to live, these day labourers were constantly exposed to unemployment and unstable housing. Thus, day-labourers living in *yoseba* were described as the classic representatives of people who are homeless in the post-war period of Japan (Kennett & Iwata, 2003).

Throughout the history of Japan, day labourers played a vital role in assisting both reconstruction and modernization of Japanese society. Due to the increased public dependencies on *yoseba* districts for construction labour in the post-war period, *yoseba* gained its position as a

reservoir of a cheap workforce (Marr, 1997). Even after the Japanese economy recovered from the losses caused by the war, day-labour markets continued to flourish in the 1960s and the early 1970s during the period of rapid economic development (Kennett & Iwata, 2003; Marr, 1997). In the 1970s, as more people gained economic and material wealth, the slogan '*Conversion to one hundred million middle class society*' (referring to a hundred million population in Japan in the 1970s) described the vigour of society in this era. Although manufacturing industries were downsized during the late 1970s and the 1980s, almost 90% of day labourers were recruited to the construction industry due to the increased demands from an expanding service industry which eventually paved the way toward the thriving bubble economy until the early 1990s (Aoki, 2006).

Until the Japanese economy started to decline in the mid-1990s, people who became homeless were mostly day labourers who lived in the segregated *yoseba* areas. They were only visible within the *yoseba* areas. Outside of *yoseba*, there used to be a relative absence of poverty in Japan due to unique life-time employment system and strong family kinship (Ezawa, 2002; Kennett & Iwata, 2003). Various benefits given by a life-time employment and the close family networks were regarded as the two vital safety nets in the Japanese society to prevent people from falling into poverty and homelessness. Most people who were employed in a company and/or had extended family networks successfully secured their positions in the mainstream society by following the so-called 'normal' life steps. Thus, homelessness used to be regarded as an uncommon life event that was only experienced by people who had not chosen the 'normal' life course and who had been situated in particular life contexts. Homelessness were often made unrelated to the lives of most people in Japan.

Current Situation of Homelessness in Japan

In the mid-1990s, the flourishing Japanese economy collapsed and Japanese society was confronted with a gloomy economic recession (Marr, 1997). The government advanced neoliberalism to manage the declining economic situations (Hayashi, 2015). Correspondingly, the day labour market became competitive and selective in favour of a healthier and younger workforce (Kennett & Iwata, 2003; Obinger, 2009; Okamoto, 2007). Furthermore, along with intensive global competition, the increasing number of cheaper foreign workers replaced the old day labourers (Hasegawa, 2005). Day labourers, who entered *yoseba* districts in the post-war period, were now faced with aging and declining physical conditions, and thus were no longer preferred in physical labour. Older day labourers found it increasingly difficult to obtain employment and eventually fell into serious poverty. Increased numbers of older day labourers slept on streets for prolonged periods or went outside of *yoseba* districts such as train stations, parks, or streets (Kennett & Iwata, 2003; Okamoto, 2007). Therefore, toward the end of the 1990s, the number of people who were homeless dramatically increased and became more visible to the public.

The majority of people experiencing homelessness in Japan were associated with day labourers in the *yoseba* districts, but the current homelessness has been shifting into new dimensions. New forms of homelessness have rapidly increased in recent Japanese society. First, a growing number of people who are at risk of becoming homeless are found in informal workers. Informal workers are defined as people who work casually as temporary contract workers or part-time workers (MHLW, 2015). Since the late 1990s, the global economic recession has brought about a drastic restructuring within the Japanese employment structures (Kami, 2006). In the end of 2008, the global economic crisis dramatically led almost 400,000 dispatch workers in

Japan to become unemployed, which seriously drove many of them to the risk of homelessness. Due to the intensive competition in the global markets, one of the vital safety nets of life-time employment in Japan has been jeopardized by being replaced by cheaper informal employment (Obinger, 2009). Employment status of informal workers is often not guaranteed and they are often poorly paid, compared with people with full-time employment (MHLW, 2015). Thus, even though they maintain employment, informal workers in particular are subject to sudden unemployment and chronic poverty. When informal workers lose their jobs and are no longer able to pay rent, they have no choice but to go outside to find a place for rest and sleep. In Japan, this population is called *working poor* and they are especially vulnerable to becoming homeless.

Second, growing segments of the youth population are also emerging as a new at-risk population of homelessness in Japan. One of these populations is called *net-cafe refugee*. *Net-cafe refugees* stay at 24-hour internet cafes, fast-food restaurants or other commercial facilities from several days to several months consecutively (Iwata, 2010; Obinger, 2009). It is reported that *net-cafe refugees* are mostly male in their early twenties who left or lost their homes (MHLW, 2007). According to the survey conducted by MHLW in 2007, it was reported that people became net-cafe refugees because of unemployment or family conflicts (MHLW, 2007). In Canadian studies, it was similarly illustrated that youth, prior to becoming homeless, often experience high rates of physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse, neglect, parental criminality, or substance use issues in their family (Karabanow, 2003; Kidd, 2006; Klodawsky, Aubry, & Farrell, 2006; Edidin, Ganim, Hunter, & Karnik, 2012; Whitbeck, 2009). There is not enough research in Japan that studies the phenomenon of homeless youth staying at net cafés. Due to the lack of enough family supports in addition to unemployment, youth who had to leave their family or/and home sustain their lives in a 24-hour net café, while they manage to make

little money. Their temporary residences are always unstable, unprotected, and not guaranteed. Moreover, youth homelessness such as *net-cafe refugees* are often invisible from the public. By wearing clean and decent clothing, youth who become homeless often avoid being recognized as ‘homeless’.

In Japan, there is also another growing number of youth who are at potential risk of becoming homeless; some of them are called as *NEET*, *Freeter*, or *Hiki-komori*¹; it is often difficult to find stable employment once they become *NEETs*, *Freeters*, or *Hiki-komori* for a prolonged period of time (Obinger, 2009). These youth populations are at a greater risk of experiencing poverty and homeless in the future, when they lose supports from their families and/or when they lose a stable source of income. However, these at-risk youth populations are not necessarily linked to the political or social discourses regarding homelessness. They are more likely to be considered as a separate issue not particularly related to homelessness, which can cause a delay in the early interventions and preventions before they become homeless.

People who are homeless in the past used to be recognized as a day-laborer which was an important labouring force in the Japanese society. However, the current impressions toward people who are homeless are increasingly characterized by a negative undertone of dependency on welfare (Garon, 2002). In the current situation where growing numbers of people become homeless due to unemployment, people who are homeless are struggling to secure a source of income. In fact, due to severe poverty, some people who are homeless have to engage in dangerous labour, such as decontamination of damaged nuclear power plants after the huge

¹ *NEETs* refer to individuals from the ages 15 to 34 who do not engage in employment, education, or training (Cabinet Office, 2014). *Freeters* are defined as individuals between the ages of 15 and 34, excluding students and married women, who earn their living as an untenured short-term or part-time worker, not as a full-time tenured employee (Cabinet Office, 2014). *Hiki-komori* speaks about people who are withdrawn from any social activities such as work or school and stay in their house for more than six months without communicating with anyone other than family (Cabinet Office, 2014).

earthquake of 2011. Temporary workers are sometimes inappropriately exploited in exchange of insufficient income, benefits, meals, or a place for sleep. This is called *poverty business*², which critically undermines human rights and the dignity of people who are homeless. *Poverty business* skillfully exploits people who desperately need money or a place to live. Without stable housing and income, people who are homeless strive to survive. According to one study, people who are homeless are more likely to experience poor mental well-being compared to community-dwelling populations in Japan (Ito, Morikawa, Okamura, Shimokado, & Awata, 2013). Regardless of housing status, people who are homeless in Japan are an integral part of society, but their individual lives and rights are not fully considered in society.

Political Context of Homelessness in Japan

The issue of poverty has received less attention in Japan in the past. The government provided limited assistance to people in poverty and was historically dependent on the traditional norm that families have a responsibility for other family members experiencing poverty. With complex issues and impacts of economic recession; unemployment; breakdown of family support systems; a growing aging population; and changes in the labour market, people are more likely to experience poverty and income disparity than ever before, which might possibly drive people to become homeless. In 2002, the government passed a special measure called “Special measures for support concerning the independence of homeless people” by offering employment

² Another example of poverty business is the unjust exploitation through dominative relationships between a residence owner and residents. People who are homeless or who receive income supports from welfare services are invited to live in a small living space with meals and a place to sleep in exchange for giving residence owners the full amount of income that they obtained from the welfare supports. There, people who are homeless are encouraged to apply for the welfare supports. Often, their living environments in such apartments are not desirable ones, but they have no other choice, otherwise it is not easy for them to rent an apartment by themselves and they have to stay homeless. In such ways, poverty business makes use of the weakness of people who are homeless or who depend on welfare supports, and their needs for living under a roof and having meals.

supports, counselling, skill developments, medical care, and basic assistance to the daily life to people who experience homelessness in Japan (MHLW, 2002).

“Special measures for support concerning the independence of homeless people” is a temporary measure which was renewed in 2012 for 5 years. In April 2017, another extension of the measure has not been announced. This national act does not have direct power and control to make actual changes within each jurisdiction. The final authority of developing and implementing action plans is ultimately delegated to each municipal government based on their needs assessments. So, if the issue of homelessness is not fully recognized or if local finances are constrained, municipal governments might not take up the act and, as a result, situations could not be improved to support people who are homeless in those jurisdictions. The principle aim of this special measure is to encourage independence of people who are homeless and prevent them from being dependent on welfare (Iwata, 2003). In fact, in the article forth of the special measure, it was stated that people who are homeless should make efforts to be independent (MHLW, 2002), which implicitly indicates a disassociation of people who are homeless from public assistance (Hayashi, 2014).

Moreover, the supports for people who are homeless tend to provide rather conditional assistance based on the idea of independence through working. In other words, people who are homeless are primarily entitled to housing or other kinds of welfare supports as a temporal means until they become independent with a job. Therefore, this special measure is essentially designed for employment support for people who are homeless, especially if they are able to work. Including preventive considerations for people who are at the edge of becoming homeless, the focus on the employment supports is helpful for healthy people in the working age, but this can be less effective for people who are old and/or not healthy enough to engage in employment.

Additionally, although many people who currently experience homelessness do not live in the state of absolute homelessness, the government acknowledges only visible homeless populations under the political considerations. By excluding people experiencing diverse contexts of homelessness from political discourses, the government may consequently pay less attention to the critical social structures creating inequities and also to people's voices living in the midst of deep-seated poverty and homelessness.

The Japanese government also provides the welfare support, called 'public assistance program' to low-income individuals and families. The public assistance program is the government's main income support program that guarantees the 'healthy and cultural minimum standard of living' to the citizens in need. This comes from the basic living right of citizens in Article 25 of the Constitution of Japan. This public assistance program is financed and managed by both national and local governments. The public assistance program consists of eight types of assistance: 1) livelihood assistance, 2) education assistance (compulsory education expenses), 3) housing assistance, 4) medical assistance, 5) long-term care assistance, 6) maternity aid, 7) occupational aid, and 8) funeral aid. Among these supports, livelihood and housing assistances are the main sources of supports given to the most recipients (MHLW, 2016b).

The number of recipient households and individuals of the public assistance program has steadily increased since 1995. In January 2016, more than 2.16 million individuals and 1.63 million households were receiving help through the public assistance program, which is constantly increasing and indicates the seriousness of growing poverty in Japan (MHLW, 2016b). Yet, the eligibility test for this assistance is very rigid in order to avoid benefit fraud. People who apply for the public assistance program are thoroughly investigated for any remaining assets, family assistance, and capacity to work. Even if a person has no close relationship with his/her

family, s/he will be first asked if they can use family supports before applying to the welfare. Even if a person has been seeking but could not find employment, s/he will be asked to find a job first. Particularly, it is not easy for middle-aged and healthy men who become homeless to obtain benefits from the public assistance program since they are often assessed to have ‘the ability to work’. Besides, local governments are often reluctant to provide welfare supports to people who do not have a fixed address because each local government is afraid of attracting recipients into their jurisdictions (Iwata, 2003). In some municipalities, having a fixed address is an implicit requirement to receive public assistance program (Sekine, 2008). This is because of the growing financial burden on municipalities; three-quarters of the benefits are provided by the national government, but the municipalities have to pay the remaining benefits to recipients. Thus, some low-income or homeless individuals and families who slip through the security nets are left unsupported by the welfare schemes in Japan despite their needs for help.

There is another welfare program called unemployment insurance. Yet, in order to receive unemployment insurance, one needs to have a record of working at least 26 days in the preceding two months and the benefits are given for a limited time (Sekine, 2008). The Japanese government officially offers various welfare supports for people living in poverty, but there are critical barriers for people who experience poverty and homelessness and who desperately need supports to access to the the social welfare supports. However, even if people could obtain social welfare, the financial assistance only functions as a limited solution without comprehensive supports and care for the unique needs of each individual.

Recently, the total benefit for public assistance programs have received budget-cuts by being compared with the minimum wage, which is extremely low in the economic global competitions that produced many *working-poor* populations. Historically and recently, many

organizations or groups of people have mobilized to take public actions and speak against the unequitable national or local policy frameworks (Hayashi, 2015). Although a part of such mobilizations have successfully publicized their intentions and brought about various changes in support of the rights of people who are homeless, the political pressures informed by the neoliberal economy have frequently worked as the marginalizing forces on people who are homeless or who receive welfare supports (Hayashi, 2015). It can be said that the lives of people who are homeless in Japan are not sufficiently supported by the political schemes and are more likely to remain unstable and insecure. If people who lose their employment are unable to obtain public assistance, have no family supports, and have finished receiving the limited-time unemployment allowance, they have no choice but to face the risk of becoming homeless.

Cultural Context of Homelessness in Japan

In one Japanese study on youth vulnerability, a word '*ikizurasa* (hardship of life)' was cited as a representation of emotional struggles among precarious youth who seek belonging, recognition and acceptance from society (Allison, 2012). Indeed, the current Japanese society has increasingly been characterized by a sense of '*ikizurasa* (hardship of life)' experienced by many people across the country with a fear of marginalization and isolation from society, where a sense of belonging to a group and group decisions are highly favored. Various forms of marginalization have become more and more of a daily occurrence in contemporary Japanese society and this marginalization unavoidably drives individual's unique lives, voices, and existences to the hidden edge of society.

In the past, homelessness was seen as an avoidable phenomenon by choosing a so-called 'normal' Japanese life style, which means having an extended family network and engaging in life-time employment. Yet, in more recent times, along with the arrival of powerful political,

economic, and globalized influences, homelessness has no longer been under the control of individuals. With the progressive economic recession, the influx of cheaper labour forces from other countries, and the insufficient social welfare systems, becoming homeless in Japanese society has recently become an occurrence that could happen to anyone at any moment. Thus, the modern dilemma is that homelessness can no longer be avoidable regardless of personal efforts; yet, once people become homeless, people are treated and understood as if they fail to make their own efforts. This powerful structure of marginalization has become a huge threat and imposes various normalizing pressures on people in Japanese society.

This blurring and slippery boundary between the mainstream and the margins characterizes the current society in Japan. On one hand, the blurring of boundaries is linked to the increased competitive, restrictive and shrinking realm of mainstream society. On the other hand, the slippery boundary points to the difficulty of returning to where they were after falling into the margins. People who have fallen into the margins of society, due to the competition of the mainstream society, find it difficult to find the way out of their current situations. For example, it becomes more difficult to obtain decently paid employment if people do not have a fixed address (Obinger, 2009). There are also cultural factors of shame and stigma attached to poverty and homelessness in Japan (Inaba, 2011). This culture of ‘shame and stigma’ skillfully distracts people from being dependent on the welfare supports and reinforces the negative connotations of individual responsibility toward the experiences of poverty and homelessness. Furthermore, this ‘shame and stigma’ powerfully silences the voices of people who are homeless, making homelessness a subject to be hidden from public attention. Once people suffer from poverty and become homeless, they are likely to enter into the conundrum of silence, invisibility, inhospitality, and no exit.

A growing number of people who are homeless in Japan are now faced with chronic poverty, sudden unemployment, and crucial disconnection from social welfare supports (Okamoto, 2007). In addition, the stigmatization attached to homelessness further exacerbates their emotional pain and distress. In this way, the social position of people who become homeless are frequently and unreasonably placed into an "inferior social category" (De Venanzi, 2008, p.133) that considerably limits their opportunities and capacities for optimum life choices. Allison (2012) characterised the modern Japanese society as "a land of refugees" (p. 362) where only so-called 'winners' can obtain freedom to envision the future. People who become homeless metaphorically symbolize the status of refugees in Japanese society without being seen and heard in the space of appearance (Arendt, 1958). In the modern era where the economy takes huge control over the politics and people's lives, economic independence directly affects people's quality of life. Furthermore, economic independence is closely linked to the notion of citizenship, which seemingly qualifies people to belong to the public sphere with a sense of social inclusion. Therefore, the blurring and slippery boundary between the mainstream and the margin of Japanese society in modern times builds a powerful structure of marginalization accompanied by a competitive labour market, a strong cultural notion of shame and stigma, and a restrictive notion of citizenship. These considerations can significantly reveal the hidden structure of marginalization in the society and pave the way toward achieving a society informed by notions of human plurality, equity, and human dignity. I will further explore these points in the discussions by drawing on the ideas of Hannah Arendt in Chapter 11.

Knowledge Gap in Homelessness in Japan

There is a critical gap in the current understanding of homelessness in Japan. In response to the growing number of people and the increasing visibility of the issues of homelessness in

Japan, homelessness has frequently been described and analyzed in relation to the economic and political discourses. In fact, many of the research studies about homelessness in Japan attempt to study the historical and the current development of homelessness around transforming market economy, changing employment practices, unjust reformation of public assistance, or deregulation and privatization measures of the government (Ezawa, 2002; Garon, 2002; Hasegawa, 2005; Okamoto, 2007; Sekine, 2008). In such ways, homelessness tends to be viewed and placed under the institutional and structural discourses within the existing knowledge. Recently, the increasing dominance of neo-liberalism has created a strong discourse, which powerfully guides a range of sociopolitical decision-making and ultimately produces insecurity and precariousness in people's lives. Thus, an institutional analysis of homelessness in terms of marginalizing effects of neo-liberal transformation might be of a particular interest and focus on current knowledge development. Also, within the healthcare field, homelessness in Japan is mostly studied in terms of epidemiological analysis (Ito et al., 2014). Yet, this focus may only highlight the social or physical vulnerability of people who are homeless and intensify a sense of isolation and powerlessness.

The prevailing influences of neo-liberalism infringes upon the basic human rights by introducing the notion of individualism and building a new logic of individual responsibility (Sommers, 2013). These normalizing effects of neo-liberalism, the phenomena of poverty, unemployment, and consequently homelessness tend to be carelessly seen as individual failures, by which people who are homeless feel stigmatized by society or removed from equal life opportunities (Obinger, 2009). Thus, it is considered that there are basically two distinct but inter-related views of understanding homelessness in different layers in society: one is

homelessness as an outcome of sociopolitical reasons and the other is homelessness as a result of individual lack of responsibility.

However, there is a critical gap within this knowledge of homelessness. While the links between homelessness and the sociopolitical arrangements have been explored, the link between homelessness and people's experiences has not been well examined. Questions such as: how do people experience homelessness? or how do people who become homeless make sense of their lives? are not frequently asked or given enough regard in the current knowledge development of homelessness in Japan. Moreover, as it can be assumed from the obvious decline in the number of people who are homeless in Japan within the national survey, homelessness which used to be more visible with people sleeping outside on streets or in stations has become more invisible to people's eyes. This sharp decline in the visibility of homelessness in Japan can further distract people's attention from the crucial issues, crisis, and needs experienced by people who are homeless. Thus, even within the knowledge of homelessness, the unique bodily, cultural, or social existences of people living in the midst of homelessness tend to be minimized or marginalized. Distress of marginalization not due to the lack of voice, but due to the lack of a space of appearance described by Arendt (1958) critically elucidates this gap of knowledge in terms of the lack of speech and recognition by others, and reveals the vulnerability of people who are marginalized. Therefore, in this doctoral research, it is significant that stories of people who are homeless in Japan are respected and carefully listened to, not as a collective voice but as individual voices, so that their individualities are reflected upon to add a new dimension to the current understandings of homelessness in Japan.

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Chapter 3: Narrative Inquiry

Why Narrative Inquiry?

I have chosen narrative inquiry as a research methodology to explore my research puzzle, through which I wondered how people who are homeless or precariously housed in Japan have lived and told their experiences of becoming/being homeless. Not only a research methodology, narrative inquiry also importantly encompasses a way of understanding experiences through which stories are situated in time, place, relationships, and various other contexts; in narrative inquiry, stories are treated as phenomena under study (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). One of the reasons why I decided to use narrative inquiry is that homelessness in Japan has often been viewed as a social phenomenon in general and not as a personal experience. Once people traverse a boundary of the mainstream society and lose their home or house, they are likely to be labeled as ‘homeless’ and their unique individuals lives are hidden and made invisible.

Evolving from the historical development of homelessness in Japan, the current situation of homelessness now shows a wide range of diversity with regard to age, gender, pathways, backgrounds, and implications of becoming homeless to each individual. Again, I am recalling Sumi in *Kamagasaki*: he might not think of himself as a so-called ‘homeless person’ if he has already found his ‘home’ in the slum town, in the protest group, or in the support center. Dismissing the diversity embedded in the current understanding of homelessness could consequently hollow out the important reality which could only be expressed by the experiences of people who are actually living without a home in Japan. Revealing the diversity of homelessness in Japan could also challenge and shift the common notions about homelessness, by which people tend to stereotypically understand homelessness. By means of narrative inquiry,

which respects the wholeness of individuals' lives, I believe it is possible to disclose aspects of the diversity of homelessness in Japan by highlighting the complexity and diversity of experiences of people who are homeless situated temporally, and within diverse contexts/relationships, and places (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Overlooking the complexity and diversity may significantly shrink the worlds and create the silence shaping our perceptions of the worlds. In the speech given by Adichi (2009), she points out that we are often trapped in a single story which we uncritically accept as a complete truth and un mindfully incorporate into our understandings. People who are homeless in Japan are often described in a single story, such as they become homeless because they are lazy or fail to carry out their responsibilities. With the economic/political influences in Japan, the impressions toward people who are homeless are likely to be manipulated and are seen as a financial burden or a threat for the public safety in society, which may ultimately result in devaluing their citizenship and disregarding the basic human rights of people who are homeless in Japan. The single story can powerfully create a dissonance between people who are experiencing homelessness and people who look at homelessness from the outside. The single story could further allow ignorance among people in fully recognizing the reality of homelessness, which could reinforce the stereotypical single story and result in insufficient supports for people who are homeless. Narrative inquiry holds the possibility to criticize this single story by listening to the stories of people who are homeless in Japan and carefully attending to the complexity and diversity embedded in them. In addition, narrative inquiry is embedded in the relational space between researchers and participants. Establishing a relational space with a participant, a researcher will be intimately involved in the life of a participant (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), which allows a participant to become a central actor in a study. Hence, narrative inquiry further

provides a space where participants can break the silence imposed by the single story and expand their worlds and other's worlds with their own voices. In this way, their existences are meaningfully interwoven into their stories.

Clandinin (2013) articulates narrative inquiry as “people in relation studying people in relation” (p. 141). With regard to a relational space in narrative inquiry, narrative inquiry also allows researchers to appear in a study by disclosing their respective life experiences, different perceptions, and unique vantage points (Clandinin, 2013). This means researchers can also direct their focus inward to their life stories which are shaped by their lives in the midst and are being shaped within a relational space alongside participants. Narrative inquiry also encompasses a philosophical standpoint in terms of contemplating human experiences with its overarching viewpoints and ethical commitments (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Unlike other qualitative methodologies, narrative inquiry reveals the particularity, complexity, and contingency of human existences and their experiences. These concepts call forth a respect for subjectivity and singularity of each human being, as well as the value of human relational interdependence and interactions. This point of respect attests to the ideas elaborated by Arendt as well, in terms of human plurality and equity in a public sphere (Arendt, 1958). For philosophical understandings of human experiences, it is also profoundly meaningful to undertake narrative inquiry as a research methodology, because storied accounts of individual lives will be meaningfully incorporated into or expanded to philosophical reflections upon what constitutes human existences, our living spheres, and citizenship and human rights. By thinking with Arendt's ideas, I imagine stories may entail important aspects and reveal fundamental questions about how we respect each human being and create an inclusive space for all.

Key Assumptions in Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research methodology proposed by Connelly and Clandinin in the 1990s. Narrative inquiry is a methodology and also defined as a way of understanding and narratively inquiring into experiences as storied phenomena (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Caine, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In other words, narrative inquiry is a study of how people experience the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Furthermore, as Clandinin (2013) mentions, narrative inquiry is a way of honoring experiences which is interwoven into a wholeness of each individual and ultimately provides a source of knowledge and understandings about human lives. Also, Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) see narratives as “one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another’s assistance in building lives and communities” (p. 35).

Dewey’s concept of experience conceptualizes and characterizes the central philosophy in narrative inquiry. Dewey is a philosopher and was an education reformer in the twentieth century in America. Dewey’s two criteria of experience, interaction and continuity, build a distinctive ontology and epistemology in studying human experiences (Dewey, 1938), which are reflected in the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space of temporality, sociality, and place¹ (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Caine, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Thus, the important ontological commitment in narrative inquiry is a relational commitment through which researchers and participants co-compose stories in relational and participatory ways in the midst of living out stories of their respective lives (Caine et al, 2013; Clandinin & Caine, 2013).

Relational commitment in narrative inquiry closely connects itself with another ontological

¹ Temporality is defined as temporal continuity from past, present, and future with which researchers travel backward and forward from the moment they attend (Clandinin, 2013). Place is defined as being specific physical boundaries where experiences are lived and told (Clandinin 2013; Clandinin & Caine, 2013). Sociality is regarded as the personal-social dimension of the narrative inquiry where researchers and participants move inward to their emotions or moral responses and outward to existential conditions (Clandinin, 2013).

stance of continuity in which experiences are understood both “in the living and telling” and “by listening, observing, living alongside another, and writing and interpreting texts” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 43). Accordingly, the epistemological stance in narrative inquiry informs a view of experience where we see experience as being lived in the midst, unfolding over time, growing up in collaborative ways, and reflecting who we are in a relationship, across contexts, place, and time (Clandinin, 2013). Furthermore, these ontological and epistemological commitments awaken the significance and the sensitivity to the realization of relational ethics in narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013).

One of the assumptions in narrative inquiry is that human beings are inherent story-tellers. Built on the understanding of human beings as inherent story-tellers, each research participant will be respected as a unique individual who has lived and told and will continue living and telling their stories, in relation to people, social contexts, and in specific places. Human beings, as inherent story-tellers, always need someone whom we can tell a story to, ranging from family members and friends to a larger public audience, because stories create meanings in lives. Okri (1997) as cited in King (2003) conveys that “we live by stories, we also live in them” (p. 153) and “[i]f we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives” (p. 153). Within narrative inquiry, human beings are recognized as inherent storytellers who live and tell a storied life individually and socially (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In such ways, each life story is situated in a complex web of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space of temporality, sociality, and place, which is continuously negotiated through a research relationship.

According to Dewey (1938), experiences occur in the interactions between individuals and their external contexts. Crites (1971) similarly describes that shared cultural or social

narratives unconsciously infuse life stories of people in order to orient people toward a common public world. In addition to relationships between researchers and participants, Clandinin (2013) demonstrates various other relational links in narrative inquiry, such as the relation between persons and their world, the relation between past, present, and future, and the relation between cultural, institutional, linguistic, and familial narratives. Since researchers in narrative inquiry pay close attention to various relationalities embedded in life stories, narrative inquiry can also elucidate a range of social narratives which are not consciously identified by people but significantly shape their stories of experiences. Acknowledging these relationalities in narrative inquiry honors the complexity of human lives and it gives a holistic, thoughtful, and reflective way of understanding experiences.

This point of relationality further entails another assumption of the particularity of human experiences in narrative inquiry; even if two persons went through the same life events, their experiences would be very different. Furthermore, Caine et al. (2013) illustrate the unfinished and transforming nature of people's narratives by saying that "... each story is always partial, contextual, and offers new possibilities as the stories are retold" (p. 7). As Clandinin (2013) articulates, lived and told stories are always situated in relationships and within storied landscapes. In narrative inquiry, another underlying assumption is that human experiences are always transforming alongside relationships and one's unique interpretations and imaginations, as well as changing life contexts. As Bell (2002) elaborated, life experiences can never be fixed and confirmed; they are always changing into new narratives. Thus, stories are the momentary but comprehensive incarnation of who we are at a specific moment within a floating sequence of time, place, and various relationships situating our lives. The sensitivity toward the particularity of stories can be further elucidated if we think about how stories could be told otherwise

(Greene, 1995). As Bruner (2004) illustrated, “any story one may tell about anything is better understood by considering other possible ways in which it can be told” (p. 709).

In connection with the particularity of stories, understanding lives as always ‘in the making’ is another important aspect of narrative inquiry. As people live their lives, their internal, external, and relational contexts are always shifting, as well as the meanings of experiences of past, present, and future are transformed by living, telling, retelling, and reliving² their experiences. Narratives that are lived and told are constantly restructured while keeping some degree of coherence. Committed to people’s ongoing experiences which are recurrently lived, told, retold, or relived within a narrative inquiry space, narrative inquiry supports an understanding of “lives in motion” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 204). Dewey (1938) describes the continuity of experience by saying “... every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after” (p. 35). Therefore, even after the completion of a research study, the understanding of lives as always in the making allows for the continuous reflection of retelling and reliving of the experiences which are lived through an inquiry space by both researchers and participants. This can be another unique aspect of narrative inquiry, in that the narratives will continuously be revisited and that the relationships established in a narrative inquiry space may keep evolving even after the formal research period ends. As it is mentioned “...we are our stories, and our stories are what we need to learn, to live, and to live well” (Caine et al., 2013), we forever embrace and live with stories to enhance our future, shape who we are, and care for the people who were/are/will be part of our stories. Informed by interaction and continuity of experiences

² The terms of living, telling, retelling, and reliving have special meanings in narrative inquiry. First, people live stories and tell stories of the living. The process in which researchers inquire into these lived and told experiences is called retelling stories. Also, researcher and participant might also live and tell stories of a relationship. While retelling stories of lived and told stories, researchers and participants might possibly be influenced by them and start reliving their stories during or after a research period. (Clandinin, 2013)

(Dewey, 1938), narrative inquiry incorporates the viewpoint of lives always in the making, as an important ethical concern and responsibility to participants and their stories.

Encountering People who are Homeless in Japan

In the study, I recruited three participants who are currently living in various precarious housing conditions in Japan. Two of them are now homeless and the other participant was homeless in the past. All three participants are middle- to older-age, male, and over 60 years old. I engaged in a series of face to face conversations with each participant for a period of three months in Japan in 2015 and had 10-12 conversations with each of them. Following the series of conversations during the first visit in Japan from January to June in 2015, I composed the narrative accounts in Canada and returned to Japan from March to April in 2016 with a purpose of sharing and negotiating the narrative accounts with them.

In order to recruit participants, I visited one of the non-profit organizations in one city in Japan which provide specialized supports for people who are homeless. This support organization is associated and located within a Christian church. Around less than five people are working as regular staff members and more people are coming to volunteer. The city in Japan is my hometown and one of the metropolises where 1.5 million people live, and where around 70 people³ are reported to be living in a state of absolute homelessness in 2016 (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2016a). As the city has an extensive harbour for trading overseas, many people who are homeless are found living alongside these ports. According to a staff at the support organization, most people who access support organizations are male and over the age of 60. I requested that the supporting organization introduce me to potential participants, so that it

³ According to the national survey, increased number of people who are in absolute state of homeless were reported in major metropolises such as Tokyo or Osaka, or cities where *yoseba* used to be located. The city where I recruited participants was a middle-sized city that does not hold a major *yoseba* district.

could possibly reduce the potential anxiety of participants and guarantee safety in building a relationship. The exclusion criteria in the study were, 1) youth under the age of 16, 2) people who do not speak Japanese, 3) people with severe mental illness, and 4) people who know that they are moving out of town soon. I write more about my experiences of entering the field and how I met three participants in Chapter 4.

Transition from Field to Field Text

In the course of a narrative inquiry, researchers write field texts arising from relationships with participants, which capture the subjective or intersubjective experiences of a particular moment, place, and relationship (Clandinin & Caine, 2013). After entering the field and engaging in conversations, both researchers and participants start to live in a relational narrative inquiry space (Clandinin & Caine, 2013). This relationship builds the foundation of field texts which represent the emerging moments, feelings, and landscapes co-composed by both researcher and participants. In regard to how relationships shape field texts, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe, “a relationship embeds meaning in the field texts and imposes form on the research text ultimately developed” (p. 94). Relationships between a researcher and a participant importantly affects meanings, manners, and styles of field texts by which further consideration and writings about a relationship is underpinned. Also, in turn, field texts have an influence on the nature of relationships where a researcher and a participant live alongside each other (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

In narrative inquiry, field texts are reflected upon, interpreted continuously throughout the course of the inquiry (Clandinin & Caine, 2013) and continue to anchor researchers to relational space and moments even after formal research relationships end. Field texts include field notes, transcripts of conversations, and artifacts (Clandinin & Caine, 2013; Clandinin &

Connelly, 2000). In this study, the primary way to compose field texts was to have a series of conversations with participants over three months and to transcribe the conversations. While living in the midst of a relational journey with participants, I also kept journals in which I wrote down my emotions, reflections, and poems about my experience of our relationships. Keeping a journal helped me to stay focused on my subjective feelings and internal thoughts emerging from conversations and relationships with participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I also wrote field notes to keep the record of time, place, contexts, and other observable information about our conversations.

In addition to field notes, I asked participants to take photos of their daily life landscapes, as well as to bring memory items which are meaningful to them. However, as participants have lost most of their personal belongings in natural disasters and in the process of becoming homeless, it was impossible to ask them to bring artifacts that reminded them of memories in the past. Two of three participants agreed to take photos of the sceneries that are meaningful to them. Photographs visually supported the understandings of stories and experiences of participants. These visual tools also provided both me and participants with opportunities to live, tell, retell, or relive stories. Thus, in this study, I incorporated several different kinds of field texts, including transcripts of conversations; field notes of events, visits, and conversations; photographs; and my research journals.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), field texts are collaboratively composed between a researcher and a participant, but it also allows a researcher to take a distance in order to reflect on their relationship with participants. Although the movement of back and forth through field texts within a relationship may cause relational tensions, this helps researchers to be more attentive to a relational journey (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009). Clandinin (2013) states

that stories lived and told within a narrative inquiry space undergo an ongoing interpretation through a continuous process of living, telling, retelling, and reliving. Having multiple forms of field texts allowed me to remain reflective. I also stayed flexible and mindful of exploring various other possibilities of composing field texts that might arise from a relationship with participants. For example, I brought some photos I took in Canada to one participant who used to deal with lumber coming from Canada. I brought some photo books of the world heritage sites to another participant who expressed his wish to travel to many new places. The way they reacted to these photos gave both me and participants an opportunity to imagine and invited further stories to tell. By staying open to the dynamics of each relationship through shaping field texts, I appreciated lives and worlds storied by participants in a more thoughtful and interactive way. At the same time, in creating field texts, I also tried to be conscious of the broader “social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 46) embedded in each story.

Moving from Field Texts to Interim and Final Research Texts

Clandinin (2013) mentions that life experience is always more than we can understand, which signifies the ambiguity, complexity, unpredictability of how individual’s life stories unfold. Narrative inquiry is not a methodology to obtain knowledge about a certain phenomenon or population group; rather it distinguishes the multiplicity of individual’s life stories situated in particular place, time, and contexts. While field texts mark the particularities of experiences embedded in specific time, place, and context, interim research texts are a beginning of the retelling process (Clandinin, 2013). Interim research texts make visible a bridge connecting one experience with another and make clear the complexities, tensions, and ambiguities of storied experiences, which are negotiated between a researcher and a participant. Also, interim research texts shape an important connection between the initial research puzzle and the final research

text (Clandinin & Caine, 2013), which helps to preserve the consistency and coherence within a research structure. Clandinin and Caine (2013) state that interim research texts such as narrative accounts⁴ can facilitate retelling and possible reliving of research relationships. Thus, writing interim research texts is a significant process in narrative inquiry, since it provides an opportunity to move deeper into the storied moments and landscapes, and experiences of relational space, and find new directions or interpretations within an ongoing relational journey.

As Richardson mentions, “writing is validated as a method of knowing” (pp. 962). While a researcher and a participant were retelling stories through writing them down in the interim research texts, we came to know the multi-layered complexity hidden in stories and the nature of relational spaces more clearly and differently through these writings. As it is elucidated by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), interim texts “take on different forms and vary according to the circumstances surrounding the life of the inquiry and particularly the research and scholarly life of the inquirer” (p 133). In seeking ways to creatively re-tell and understand the stories of participants in our conversational space, I explored the possibilities of manifold expressions to write and situate interim research texts in the study. Part of narrative accounts in this study were written as a letter from me to participants. Letter format in interim research texts was intended, not as its original meaning, but as a representational form whereby I could secure some spaces to articulate my emotions to participants’ stories and our emerging relational spaces, and to interweave my stories with their stories. As I engaged in writing interim research texts, I came to more clearly realize the multi-layered feelings embedded in myself as I was re-listening to participants’ stories and continued living alongside our relationships. By taking a letter format, it

⁴ Narrative account is retelling of participant’s and researcher’s stories shared in a relational space. Narrative account is co-composed between researcher and participant, as researcher writes a draft of narrative account and negotiate it with participant (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

helped me focus on my inarticulate emotions, wonders, and reflections on dynamics of co-composed stories and relationships, with increased sensitivity toward my shifting inward worlds in relation to participants' worlds.

In the interim research texts of narrative accounts, I sometimes chose to employ metaphorical expressions. In our conversations, I recognized multiple disruptions and dissonances which participants might have to recurrently encounter in initiating a relationship and in disclosing their personal stories of being homeless with me. Whenever the silence was noticeable underpinned by their tension and struggles, I was puzzled and prompted to travel to their worlds (Lugones, 1987) while imagining what could be possibly hidden behind the silence. This imagination inspired my emotional sensitivity and revealed the potential complexity within their tensions and struggles which cannot be captured by rational, verbal expressions alone. Related to metaphor, Anzaldúa (1999) talked about "sensing" that is "the capacity to see [...] the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface" (p. 60). Using metaphor significantly sustained my wish for "imagination without insight" (Lorde, 1984, p. 37) in ways that let meanings and interpretations be open and shifting. According to Anzaldúa (1999), this sensing is "an acute awareness...that communicates in images and symbols which are the faces of feelings, that is, behind which feelings reside/hide" (p. 60). I have chosen to use metaphors not only to show/imagine inarticulate feelings through images, but also to invite readers to perceive these moments through more sensible and collaborative ways, such as in elucidating my confusions or in imagining participants' troubled hearts implied in their actions and stories.

In addition, metaphors in interim research texts represented a tool from linguistic point of view. As all conversations were done in Japanese, translation into English posed challenges in preserving and conveying the delicate meanings of participants' stories, voices, and gestures

expressed in our relational spaces. When communicating in Japanese, people often do not explicitly demonstrate their opinions or emotions to others in verbal forms, which leaves more unspoken words and emotions than in communicating in English. In Japanese communication, we are often expected to ‘read the air’ which means ‘read between the lines’ in English. These silences, caused by Japanese language and brought by Japanese communication styles, also necessitated imaginations to fill in the gap that resulted from the translation between Japanese and English. Also, as I use English as a second language, I sometimes found it more comfortable to express my feelings through metaphorical images, which, I thought, could not be fully demonstrated by English expressions. Through deliberations, several metaphors were incorporated into interim research texts for foregrounding the complicated nuances of language and of our relational spaces in ways that honor participants and me.

In narrative accounts, I also employed others creative means to explore and illuminate the complexity of emotions, stories, and relationship-building between me and participants. For example, I wrote some poems arising from our relational journeys as I lived alongside participants’ stories and lives. As it is eloquently articulated by Lorde (1984):

...poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives.
(p. 37)

I deeply resonated with Lorde (1984) in that poems bear and bring forward sensitivity and awareness of lives that cannot be easily described, but importantly sustain “our hopes and

dreams toward survival and change” (p. 37). In another interim research texts, various font styles and blank pages were intentionally inserted to visually show the tensions both participant and I felt in our relational space. Also, photographs which either participants or I took in various locations were also incorporated in interim research texts to demonstrate stories through visual images. These creative attempts were made in hope to represent knowledge and meaning-making process of participants’ stories and our relational spaces in more respectful and interactive ways.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), writing a final research text is full of tensions because a researcher needs to turn inward to the voices of participants and outward to the possible forms and the wider audiences. Clandinin (2013) discusses voice and narrative form of a final research text; throughout interim and final research texts, the experiences of participants are always given the first priority and care. In final research texts, it is important to find narrative forms that honor the voices of both participants and researchers and the stories that have arisen from/within a relationship. Also, I tried to consider social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives that have been lived and expressed by experiences of participants and researchers, in order to elucidate the complexity of our lives (Clandinin, 2013). While writing field texts and interim texts, I engaged in continuous thinking and reflections on how my final research text would be structured, characterized, and read by participants and by the possible public or scholarly audiences. I wrote three final research texts from the study in order to consider the complexity and multiplicity embedded in participants’ experiences of being homeless in Japan and the relational knowing in narrative inquiry. From a methodological point of view, I inquired into my role as a researcher to explore relational ethics in narrative inquiry in terms of how relational ethics shape a space where participants tell their stories. Through retelling and reflecting on the stories they shared in our conversations, I identified narrative

threads that illuminate both the diversity of their experiences and the tie weaving through their experiences. From a philosophical point of view, I engaged in thinking about the implications of the body of people who are homeless in Japan as a political stance to bring about changes in recognitions and to reconsider the concepts of human right and citizenship.

Through carefully attending to ethical considerations, I wish to keep the uniqueness of each participant's experiences alive by closely listening to their voices. In this way, I hope that this study can introduce the diversity and multiplicity into the understandings of homelessness in Japan. I hope the final research text will become an honored footprint of the journeys courageously lived by participants who are homeless in Japan, as well as of our research relationship that we have built together and will continue to live in the future. Even following the completion of the final research texts, I will remain attentive not only to my initial wonders, but also to my personal, professional, and ethical responsibilities to the lives of participants (Clandinin & Caine, 2013).

In terms of the language, I wrote all the field texts in Japanese since all the conversations with participants were done in Japanese and I felt more comfortable to use Japanese when I was in Japan and having conversations with participants. Through engaging in conversations and ongoing interpretations of participants' stories, I have eventually selected several excerpts from transcripts which were translated into English and which I incorporated them in the interim texts and the final research texts. The reason why I have chosen this style was that translations can potentially change the nuance of linguistic expressions, the delicacy in participants' stories, and the atmosphere of our relational spaces. Viewing experiences from different languages might have given me a renewed understanding of experiences, as I wrote my journals in both English and Japanese. However, detailed, comprehensive translations of conversations in an ongoing

basis might have taken me outside of the particular world and particular contexts that were shared and co-created between me and participants. In the interim and final research texts, I purposely left the original excerpts in Japanese in order to honor participants' voices and let our relationships show more clearly and visually in the texts, because language was one of the important elements that characterized our relationships.

Ethical Considerations

In narrative inquiry, a relationship between a researcher and a participant is given close attention and care. Clandinin and Caine (2013) clearly mention that narrative inquiry is situated in relationships and in community by attending to the knowing in relational and participatory ways. Relational space creates a moment, a place, and a context in which a researcher becomes more aware of their ethical commitments to participants and to their stories. Bergum (1999) argues that relational ethics takes the interpretive and subjective knowledge into account, which acknowledges the multiple notions of truth to support ethical practices tailored to each person and to a specific time and context. In this study, I tried to be attentive to the dynamics of each relationship with participants, so that I remained attentive to the different ethical values and needs requested by each participant and relationship. Rooted in relational ethics, stories of both a researcher and a participant are respected in narrative inquiry and made visible across field texts, interim texts, and final research texts. I engaged in more consideration of the relational ethics in narrative inquiry in Chapter 9.

Ongoing negotiation between a researcher and a participant is one of the imperative elements in building an ethical space where we think about who we are in relation to each other (Clandinin, 2013). According to Clandinin and Caine (2013), ongoing negotiation entails a commitment to the relationship. When recruiting participants, I gave the documents including a

brief summary of the study, ethical considerations, and my contact information to a staff member at the supporting organization in Japan. Also, I shared the recruitment poster with the support organization and made some amendments based on their advice (Appendix D, E). The location for a conversation was a meeting room provided by the support organization next to their office areas. Before starting a conversation with participants, I explained the study regarding the purpose, study procedures, confidentiality, and potential risk to the participants, as I carefully adjusted the expressions depending on the participants and frequently confirmed if they understood my explanation. In the first conversations, I negotiated the frequency/duration of conversations with each participant and remained flexible if they asked for any changes for later meetings. In addition to oral explanations, I also prepared a written information sheet which summarizes the study (Appendix B, C). I explained to participants that their participation was completely voluntary and confidentiality was provided. If the participants had any concerns or questions with regard to the study, priority was always given for addressing their concerns first.

During the course of conversations with participants, all of the emerging texts that were going to be included into interim and final research texts were shared and negotiated with participants until they agreed and felt comfortable with how they are described and in which contexts their life stories are situated. In addition, before, during, and after the period of our conversations, I kept a journal to capture my feelings and reflect on them later. For me, keeping a journal was also a way of ethically attending to the relational space by situating myself in a relationship, and seeing myself in participants' worlds (Lugones, 1987); playfully seeing myself within each relationship (Lugones, 1987); being conscious of the silences presented by stories; and asking questions to myself. Also, I had regular meetings with my supervisor and committee members to share my experiences in the field and my writings. Finally, as the final research texts

were written with a public audience in mind (Clandinin & Caine, 2013), I was always careful about the potential influences of this study to the larger contexts and audiences.

Before initiating the study, I submitted an ethics application to the Research Ethics & Management Online system (REMO) so that the research was reviewed and approved by the research ethics board at the University of Alberta (Appendix A). Throughout the research process, I was careful that the research meets the requirements of the current *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans* and University policy, as well as provincial, federal, and other legislations and regulations. From the beginning stage of data collection, pseudonyms were used to name participants in the field texts, interim texts, and final research texts.

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Chapter 4: Entering the Field

Note at the Airport

January 27th 2015

Waiting in front of the gate at the airport, I wonder how my new journey will unfold...

“Open up, enter in”- from a childhood, I remember when starting a new notebook, I paid a special attention to the first page, much like when taking careful first steps with a new pair of shoes, as if the first page determines the whole life course of this notebook. Among other carefully-written fragmented pieces, “Open up, enter in” was curiously glimmering on the first page of my journal. As I listened to music a few days before my departure, this lyric was sharply echoed into my mind which was longing to find an expression. I believe when I revisit my journal after I return to Canada several months later, this quote shall still have a soul on the first page.

“Open up, enter in” has created a new visualization to one of the important dimensions of my trip back to Japan, not only about entering into a new field to start a study, but also about my sentiment of going home. After having lived in Canada for more than nine years, my home country has become a place of occasional visit, where I spend only a few weeks every year. Whenever I go back to Japan, I always enjoy Japanese food, am amused by the rapidly-changing Japanese culture, and reminded of the value of relationships which have nurtured me throughout my life. When I booked a flight to Japan this time, I was simply thrilled about this opportunity of going back to Japan where I had not spent as long as five months in the past nine years.

However, when I imagined myself as a researcher in Japan, I realized it might be a

different kind of visit. It is not merely a temporary respite from schooling nor a delightful and permanent homecoming. Having lived in Canada for more than nine years as a graduate student and having been married here, I have continuously been making every subtle adjustment to get accustomed to a life in Canada. Staying in Japan for almost five months to engage in my research is going to be a new unknown combination between my daily 'life' as a student in Canada and my occasional 'visit' to my home county.

Still, I am very happy that I can stay beside my mother, through the moment of a difficult transition in her life, but at the same time, I was uncertain of how this new mixture of 'life' and 'visit' in Japan will turn out. Living in multiple worlds is accompanied by a need for constant adjustments and compromises. I felt the tension of entering the field for my study. In many ways, I was about to "Open up, enter in" to a whole new world. Standing on the threshold, my feet trembled especially when I am aware of my freedom in choosing any directions or remaining disoriented. Soon, I am getting on a plane. When I get off this plane, I will open up a new life and hopefully take a courageous stride entering the new world full of untold colors, smells, temperatures, textures, lights and shadows through which I will weave countless new stories.

"Open up, Enter in"

January 29th, 2015

Since I came back to my hometown in Japan in January 2015, I feel a sense of nostalgia. My home town has been the same with a crowd of people impatiently waiting for a traffic light, repetitive music coming from a flashy real estate office, and young men with bright hair and women in body-conscious dresses smoking on a corner of the street, telling me that the morning has been passed from the night, most of the time with tranquility and with tiny twists. I was

running to the church with winded breath in that chilly morning to join the soup kitchen. That day it had been almost one year since I volunteered at the soup kitchen, so I could not recall the time when they usually leave the church and drive to the site to start cooking. I was not certain if I could make it this time. When I arrived at the support organization¹ located within the church area, I immediately sensed that I did not arrive on time. The support organization was quiet. After I quickly explained to a lady at the reception desk that I came here to join the soup kitchen, she urged me to go there now by saying “*You can still make it!*” She carefully explained the way to the bus stop and the way to the soup kitchen from where I was supposed to get off the bus. Just before I said thank you to her and left the center, she quickly added that I should find a woman with an orange toque there.

It was easier to find the woman with an orange toque than I thought. For my eyes, this orange seemed like the only color in the colorless winter scenery. Kindly, the lady at the reception had called her cellphone to let her know that I was coming. She called my name from a distance and greeted me with a gentle smile, which made me feel relieved. Yet, I also felt a tension in the soup kitchen, as I realized that I was about to go into a situation where I would meet new people, create new relationships, and co-compose new life stories. This tension has continued to grow and swell as I recognized the uniqueness of my existence in this space.

She encouraged me to go into the kitchen area which was located at the middle of an empty ground beside the park. The park is under construction to build a new running trail as part of the city-development projects. Caught between the construction area and a huge soccer ground, the soup kitchen operates in a small narrow area, as if it only found its niche here for

¹ This support organization provides specialized supports for people experiencing various housing insecurities. It offers a wide-range supports such as soup kitchen, offering cloths and shoes, night patrol, health/housing consultations, and self-support groups.

people coming to secure a meal for a day. According to a staff member, this soup kitchen used to operate within the church located in the downtown area, which many people found easier to access. However, due to numerous complaints from nearby neighbors, since this area was among one of the most popular tourist destinations, it has been driven into the current place under the busy highways and next to a number of warehouses. Feeling many curious and strange gazes coming towards me, I slowly went into the kitchen area and stood around the *Kamado*² while listening to people's conversation:

"He is telling the same story again!"

"He is weird because he's drinking alcohol today as always."

"No. I am weird because I'm NOT drinking alcohol today. I look totally normal with alcohol. Too bad I ran out of booze!"

"Drink protein with aspirin. It gives you a pleasure."

"It doesn't matter. If anything happens in my life, I would just jump in."

"Jump in where?"

"Of course, into the ocean or railway!"

In a cold winter day in January, *Kamado* supplied much needed warmth to anyone looking for an instant repose. While listening to their lively but fleeting conversations around *Kamado*, all of a sudden, I heard a whispering voice behind me; *"You came here before, didn't you?"* I turned around and there was a small old man with shabby shirt curiously smiling at me. Countless wrinkles engraved on his face, fashioned his smile into a charming and welcoming look. I recognized him right away. I remembered that three years ago when I first volunteered at a soup kitchen, he gave me thorough instructions about how to cut vegetables to their proper sizes while showing his own as examples. I was happy to know that he was still coming here and

² *Kamado* means a fire place which used to be placed at a kitchen area for cooking in Japan. This *Kamado* at the soup kitchen can hold a huge pot enough to serve over a hundred people.

he looked exactly the same from the last time I saw him. While I felt like a stranger, he gave me a sense of anchor which allowed me to feel at least a small tie onto this space. With an excited voice, I said, *“Thank you for remembering me! How are you doing?”* He shrugged with smile and said, *“Nothing can possibly change”*. Conversations emerged, continued, and ceased everywhere at the soup kitchen while some were muttering to themselves and some arguments broke out into violence. At the corner, somebody went unconscious due to the extreme hunger and was transported by the ambulance just before soup was served. Yet, all disappeared like a dream when the time comes to close the kitchen, leaving only a naked ground with whirling icy winds.

After the soup kitchen, I came back to the support organization with the woman in the orange toque. We sat in a small living room connected to an office area, where things such as a coffee maker, a dining table, many bags of donations, copy machines, and lockers were tightly crammed in order to accommodate multiple functions. Sitting on a worn-out chair at the dining table, I presented a recruitment poster and an information letter on the table and explained my purpose for the study to her. She quietly nodded as I was carefully choosing words, trying to give her a clear reason why I came here from Canada and plan to do a study here. Also, I read her a short summary of the narrative inquiry study to explain that I expected to have a series of conversations over a three-month period with three to four people who are homeless. While paying attention to my outbound voice, I was constantly disturbed by my anxious inner voices; *“if she would not be able to support the recruitment, what should I do?”* When she put back her gentle smile, my inner voice diminished in its volume. She sounded rather favorable to support my study, but she also expressed a concern that I am a young woman who was engaged in one-

on-one interviews. Gender issues seemed to have a pressing influence here and obviously, being a young female seemed to be troublesome. She told me that she experienced a problem with a young female student before who had similarly interviewed people and where difficulties had arisen with her participants. According to her, most of the people who come to the support organization are male in their 60s or more, they are often estranged from their family and have no opportunities to talk with women. Looking at the recruitment poster, she asked me to remove my phone number from the poster, otherwise it would quickly spread among people and cause serious issues. I felt disappointed to lose one potential means of communication with participants. Knowing more about what was behind her expressed concerns, I became puzzled over the situation which seemed outside my expectations and control.

I thought about the implication of entering into a world where I need to be always cautious about how I behave and about how and what I say. She also told me that I should pay close attention to how I dress, specifically pointing out that I should avoid showing my skin unnecessarily and wearing too feminine dresses, all of which may give unintended messages to some people. Until that moment, I have never thought that my age and gender would potentially have such influences and might interfere with my study to such a degree. Another lady at the support organization advised that I should not talk too much about myself even though they ask me. I sensed a deep gap between me and the people whom I imagined might become participants. I was reminded about how I felt at the crosswalk connecting the busy train station and the silent slum town in my previous visit in Japan. The only difference is that we are not cut off by a visible distance like a crosswalk; we are sharing the same physical place, but they were implicitly but clearly demarcated as those whom I should pay attention to. These prescribed boundaries between me and potential participants might also determine how I should behave as a

researcher and how much I should distance myself. I was too inexperienced to discern what is hidden at the core of this implied boundary and, probably, I was too naïve to think that this boundary seemed unfair. This gap seemed to conflict and distract with what I expected to do here, which was to build trusting relationships with participants to narratively inquire into their life experiences. In many aspects, I needed to be defensive enough to always ensure and prioritize my safety first, which, if not, may put a considerable burden on the already-overloaded staff members at the support organization and may even determine their attitude for future young female researchers in the field. There was a conflict between their institutional responsibility to avoid potential issues around a young female researcher and my personal commitment as a researcher who intended to do narrative inquiry. I imagined how my experience would be different if I were a man or an elderly woman. I slowly inhaled the air circulating in the small cramped room - it did not help me alleviate this sequence of bewilderments.

Noticing the futility of my attempt at this point, I dared to pose the last question: Could I go outside to a café or some meaningful places for participants to have some conversations with them? Her quick surprised response clearly demonstrated the impracticability of this idea. I was not allowed to go outside with participants because it may cause trouble if we were seen walking together outside by other clients. She kindly offered a meeting room within the church area nearby the support organization. She said I should wait inside the meeting room until a staff member escorts a participant there, otherwise it might provoke curiosity or jealousy among other clients if I accompanied a participant into a meeting room. She also told me Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays were ideal days for an interview as there tend to be less people visiting the support organization. Everything was arranged for me to have conversations. These careful instructions made me feel alert and sensitive. The staff at the support center were far

more experienced than me, and I felt that I needed to figure out why they are so vigilant. I was getting a sense of the small, close-knit community of people who are homeless in this town as well as of their sensitivities from my visit to a soup kitchen. I felt as if many eyes and ears were constantly directed at me, watching either with curiosity or for supervision.

I truly appreciated that she agreed to support my study and care about my safety, and the possibility to do my study here. Yet, I felt distance between me and potential participants. How can I jump across this perceived disconnection? Or am I not allowed to do so? I worried if it would become a more formal interview where a researcher takes a lead. I wonder if participants would open their hearts to me and how our relationships would be shaped under these conditions. She ended the conversation with a recommendation that I work as a volunteer for about a month before starting recruitment in order to let myself become familiar with potential participants. I agreed with her advice. She gave me brochures and the detailed information about activities offered by the support organization. Leaving the support organization, I was still holding many uncertainties, but at the same time, felt a sense of achievement that a door had opened. In fact, I believe there should be some creative possibilities to explore various styles of conversations and relationship-building which are responsive and attentive. Seeing myself in a small cove in flux, I hold myself together with remaining elements of hopeful prospects and readiness to volunteer in the beginning period of my research.

Stumbling over the Perceived Disconnection

February, 2015

Abyss below the abyss.

“There is the abyss below the abyss; it’s like a thick, dark, and infinite sludge where people can

never break free once they get caught.” One older woman at the support organization told me this while we were waiting to start a night patrol on Wednesday night. It was the day after my first visit to the support center. The older woman had been working at the support organization for more than twenty years. From her tone, I could feel a palpable sense of helplessness engraved onto the reality of homelessness. I recalled my perceived disconnection from potential participants, which I had felt the previous day. Metaphorically, it may not simply be a disconnection which separates us, but may be a tainted, muddy ground which traps people and makes it difficult to stand up. The world which I am about to approach may be far more fragile, deeper, colder, and darker than any stretch of my imagination can possibly access. I began to realize what messages were possibly hidden within the gazes directed at me, such as “What are you doing in such a place?” or “You must belong to a different world”. Studying abroad is not a common practice in Japan; rather it tends to be regarded as a prerogative of some fortunate people. Who am I as a student who is studying abroad and coming back to Japan temporarily to listen to the stories of people who are homeless in Japan? Standing among other experienced volunteers, I felt tension when I considered myself as a curious, temporal visitor who wants to have different experiences. Her telling of “*the abyss below the abyss*” oddly resonated with me, particularly in the darkness of night it made itself sound more realistic.

Before starting a night patrol, volunteers prepare some *Onigiri*³ and boiled water in a small pot. Then, volunteers were divided into several groups of two to three persons and each group was assigned an area. With two other experienced volunteers, I was assigned to an area close to a big commercial harbor which, during the daytime, is one of the most popular destinations for visitors and families with children. In an empty office at night, we quietly packed

³ *Onigiri* means a rice ball wrapped by a sea weed paper, which is a traditional and typical portable meal in Japan.

some paper cups, instant miso soups, and brochures of the support organization in a small shoulder bag and hold the portable pot and a blanket. When we parked a car at an empty parking lot nearby the harbor, I could not see anyone. The harbor was soaked in quietness and darkness, but vivid illuminations from a waterfront hotel and a huge Ferris wheel were beautifully shining from a distance. It was a very cold, windy night. The constant sound of tide beating the quay intensified the silence and added stiffness to the air. I follow a gentleman who had volunteered for a long time and knew well where to go and whom to visit at the harbor. First, we went into an empty waiting lounge for ferryboats where we met a middle-aged man sitting on a bench. He was waiting for us to come. As I clumsily stirred hot water with miso paste in a paper cup, I asked him *“Are you going to stay here the whole night?”* He said he would stay there until the lounge was closed and then move to another place. I was relieved by the way he responded which sounded gentle. He wore clean, decent clothes and if nobody told me, I probably would think he simply had finished his job and was waiting for a ferryboat. After leaving him, we checked public washrooms, bushes behind a fence, and an archway to a museum where we found a few people quietly sleeping, surrounded by a pile of cardboards. While we swiftly and silently walked from one place to another, this volunteer gentleman told me a story that a few years ago, there were repeated blind attacks by young gangs and many people were forced to move out to find another sleeping place. I imagined a complex, intensified tension; in this cold, quiet, and dark harbor, people may be spending a night while holding their breath. I hoped this silence was a peaceful silence. Yet, nobody knew if the same silence is promised tomorrow.

Finally, we arrived at a dark parking lot located nearby the harbor and across from a luxurious hotel. There, I was surprised to see a well-made small ‘house’ located on a narrow cement ridge at a parking entrance. For me, this house was shaped exactly like a coffin, but with

a welcoming outlook of a house with a fake handmade miniature door and windows decorated on the sides. The gentleman who volunteered knocked on the door by softly calling a name, and an elderly man bluntly opened the door, more technically a ceiling of his 'house'. Apparently, he had been living here for a long period of time. When we said "*How are you, Sir?*", this man, with a mixture of irritated and anxious voice, claimed that he suddenly fell down a few days ago and now he was feeling numb in one hand. From his hasty way of speaking, I could tell how much he was waiting for us to come. After asking several questions about his condition, we recommended that he visit a clinic the next day. However, he refused because he was reluctant to leave his house. He said, "*I know I need to see the doctor*". But he was afraid that his well-built house and all his belongings would be removed if he was absent from his 'house'. All he could do at that time was to keep observing his situation and visit a clinic if it got worse. All we could do at that moment was to give him the date and the time of free medical counselling and to urge him to go. There remained a certain degree of entanglement below the surface of our communication with no convincing answers for both of us. Every single word in our conversation was trapped in this entanglement which encompassed countless emotions, internal/external conflicts, and visible/invisible issues. When we were about to leave, he said, "*I am scared!*" by looking straight at us while pulling his upper body from his tiny little house. I felt powerless in that situation. His cry was evidence of his life. He was vulnerable without secure housing and frail without attentive care and appropriate treatments, but even in such a situation, he had to make the ultimate choice between his house and his health simply in order to ensure his survival.

While we were driving back to the support organization, we met some people sitting on a bench and others were waiting for us at a crosswalk. We gave them *Onigiri* and a blanket according to their needs. The volunteer gentleman told me that some people kept walking

throughout the night because some were afraid of sudden attacks or some cannot sleep due to the pains from arthritis in these extreme cold nights in February when the temperature dropped as low as zero degrees. It was hard for me to imagine what it feels like to sleep outside or to keep walking in a cold winter night with a fear of a sudden attack or unexamined/untreated health issues. People sleeping outside have various essential needs such as a need for food, medical attention, refuge from the cold, or a desire for the warmth of human interactions. They constantly had to balance, prioritize, compromise, or give up these crucial needs with a feeling of uprootedness and a scarcity of resources. Maybe, what the women called “*abyss below the abyss*” found meaning in such situations. Their desperate efforts to survive were driven into the hollow of the darkness of the night and exhausted in vain by the morning. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, they have to keep fighting with something far beyond their control without available resources. Yet, their wounds and heartaches are made unrelated to their desperate fights and may be merely defined as flaws and vanity by society. “*They were made small in society*”, the volunteer gentleman said in the car when we returned to the support center. I deeply resonated with his comment and the comment has stayed with me throughout my study.

Encountering myself as an outsider.

On Friday of the first week of my visit, I joined a weekly round-table meeting at the support organization. In a brochure, this meeting was described as a group meeting where people take a moment to think about themselves and better realize their life, which fit my interest to listen to the life stories of people. Anyone who wanted to share stories or listen to others’ can drop in and attend the meeting which lasts about one hour. On my way to the meeting, I accidentally took a wrong train and I was running late. I was running in a hurry to the support organization, like the first day when I was heading to the soup kitchen. However, this time was

different. When I arrived, a woman who facilitates the meeting was still doing some preparations inside the office and the meeting had not even started yet. I perceived the atmosphere at the support organization as being more easy and relaxed than the last two days. She seemed to be creating her own time schedules which other people also found comfortable. I felt at home in this gentle atmosphere shaped by her. After a while, she encouraged me to enter a meeting room located across a courtyard. She opened the door and I slowly went into the room with a little nervousness. Similar to the soup kitchen, I also encountered many gazes telling me that I am a stranger, but without the same intensity at this time, since these gazes were no longer unfamiliar or unexpected. Yet, these gazes were more penetrating within a closed meeting room.

The room was quiet. There were about ten people already sitting in the meeting room. All of them were men who looked around sixty years or older. In a large meeting room with a high ceiling, people were sitting on a metal chair around a long rectangular table. The heater warmed up the room and when entering inside, it took some time for me to get used to the mixed smell of sweat and coffee circulating the room. I chose a chair close to the door, next to the women. She recommended I have a coffee and take one snack plate. In the back of the room, there were two coffee servers and several snack plates prepared for each person. I slowly went to the snack table, made a coffee, and took one plate of snack with me. As the room was facing to the courtyard with a big grass frontage, I could see some people sitting right outside the room and talking to each other while paying attention to the room. On the other hand, people in the room were not talking to each other and they were either reading a newspaper, eating snacks, or aimlessly looking elsewhere. I felt another silent gaze coming from the outside.

When I returned to my chair, the woman placed a card and a pen in front of me and asked me to choose a name, as she pointed at her name card written as Mary. I looked around and

found everyone at the table had their own unique, or humorous name. According to Mary, during a meeting, people call each other by their nicknames and no one was asked to tell their real names or share any personal information. For me, it was very interesting to see their nicknames, each of which might bring forward a part of their identity or life stories. I wondered how they came up with these names. Yet, it was not easy for me to give myself a nickname. I also anticipated my new name would bring a new personhood to me in this group. I pulled on my imaginations and memories in search for a nickname and I finally came up with a name, 'Helena'. I remembered when I just started my life in Canada, I was asked to have an English version of my name and somebody gave me a name, 'Helena' simply because it starts from H, the first letter of my name. I got a new name. It almost felt like a new thread of the self was arising from this new nickname. As soon as I finished writing my name on a card, people asked "Is it coming from Helen Keller or is it from the female Japanese comedian Helena?" I enjoyed that moment, since it seemed my new name created a closeness and a sense of membership in this community.

Before they started the meeting, Mary named one old man to read the promise of the meeting written on a paper which was distributed to everyone. He readily accepted this offer and started reading it in an accustomed way, "*Regardless of nationality, religious belief, gender preference, social status, or any other reason, we are always valued as one person. This is a space for people who want to reflect on their lives and explore new ways of life...*" At the end of the promise, Mary added cautions that nobody should ask any personal questions to each other and we should not bring any information and any stories of others outside this room. These careful arrangements rooted all of us into the affirmations of safety and acceptance, which encouraged each of us to return to who we are, while we temporarily obtained a freedom from

the gravity, harshness, and discontinuity which might be imposed by external forces.

Then, Mary named another man to think about today's topic. After a few minutes of thinking, he posed a question; "What is the meaning of this meeting for us?" One man told us that this meeting is a valuable space because he could talk about anything. Another man said this meeting is a homecoming place for him where he could always feel at home and cared for. People were sharing the same moment together where we were united in passing on stories and listening to one another. Although some people chose not to tell stories and people mostly did not respond to each other's stories, their lives were intersecting with each other for a limited time by leaving traces of their lives in others. I was impressed and relieved to know that there were some people who were willing to share their stories, which gave me a hope for the recruitment of participants in the near future.

When it came to my turn, I shared my experiences at the weekly Research Issues Tables and my small response group with other doctoral students in Canada by telling them how significant and rewarding it was to be a part of a community, helping each other, and being able to tell and be listened to by others. After I finished talking, I was awaiting for some reactions or comments, yet there was a prolonged silence. Suddenly, a man asked *"Are you 100% Japanese or are you mixed with other blood? Your way of talking Japanese sounds a bit different. You used some expressions which we don't use in this area."* He repeated one of my words and compared it with the way in which they normally say it in this area. In Japan, we have a variety of accents according to the regions. Sometimes, it is easy to tell which part of Japan people come from by simply listening to their accents. I was born and grew up in this area until I was 22, so I was surprised to hear his comment. Maybe it is because my way of speaking Japanese has been transformed while living in Canada or influenced by my husband coming from a different region

of Japan. Parallel to my confusion, I felt sad that his comment was unrelated to my story. Hiding my disappointment, I responded to him, *“Oh really? I just came back from Canada. That’s maybe why. I am from here!”* Another man gave me a comment that it was very unusual for a woman to come to this meeting; they had had a few women in this meeting before, but they never came back for the second time. I wonder what kind of experiences these women have had in their first encounter. Surrounded by attention and a curiosity about who I am, why I am here, and what I am doing here, I started to realize that it could be a very complex process, particularly for women, to perceive a sense of being part of a community here. I found myself standing at this perceived disconnection.

How can I come close to them? How can I mitigate this perception of disconnection? At this moment, I sensed that it seemed difficult to expect a relationship like a friendship with a sense of closeness. Yet, if I surrender myself to my perception of disconnection between us, how would our conversations and relationships unfold? On my way back to the train station after the roundtable meeting, I met a man who participated in the meeting. He introduced his real name to me, but I could not give my name to him due to my anticipations of the safety advised by the support organization. He told me that he had been looking for a job for a long time, but it was never successful because of his disability. I asked, *“Are you still looking for a job?”* Being distracted, he answered *“Oh no, I gave up. It’s impossible to find a job for me.”* While walking with him, I surprisingly recognized that people walking on the street did not yield way to him and he repeatedly hit people and side bushes. The scenery was apparently different from when I walk on this busy street alone. I wondered if this was what narrative inquiry entails: seeing his world from my eyes and my world through walking beside him. Without being bothered, he continued talking, *“Don’t care about anything you are told there. People have various opinions*

and values.” He smiled and disappeared into an unkind crowd while dragging his one leg. For these couple of days, I underwent an upheaval of emotions with confusions, puzzlement, uncertainties, and questions, interwoven with deep relief, ambitions, desires, and hopes. It was as if I was riding a rollercoaster with unseeable tracks. It was a tension-filled moment of transition into the field, but I thought it must be a significant to learn to live alongside people whom I might have conversations within a near future. Within the transition of entering the field, I am living in a sphere of motionless motions and active thinking of who I am, who they are, and what this place is, in hopes to characterize my inquiry more caring, responsive, and respectful space.

Walking across the crosswalk again.

In February, I participated in the soup kitchen three times a week, the night patrol, and the roundtable meeting once in a week. Day by day, my presence became more familiar to people and I encountered less strangeness as an outsider, which allowed me to be more open and creative to demonstrate care to them along with a growing sense of community. When entering the meeting room for the roundtable meeting, my name card and a plate of snacks were already placed in front of my chair. Some people willingly came and talked with me at the soup kitchen or secretly shared some candies. I became more accustomed to the ways in which the soup kitchen was operated while exploring my way to be helpful. Many people seemed to come to the soup kitchen for a long period of time. From the way they band together as a group, I perceived both the closeness of their community and the tensions associated with it. While people were receiving counselling, haircuts, or some donations at a corner of the soup kitchen, volunteers, staff members, and people who came for a meal were equally and actively involved in the routine set-up, cooking, and closing of the soup kitchen. I was particularly impressed by the way they quickly and efficiently closed huge tents, tables, and chairs and bundle all of them up in a tiny

place with a seamless cooperation. Wherever any help was needed, people readily gave their hands. People who regularly came to the soup kitchen were observant enough to instantly find out the needs and correct others' behaviors unusual from their routine. When one regular man returned to the soup kitchen after a few weeks of his absence as he was sick, he told me, "*I really missed being at the soup kitchen and wanted to come back to help*". People have attached extensive values to this space not only for the sake of a service, but also for the sake of a commitment with which they could acquire a sense of acceptance and belonging. Yet, as I have engaged more closely, I also noticed potential tensions and fragile layers hidden under the seeming equilibriums. I was gradually but intensely caught in my life as a volunteer, but emails from my supervisor and occasional Skype calls with my friends in Canada helped me step back from my role as a volunteer and see the situations from the viewpoint of narrative inquiry, and focus on my reasons for coming.

I felt that I was taking one step forward at a time to enter into the field, even though my anxiety towards participant recruitment deepened step by step at the same time. Knowing more clearly about my unique position and the various tensions embedded within this space, I was haunted by a fear that nobody would want to have conversations with me. With the daily volunteering and worry about my research, my body was fatigued. One day, at the soup kitchen, a small old man taught me how to tie a knot. He said, "*You shouldn't tie a knot too tight. You have to leave it slightly loose so that the knot gets tighter with external movements. If the knot is too tight, it won't stand any movements from outside and it will easily break down*". His particular remark taught me a lesson about the importance of releasing control and living in some degree of ambiguity. Like "*To do and to be*" a pastor told me one day at the soup kitchen, referring to the notion that being in a space appears to be simple, but it may be the most

challenging action to keep oneself open and acceptable to the forces outside. *“To do and to be”* requires much courage and strength, but reciprocates with considerable benefits which one can never experience alone. What this man said, *“leave it slightly loose”* and what the pastor said, *“to be”* reminded me to ‘live in relation’ by leaving some spaces within myself, so that I can better respond to the voices/sounds from outside, carefully perceive what happens in front of my eyes, and make sense of these perceptions in thoughtful and relational ways. I sensed my knot was very tight and I really wanted to learn to loosen it while learning to live in relation to people and within visible/invisible environments surrounding me.

At the end of February, I went to the slum town again after my first visit two years ago. Before coming, I contacted the support organization where I met Sumi, but they did not respond to my messages, so I decided to visit another support organization. I walked the crosswalk again to enter the slum town. This time, the crosswalk looked and felt much smaller and less striking than it did two years ago. The air in the slum town was still tense, pulling me back to ten or twenty years ago in Japan, but I did not find unfamiliarity there. When I arrived at a support organization, an older male volunteer took me on a quick tour inside the building which looked like an old wooden house. He said it used to be a diner in the past. On the first floor, there was a kitchen for people who want to cook instant noodle and a lounge for people over 60 years old. On the second floor, there was another small lounge for people younger than 60 years old, a little barber room, and a mortuary room where the ashes of people who died without family are quietly laid next to a big cross and a picture of Virgin Mary. It seemed only a few people were working in this building, though about twenty to thirty people were constantly coming in and out for help.

After finishing the tour, he had another client waiting for his help. He encouraged me to

stay inside the lounge on the first floor and help supply daily necessities such as toothbrushes or basic medications to people who need them. The lounge room was filled with the heavy smell of tobacco which made it difficult to breathe. Rusty metal chairs were aligned evenly toward a small TV hanging on a wooden wall, in a way as if it was a lecture room. The room was full of people, mostly older men, watching TV, smoking, talking to themselves or each other, or sleeping. I sat down at a reception desk where people frequently came to ask for supplies or to talk with me, such as *“How old are you?”* or *“Give me a light for my cigarette!”* I found it interesting that people spoke to me as if I had been working here for a while and I did not feel any strange gazes in this room. This may be partly because this is a big slum town and people may more often encounter young female volunteers than those in my hometown. While I was dealing with other people, one old man stood beside the reception desk and kept telling me, *“I feel my head is blurred. I can’t think clearly. What should I do? Can you help me?”* At that moment, I remembered one young man talking to me similarly a week ago when I visited another support center close to another big slum town 150 kilometers away from my hometown. There, a young man sat beside me and said, *“I really want to find a job, but I haven’t been fortunate so far. I don’t want to be a part of disposable work force. I want to do a job which recognizes my personality.”* I heard their cries as an expression of their desperate struggles against a loss of personhood, infringed by inescapable aging or powerful economy-centered ideologies in society. I saw them as living in frustration that pulled on them deeply and endlessly which resulted in their feelings of vulnerability and hopelessness. Amidst these observations I wondered: What is it like to live in relation to them? What significance does it have that I narratively inquire into the lives of people who are homeless in Japan? What are these worlds I am about to enter? Walking on the crosswalk back to the train station in the evening, I vaguely perceived the increase in the

density of the atmosphere. As the day light receded, all visible shapes and boundaries became silhouettes and converged in the night of darkness. In that moment, I lived in remembrance and imagination to remain related to the both tangible and intangible of the past, present and future; amidst the transition, I hoped to find a coherence of my life through thinking about who I was, who I am, and who I want to be. I wonder how I will commit to a life lived with participants and within new relationships through which I will define new directions of light to illuminate new worlds I am about to enter.

Uplifting Strength and Hope

March 7th – 14th, 2015

After volunteering for about a month, I talked to the woman at the support center about participant recruitment in March. She said she had asked several potential participants, but after a week, I figured out it seemed not as easy to find participants as I anticipated. According to her, someone said, *“Time is money”* and asked how much money he could get from participation. Some people were too shy to have a conversation with me by saying, *“I don’t have any stories I can tell her”* or *“I forget what happened in my life”*. One person who agreed to join the study did not show to an appointment that was rearranged three times. I started to think of recruiting participants in the slum town where I recently visited, while searching for other possible organizations close to my hometown. Feeling up in the air, the only thing I could do was to wish - to wish someday, somebody would be interested in sharing stories with me.

Meeting with Yoshi.

I first recognized Yoshi at the roundtable meeting held every Friday. He always sat quietly on a chair at the very back of the meeting room. His grey hair made him look to be in his

seventies. He wore a long black winter jacket which was too big for his skinny body. His jacket seemed too warm inside the heated meeting room, but he always kept this on. He rarely talked or shared stories, but he came to the roundtable meeting every week, sitting in the same spot and quietly eating snacks. When a month passed since I started to join the meeting, one old man offered a topic about hope. When it was Yoshi's turn to speak, he paused for a while and hesitantly started talking. He said that hope is connected to strength; if a person has a braveness to take one step forward in their life, he/she can reach hope. His way of speaking was clumsy and blunt, which gave his story a compelling and touching sound. I was impressed by his story and thought maybe he could be a potential participant. Right after I finished the meeting, I asked Mary if she could ask Yoshi to participate in the study. She put a slight unwillingness on her face and in her tone because she said Yoshi once told her that he could hear radio waves. She shared with me that she was not sure if Yoshi was a good participant to tell stories. There was an uncomfortable incongruity between her comments and my perception of Yoshi. Despite a hint of ambivalence, I felt confident and willing to listen to Yoshi while recalling his story of hope and strength at the roundtable meeting. Again, I asked Mary to talk to Yoshi about my study.

A week later, at the soup kitchen, I was told that Yoshi agreed to join the study. On that day, I met Yoshi in a small counselling room next to the support organization. He looked tense, so I only presented my recruitment poster to him and explained briefly about my study and the expectation of having regular conversations for about three months. He was quietly looking down at the poster on a table while I was talking. After I finished talking, I asked him, "*Are you okay to join the study?*" He bluntly and quickly answered, "*Daijoubu (I am fine). I always keep a promise.*" I said to him that I would bring an information letter next time to give more details of my study.

Meeting with Ama.

When the woman in an orange toque told me that Ama agreed to join in the study at the soup kitchen, I did not recognize him. However, as soon as she whispered to me and pointed to a man, saying “*He is Ama*”, I immediately realized that I have seen him many times at the soup kitchen. He regularly came to the soup kitchen and willingly offered support to wash dishes in cold water and to put down the chairs and tents when we closed. He seemed one of the persons who most actively contributed to the soup kitchen, though he did all of these contributions quietly, never trying to show off his work to others. He looked to be a middle-aged man who always put a soft smile on his face and he had a gentle atmosphere around him while swiftly moving from one place to another like a bird. I said hello to him at the soup kitchen; he glanced at me with his gentle smile and greeted me without words. After the soup kitchen, we went back to the support organization together by car and I met Ama in the small counselling room where I met Yoshi a few days ago.

“*I saw you sometimes at the soup kitchen*”, in a polite way, Ama started talking to me with a friendly smile when we just sat down. I was very thankful for his warm welcome which alleviated my tension and opened up the space. As with Yoshi, I showed him the recruitment poster and explained my study. Ama frequently responded to me while looking at my eyes. When I asked a question about his intention of participation, he shyly replied, “*I am a poor talker. I am not good at telling stories in well-organized ways...but I will do my best.*” He said he has been homeless in this town for a long time. He briefly shared some stories about his own difficulties of being homeless, such as windy nights in winter, recent cut-down of night patrol from two times a week to once in a week, and frequent thefts of his belongings: “*Blankets were most often stolen by Dôgyôsyas (those in the same business), so I have to carry all important*

things with my bicycle". At the end, he added that one of the most distressing things is "*being hit with stones and cans by young people*." He seemed hesitant, but he seemed to be open to share his experiences with me. These experiences must not be comfortable to share with others. I was deeply touched not only by his stories, but by his step forward to our emerging relational space. I wonder how I can weave these stories and his bravery into our relationship in respectful and empowering ways.

Meeting with Apapane.

Apapane was the first person who agreed to join the study. When I asked a female staff member for potential participants for my study, she immediately brought up his name and recommended him. When she made a phone call to him about my study, it seemed that he readily agreed to have a conversation with me. She told me that I must have met Apapane in the roundtable meeting, but I was not sure who he was because I only knew his nickname. A few days later, I met him in a quiet, spacious lounge room connected to the church. Sitting around a wooden table among other similar tables and cozy couches, he struck me as an open-minded, talkative person who looked to be in his sixties. He was not hesitant to talk about himself and his life, much different from the other two participants. In fact, he kept chatting until I cut in to start explaining the study.

He was the only one who showed a particular interest about what I intend to explore through having conversations with him. I decided to present the information letter to him in addition to the recruitment poster in our first meeting. After I went through the information letter with him, he promptly said that he agreed to participate in the study, except for taking photos because it reminded him of losing all photos in the big earthquake which hit this town about twenty years ago. In addition, he told me that he had an extremely busy life schedule with his

new job; even sometimes he could not manage to get on the final bus of a day. He asked me if he could have all conversations over a phone, but I expressed my preference of meeting face to face which would better facilitate both verbal and nonverbal communications. I added that I am always flexible with arranging a meeting date and time according to his work schedule.

He told me that he is not currently homeless; he used to be homeless for one week about ten years ago. Now, he is living together with his girlfriend who expressed concerns about his conversations with me. He said to me, *“I’m an easy-going person, so I don’t want to talk seriously”* and *“I will ignore topics which I don’t like to talk about.”* All of his statements signaled and warned me about an implied distance between me and Apapane, as well as a firmly locked territory where he does not want me to step in. Am I building this tension or was it already there? Are we co-composing the tension? At the end of a conversation when he asked me, *“Are you 100% Japanese?”*, I finally recognized that he was the one who asked the same question at the roundtable meeting. Evoking my confusion, it called forth a stiffness in my body and mind. Yet, because of this stiffness, I embraced a hope to envision how this tension that lived among us will be changed as we moved alongside each other.

I returned to Japan with a wish to sit beside and listen to people who are homeless. Now, I sense my wish has developed into a hope with more concrete desires and visions. Resonating with what Yoshi said about hope, I also believe that strength cultivates hope and it could be vice versa. After the first meetings with the three participants, I tried hard to recall and assemble a strength, a strength to believe, with which I will maintain and nurture a hope for our unfolding relationships. I uplift my strength with a hope that we co-compose stories in our relationships and that the three participants will include our relationships into the narratives of their life. I truly

hope that, in our new relationships, Yoshi, Ama, and Apapane would also find, enhance, or revive their strength to strive towards hope in their lives.

Chapter 5: A Story of Building Home: Yoshi

Sunny Day at the Foyer: Notion of Distance

March 14th, 2015

Dear Yoshi,

After you ran away from the meeting room, I looked at the door you just passed: a vacant glass door facing the courtyard of the church. From the quiet courtyard, velvety sunlight gently came into the meeting room through the door. I don't remember how long I looked at the door, maybe a few seconds according to our common sense of time but much longer in my perception of time. My gaze still caught your back hastily leaving the room through that door and this fresh image is still lingering across the threshold. My ears are still hearing the thud you made when you bumped against the door. It was our first meeting after we briefly introduced each other a week before. Last time, when I introduced myself and the study, you readily gave me oral consent to participate in this study. So, this time, I brought the information letter with me to 'formally' explain further details of this study. As I was successful with this style of approach with another participant a few days ago, I believed its appropriateness in our space. Maybe, I was too far from being mindful of your fear and of your bravery when you dared to open the door. Maybe, I was too enthusiastic about my role as a researcher. When you entered the meeting room with large plastic bags in both hands, you bluntly said "*Domo*" (a casual way of saying hello or thank you in Japanese) to me with a clear loud voice. I was so happy to see you and that you remembered our appointment. Yet, after you sat on a chair in the meeting room and leaned your two huge vinyl bags against the wall, you quietly kept looking down on the floor and seemed to avoid eye contact with me. I was also feeling nervous to start a new conversation and a new

relationship. Maybe, I did not try to understand your gestures of anxiety from your point of view; rather I assumed your nervousness through my own nervousness. Soon after you came into the room, there was an uncomfortable tension hovering and there was my lack of attentiveness which allowed this tension to grow in an unexpected and unprepared direction.

It was a spacious foyer connected to the church where we met; a rustic wooden foyer with four small round tables with metal chairs, a small bookshelf, an obsolete TV, and several old couches made of varied materials. The air conditioner was not efficiently warming up this large open space, so I had to pull my jacket on inside. Except for the sporadic sounds of unhurried footsteps from the chapel, I did not hear any sound. There were three large meeting rooms next to the foyer, but it seemed nobody was there. To me, this silence was gentle and comfortably tense with this rustic taste of the foyer, the chilled air, and a sacred atmosphere of the church. How did you feel when you entered here? Was it familiar, different, or alien to you?

As I was talking with you, I was concurrently negotiating my role as a researcher. Embracing worrisome uneasiness, my choice for our first conversation was to put the information letter on the table and explain the study by using as simple expressions as possible with a reassuring voice. However the tension and my lack of attention became undeniable as I proceeded with the information letter. When I reached a section about the recording of conversations in the last part of the information letter, you finally broke a silence. You suddenly looked straight at me and spoke with a mumbling voice, but in a persuading tone:

To be honest, to tell the truth...I have an apartment. I'm not a homeless. But I cannot go back to that apartment for some reason which I cannot tell you right now. If I tell you everything, then I will be in the trouble. It's about the incident which involves many people....such as the police and the court. I cannot tell you the details. I need to inquire

into these issues first. Also, I have three kids...the oldest is 46 years old. It's related to them...I need to ask them. If the issue is solved, I will be here again for consultation...

I easily perceived your anxiety from the way you disrupted the silence, which drew my consciousness deeply into your swirl of emotions. You were confused and so was I, but the confusions on both sides did not seem to find an intersecting point yet. What are you worrying about? What did I say which made you feel anxious? All at once, I was surprised to see myself in an idea of researcher-participant relationship and unknowingly made you feel vulnerable because of my approach as a researcher. When you used the expression 'consultation', I realized that I had created imbalances in power like between a physician and a patient. What are the things that trouble you the most? I intended a conversation, but maybe it sounded more like a consultation to you. This also made me wonder how many consultations you have encountered in your life, rather than friendly conversations.

After you finished talking without any expectations for answer, you stood up and hastily took your huge plastic bags in your hands. You are leaving! In the midst of confusion, I could barely ask you a question "*Can I see you again next week?*". Unexpectedly, you said "*Anytime is basically fine*". So, I made an appointment for next Wednesday. I quickly wrote the date and time onto a slip of paper and gave it to you. After you crammed the paper into the pocket of your jacket, you stumbled to the door by saying "*Arigato* (thank you in Japanese)". For me, this Arigato sounded more like a word of farewell rather than its literal meaning. I had no hope and no guarantee that you were coming back next week. I was deeply disappointed that we could not have a conversation and regretted my lack of attentiveness, as this tension now lived between us. Still, I feel puzzled about what I was supposed to do there at that moment.

Do you come back? Can I see you again? What is in your heart right now? Please come back next week. I prayed to the cloudless, faint-colored sky above the courtyard through the empty glass door.

Sincerely,

Hiroko



Photo taken by Yoshi¹

¹ I gave Yoshi an instant camera and asked him to take some photos of places that are important to him. He took several photos in the town where he lives.

Walking in the Rain without an Umbrella

March 18, 2015

You are Back!

Dear Yoshi,

Today, it was a cold and rainy day. Grey rain clouds unevenly covered the sky and symbolized my feelings and maybe yours too. I arrived at the support center about fifteen minutes before our appointment time. I was completely uncertain if I could see you. Before going to the foyer, I dropped by the support center and had a brief conversation with a staff member. When I looked at the clock, it was already a few minutes past our appointment time. After hearing a big wave of my heartbeat, I quickly went outside to the courtyard to see if you came back. Across the courtyard, I found your back peeking inside the foyer through the locked glass door. You were looking for me while waving your body right and left in front of the glass door while holding your huge plastic bags in both hands. You are back! When I saw you almost leaving from the door, I ran into the rainy courtyard and shouted “*Yoshi-san!* (a suffix of “-san” indicates Mr. or Ms. in Japanese)”. You turned around and gave me a brief bow, bluntly saying “*Domo*” in flat voice. You looked exactly the same as last week, wearing the same long black jacket with two big blue bags. You glanced at me under a brim of your worn-out cap embroidered ‘Passion for successes’. You did not seem confused or worried this time, as if we did not have our first meeting in last week, but I could still feel the same tension between us. I encouraged you to enter the foyer, turned up the lights and the air conditioner, and quickly ran back to the office to pick up my stuff.

After our first meeting, I saw you sitting in front of the McDonald's at the entrance of a train station. You looked weary and downcast. People were endlessly flowing in and out from the busy train station and you were the only one who sat still in a bustling crowd. Are you usually sitting there? What were you thinking? I could not talk to you at the moment. Opening the door to the foyer, I tried to imagine the dissonances you have experienced in your life and the distance you have trekked and how you have struggled throughout your life. I wonder what it means for you to walk from the busy train station to the quiet foyer to have a conversation with me. I also tried to imagine how you might have felt when you opened this door and entered in the foyer for our first meeting, thinking of the implication of going 'inside' - the inside of the room which you might have only seen from the outside. I called up my experience of tension when I first went inside the soup kitchen and the round table meeting: a feeling of stiffness tied up with curious gazes and attentions from distance. Pulling my chair, I said thank you for coming back to an appointment. Then, I offered a canned coffee and a packet of rice crackers while still fumbling for a way to start a conversation which both of us could be equally part of.

"Where were you staying around today?"

"I was here in this town."

"Were you sitting in front of the McDonald's?"

"No. I was down there...down to the flower park..."

"Where do you usually sleep?"

"I have another place for sleep..."

"How do you prepare for a meal now?"

"I have to prepare...I'm managing on my own."

「今日はどこにおったのですか、ずっと？」

「いや、ここにおったよ。」

「あ、いつものマクドナルドの所？」

「いや、あっちじゃなくてね。下の方で。花畑のほうでな。」

「夜寝るのはどこですか？」

「寝るのはまあ、別にあるんやけどな。」

「今は食事はどうされているんですか？」

「自分でせなあかんねん。な。」

When I hesitantly shared with you that I saw you in the train station, you seemed not care about this, without giving me any reactions. The silence was always next to us, being ready to absorb our conversations at any moment. There were many awkward moments where my questions and your response did not smoothly correspond to each other. The flow of our conversations was often interrupted as we hesitated or sometimes got confused. Yet, I believed that we engaged in the shared moments together to find the common ground. Other than a researcher, what roles will I play in this common ground and who are you becoming at the intersection of our lives in making? I kept asking simple questions, you kept answering briefly. The equilibrium fluctuated due to the silence and the confusion. Then, I started asking questions again. I hoped this linear relation of question and answer have gradually matured into the circular relation of conversations which would sustain our relationship. Although I felt much more comfortable than in our first meeting, I was still afraid if you leave here again. Also, in the hiatus of your speech, I could clearly feel your struggles and perplexities to reveal yourself to me as a stranger, to recall your memories, and to transform pieces of your life into audible voices for us.

I started asking several questions about your experiences of being homeless. You briefly replied and hesitantly shared fragments bit by bit, telling me that you have been homeless for about twenty years, since you were 42 years old. You have been living in this town for about

seven years. When you talked about your recent experiences of being homeless, you sounded rather unclear and unsure of the details. As if one carelessly bothers another, I felt my questions and your answers were continuously not in well accord with each other, which might signal your increased anxiety and the tensions between us. Keeping in my mind your word ‘consultation’ from our first meeting, I was careful not to shape an atmosphere of ‘consultation’ which involved asking a series of questions for a purpose of examination or so-called expert’s advice. I always attempted to invite conversations. As I was worried about the frequent silence of our conversation, I realized it may be better to talk about your earlier life experiences before becoming homeless in order to understand and cherish the most important moments in your life.

In the Second Semester of Grade Four

You were born in a small rural town called Ohsu located in one of the four main islands in Japan. You left Ohsu when you were 16 years old as a part of the group employment program². You were sent to Osaka, one of the biggest cities in Japan, and obtained a job at a small family-owned candy company with a secret expectation of getting free candies. When you started talking about your experience of the group employment, you unexpectedly started telling me a story that you were living in an orphanage; *“I was in an orphanage from the second semester of Grade Four³ until coming to Osaka at sixteen years old”*. Your convinced way of saying ‘the second semester of Grade Four’ suddenly put forth something concrete about your experiences.

“From the second semester of Grade Four... What happened to your parents?”

² Group employment program used to send groups of junior high school graduates from rural towns to the big cities for facilitating employments mainly in manufacturing industries during the 1950’s to 60’s.

³ Grade Four is a part of the elementary education in Japan. Students in Grade Four are usually in the age of nine or ten. As trimester is taken in Japanese academic year starting from April, the second semester refers to the period between September and December.

“They were gone at the end of Grade Three. I don’t know where they went.”

“Did they leave suddenly?”

“Yes, they were gone without saying anything.”

“That must be so hard for you.”

“I had a sister...two years younger. I was living with my sister. One day, the women’s society in Ohsu found us and brought us to the child protection services.”

「4年生の2学期から。ご両親はいなかったんですか？」

「もう小学校のな、3年生の終わりころにはもうおらんかったわ。知らん。どこ行ったか。」

「突然いなくなったんですか？」

「うん、おらんようになったからな。何一つ言わんとな。」

「それは大変でしたね。」

「僕とな、妹がおったんよ。妹が僕より2つ下なんやけど。妹と二人で生活しとったんや。それで、その婦人会がな、見て見ぬふりができんからな。児童相談所に預けたんや。」

At the age of nine or ten, how could you live without your parents? When parents were everything for you as a Grade Three child, how could you make sense of the reality that your parents left you suddenly even without leaving a word? It is so heartbreaking to think of your sadness and confusions striking your little heart. I looked at you- you seemed indifferent to what you just said. What is behind this experience of separation and your expressions of indifference toward this pain?

You continued talking and mentioned that shortly afterwards you and your sister were both sent to an orphanage, but in different locations. When you became fifteen years old, you visited your sister in the orphanage and found out that she had already been adopted. Soon, you knocked at the door of the family’s house who had adopted your sister and said, *“I am here to bring my sister back.”* Being pushed back and told, *“You should come back when you get older”*, you had lost an opportunity to see your sister again. You attempted to visit your sister

again when you were 42 years old, but she was already gone after getting married. Your sister must be a very important part of you, as she was the only intimate family who you grew up with and shared the same memories of childhood. I understand how desperately you attempted to recapture a sense of family and how disheartening it must have been to realize that you had lost contact with your sister. It goes beyond my imagination to think about your feelings of isolation from your family, a family which was no longer accessible to you, as well as your feelings of abandonment from your parents. How did you deal with this loneliness alone?

You were jumping from one topic to another, just like randomly leaping across the fragmented storied pieces which were disorderly floating in your memories. After leaving the candy company in Osaka after two months, you moved to several places in Japan while changing various jobs until you got married at the age of eighteen. After you married, you finally settled in one place and worked at an ironwork factory. When you were twenty years old, you had your first child; eventually, you became a father of three children. However, you divorced when you were 42 years old. After the divorce, you worked as a temporary dispatch worker across Japan and, at the end, you moved into this town. You found it difficult to obtain a job at the age of sixty. When moving into this town, you had received the public assistance program⁴ from the municipal government and lived in an apartment for three years, but all of a sudden you were told to leave the apartment without knowing the reason. “*My belongings were all taken away when I was forced to move out* 荷物もいっぱいあったんだけどな、全部取られてもうたわ。”. Since then, you had been homeless in this town for about four years, but you did not tell me a lot about your experiences of being homeless. “*I’m not a homeless!*” which you said aloud in our first meeting

⁴ The Japanese government provides public assistance programs to low-income individuals and families. The public assistance program is the government’s main income support program in Japan in order to guarantee the basic life of citizens in need.

remained in my mind, making me wonder how you perceive being homeless in your life.

Looking at your huge plastic bags, I asked:

“Are they all of your belongings?”

“Yes, yes.”

“Do you want to live in an apartment again?”

“I don’t feel like living in an apartment anymore.”

“In the last meeting, you told me that you still have an apartment.”

“...I have a house.”

“In your hometown in Ohsu?”

“...Yes, in my hometown.”

“Don’t you have an apartment in this town?”

“I’m not sure about it. I’m not sure about this town.”

「荷物はそれを全部持って移動してるんですね。」

「うんうん。」

「家に入りたいと思いますか？」

「家はそんなにもう入りたいと思わないやけどな。」

「この前まだ家があるって言ってましたけど、それはまだあるんですか？」

「家はあるんや。」

「地名 1 ですか？」

「地名 1 で...。な。」

「地名 2 では家はないですか今は？」

「ん？地名 2 内は分からないんやな。はっきりな、分からない。」

When you said that you have a house in your hometown, maybe you were talking about the memory of home with your family. Or maybe, you did not want to be labelled as ‘homeless’

to which many shames and stigmas were attached. For you, disclosing yourself as a homeless could mean losing your independence or identity. To protect yourself from the destructive impacts of ‘homeless’ defined by dominant narratives, you might hold close a vision of your house which is still present in your memory. I still try to understand what is hidden behind your anxiety, hesitation, and silence. I see myself not treating you as a person who are ‘homeless’, but my intention for the conversations itself may already involve an arrogant perception (Lugones, 1987) in which I fail to see myself in your world, and which might force you to protect yourself.

“The sound of rain has become heavier. Do you have an umbrella?”

“No. I don’t use an umbrella.”

“Where are you going after this?”

“I’m not going anywhere...as usual.”

「雨の音が聞こえますね。雨降ってきました。傘、持ってますか？」

「傘はささないです。」

「今日はこの後どこに行くんですか？」

「どこにも行かないんやけど。いつも通りに...。」

When I asked you “*Do you have time to meet next week?*”, you briefly responded “*I have time*”. I quickly wrote down the date and time on a slip of paper again and gave it to you. After you thrust the slip into your pocket, you opened the door and walked in the merciless rain without an umbrella. Your back looked small and helpless in the dark, cold rain. Your two heavy plastic bags pulled your body to both sides, which frequently caused you to lose your balance and stagger. Where are you heading to? Looking at your back soaking in the rain, I was thinking of your life journey; this image of ‘walking in the rain without an umbrella’ may exemplify how you have lived and are living in the midst of your life. Your body may suffer, but you are quietly

living in sufferings while being exposed to the rain without a destination. Are you determined to leave an umbrella behind, or did you have to give it up so you hold your bags in both of your hands? I could see a lot of blank spaces in you - the silence that surrounds you and your memory of life. The silence may enfold countless upheavals of emotions- uncertainty, fear, ambiguity, and unknowing, but it is mysteriously calm and silent. We both can feel something implied by the silence, but our relationship is still too remote to clearly see and touch what the silence encompasses in itself.

Thank you for coming back, Yoshi-san. Thank you for sharing your stories of childhood. I am very much looking forward to meeting you our next conversation.

Sincerely,

Hiroko



Photo taken by Yoshi

Merry Go-Round, Round, and Round

April, 2015

Keep Rolling – round and round

Dear Yoshi-san,

“Where did you go today?”

“I went to the harbor to see wooden horses rolling, round and round...kuru-kuru-kuru-kuru (imitative sound of rolling in Japanese).”

“Do you like to see wooden horses rolling?”

“No. Because there were many kids and family...”

“Do you like to watch kids playing in the amusement park?”

“Not really...”

“Do you go inside the amusement park?”

“No. I just watch them from outside...from far away.”

When you walked into the foyer, your two plastic bags looked much different from the last week: they were both damaged with rips and stains and seemed almost incapable to bear the heavy load anymore. What happened to you? You did not tell me why. You did not seem to mind that they were so damaged. I remember that a few weeks ago, you once came to the donation booth at the soup kitchen, asking for a pair of shoes by saying *“They are easily worn. Shoes do not last more than a month”*. I imagined you; you must keep walking...keep walking to find a place to rest, eat, sleep, and reside. Then, you were given a pair of sneaker made of mesh fabric; they apparently were not suitable for walking in the winter, but that was the only shoes that fit your size.

I remember in our last conversation, you told me that there is no place in this town where you can sit down. Whenever I heard you say *“I cannot sit down outside”*, it gave me an odd feeling of surprise because whenever I had recognized people who are homeless in Japan, they usually sat down on streets or in train stations. You claimed, *“I cannot sit down because many groups of people are doing activities in a park or because security guards immediately find me and come to kick me out everywhere.”* Outside my attention, there must be many people who are living without home and have to keep walking without being able to sit down and rest. Even when they are sitting on streets, it may not be a restful moment for them. You keep moving. You keep moving until your body merges into the busy crowd. If you stop, you may become a target of curious attentions or of elimination. I wonder how exhausting it is to keep walking every day and how powerless it is not to be able to choose to sit down. It must be so hard for you, Yoshi-san, to keep walking with your two heavy plastic bags in both hands and no escape from the cold wind in the winter.

Since I returned to Japan, I noticed there are fewer public spaces where people can comfortably sit down. Whenever I made a phone call to my husband in Canada, I looked for a place where I could briefly pause and take a seat, but it was challenging to find a place to rest, unless I paid for a coffee to sit down in a café. When I chose to have a phone conversation at a shopping mall, I noticed security guards checking on me in their rounds. Even sometimes, I found a sign on a street which says, *“Don’t stop around this area”*. We all have to keep moving...keep moving without being allowed to sit down and stop. I wonder whose decision it is to not sit down in a public space and I feel scared to think of how far the governance of the public can control people’s behavior by minimizing freedom for seemingly random reasons. Now, looking at your already worn-out mesh sneakers and ripped luggage, I perceived the

harshness of living outside in more tangible and sympathetic ways. Yet, without displaying any complaints, you quietly sat in front of me, waiting for my questions to come as usual. It seemed as if you gave up to fight with everything disturbing you from inside and outside. I hope this space can be a place of relief for you - a relief from the loads of walking, being watched by others, and hiding in crowds.

When you said that you went to see wooden horses in an amusement park, I visualized you standing alone, a bit distant from the small amusement park, looking at a shining merry-go-round and kids happily playing around. You are taking a new journey every day by unceasingly walking from one place to another. In a meantime, your everyday journey may also be a journey into your memory of home and family. The way you said, "*Wooden horses, rolling round and round...kuru-kuru-kuru-kuru*" sounded charming and humorous, which reminded me of the way a little child talks to their parents. This also made me think of your childhood which was interrupted when you were in Grade three. Were you able to talk to your parents like this when you were a child? When you looked at children and families in the amusement park, were you calling up memories of your three children? I am not sure as you did not share so much about your three children. Were you thinking about your parents who left you alone, viewing from the aspects of both a child and a parent? Looking at families in an amusement park from a distance, do you feel a sense of separation between you and a picture of 'family' in which you used to have your own place? It seems there are a lot of remnants of you as a child and you as a father that are still alive and echoing in your mind and in your perceptions. Watching wooden horses in an amusement park, you may have been living in a sentiment of family to temporarily relieve the pains from walking and not to be drawn in the pain of solitude.

Mirroring: Living in the Sentiment of Family

“Oh, I remember I visited a rice-mill where my parent worked.”

“Did both of your parent work at the same rice-mill?”

“No. Only one...only a male parent...not a female...there used to be a woman who took care of us, though.”

“Was she your mother?”

“I don’t know whether she was my mother or not. There was a young lady at home.”

「親が働いとる精米所に見に行ったことあるわ。」

「精米所で働いてたのですか？二人とも？」

「いや、一人だけ。あの男親だけね。で、女の方は...な。よう面倒みてくれよった人がおったんやけどね。」

「お母さんじゃなくて？」

「いやーお母さんかなんか知らんけどね。若いお姉さんがおったんやけどね。」

You started jumping across the fragmented memories of your childhood again. Like a strolling camera, your childhood memories were randomly focused piece by piece from the vague and jumbled backgrounds. You remember that you once visited a castle in Ohsu and celebrated the dolls’ festival⁵ in honor of his sister, with a young lady whom you were not sure if she was your mother. At another time you went to a river to see how fishes were sleeping during the midnight with *Oji-san* (an uncle or a middle-aged man in general in Japanese), but he seemed not to be your father or relative. In the memories of your childhood, your parents were curiously absent, only leaving their shadows. When your parents left you, you were only around the age of nine. You might have been too young to remember the memories of your childhood spent with your parents, or you have been avoiding recalling the memories of your parents which might evoke a feeling of helplessness and vulnerability in you as a child. Spotlight randomly flashes

⁵ The doll’s festival is a special celebration for girls on March 3rd in Japan. Small dolls wearing Kimono, the traditional costume, are displayed on the doll’s stand at each house in order to pray for girls’ healthy growth.

here and there and your camera is still wandering, but a lack of focus on your relationships fashioned your stories of childhood somewhat incoherent and uprooted, as if I was watching a silent movie with lots of missing frames and eventually lost track of the plotline. I can see a fragile scar deeply marked in your body and in your stories of childhood. This scar might be still unsettled by a feeling of abandonment from your parents and an isolation from close relationships.

I wonder if, since your childhood, you have been constantly seeking a place and a relationship where you could obtain a sense of home and family. You frequently told me that you have a younger sister. However, you did not share many memories of her. You said she stayed in a hospital during daytime and returned home only in evenings, while you were living together with parents. I could not understand very well about the contexts between you and your sister. Yet, after you and your sister were suddenly left alone by the parents, you started to live with your sister until both of you were sent to orphanages about a year later. While you were still nine or ten years old, you cooked potato porridge every day, though you never cleaned the house or did laundry since your parents disappeared. I imagined you in an unwashed t-shirt, clumsily cooking potato porridge in a poorly maintained house – all of sudden, you had to take a huge responsibility for the survival of yourself and your sister without having an idea of how to ask somebody for help. At the age of nine, you might have already experienced a sense of homelessness while being disconnected from the safety of home and the comfort of family under which you were supposed to be loved, nurtured and protected unconditionally. How could you manage these overwhelming situations alone? When you talked about the difficulties in your childhood, I was also thinking back to my own days in my childhood. With a quick-tempered, sometimes violent father, the house was always filled with tensions and I was constantly vigilant

to prevent him from causing any troubles to my mother. As an oldest child, I was holding tight a responsibility to support my mother and protect my sister against the destructive influences of these tensions at home. Yet, having grown up, I realized that this responsibility had been too weighty for me to handle as a child and this deep-seated tension eventually made me feel disempowered and silenced. Yoshi-san, your hardship is incomparable to my experience, but I understand your frustrations and confusions to fight against the harsh consequences which you did not have any control over and you were not given any reasons at all.

I sensed a lot of neglected or untouched stories within your silence brought by a feeling of abandonment and disconnection. This feeling may somehow be similar to my feeling of dislocation and disconnection when I first moved to Canada; within the silence situated in disconnection from anything familiar, my voice did not communicate with others and the seeds of stories are driven to obliteration. After you entered the orphanage, you said you no longer felt loneliness because you lived with many children. However, after living in an orphanage, you began to miss an image of family, especially when you saw many children adopted to families one after another and you were the one who had to remain there. Pursuing a place of belonging, you must have longed to be adopted to a family as well, but your desire did not come true. When I asked you, “*Do you think your childhood between Grade three and four is a point of transition in your life?*”, you answered in an unexpected way:

The significant moment in my life was...when I had my kids...I think the same to the most people. I think I changed a lot when I owned a responsibility and an enthusiasm to raise my three kids. The younger was Grade 9, the second one was in a high school, and the oldest one was already working when I divorced at 42 years old. I was so happy when I started to have my family...like...uh...particularly because I was young and motivated to unite my family together.

は？それはみんな一緒とちゃうかな。ね。今まで生きてきた人生の中での転機ってあのー自分の子どもを育てて行くこととするな、そういうあのー思いをしたときにね、人間も変わってね。子どもを育てて、そうなるからね。もう一番下が中学3年生やったからな。みんな二番目が高校行ってたからな。3番目はもう働いとったから、離婚したとき。家族持った時は嬉しいんやろ...何やろよりも...やっぱり若かったからな。

After a long period of the silence, you obtained a sense of home and family when you got married at the age of eighteen and had three children. You must have felt happiness when you had a family, since these feelings were what you had desperately been searching for since your family were disconnected in the Grade Three. You finally found a place of belonging. You engaged in several jobs and devoted yourself to work from morning to night to maintain your family financially. However, after twenty years of marriage, you were suddenly told from your wife that she wanted to divorce. Being told by your wife that your children would be happier with divorce, you simply agreed to divorce without asking her for any reasons. You were concerned about the happiness of your children more than the reasons of your divorce. When leaving your children, you told your kids, *“I am not coming home for a long period of time, so you should help each other”*, 長い間もう帰らないから、3人一緒に助け合って生きていってよ, which mirrored your experience of separation from your parents. Again, you were disconnected from your family and you lost contact with your wife and three children since then. Imagining your despair of disconnection, again I shared my stories of my family; in my childhood memories, my father was always absent. All I could remember was a tension; because of his short-temperedness, I was constantly afraid when he was going to lose his temper again. As a child, I felt lonely and sometimes jealous when I saw children of my age happily playing, talking, or walking with their fathers – since mentally I was disconnected from my father. Then, you slowly started talking:

After all, no matter how poor a life is, parents and children should live together, so that the relationship between parents and children can be established. If parents give up with their children, children will lose attachment to their parents. Moreover, when children

grow up, they struggle so hard not to follow the same path of their parents. I cannot say what is good or bad, but the good environment is indispensable for healthy growth of children. If the environment is bad, their lives are also damaged.

やっぱり家庭はな、貧しくてもどんな生活しててもな、親子で一緒におるほうがいいわ。そしたら親子のつながりがあるからね。やっぱり人に預けたりしてたんでは、子どもも離れてしまうしな。ああいうような生き方をせんって思っ
ね。また子どもも頑張ろうとして無理をするからね。まあ良い悪いも言われないんやけどな、やっぱり環境の中が一番良いようにすれば一番良いんやけどな。環境が悪ければ悪くなるし、良ければ良くなるし。

When you said this, you might be recalling the multiple dimensions of your life. Also, I became aware that my stories and your stories started to respond and resonate to each other (Bateson, 1989). You still remember the age of your children. When you said in the first meeting “*The oldest is forty-six years old...*”, I could see that your three children continue to grow up in your heart. When you were watching a merry-go-round at an amusement park, you may have been living in a sentiment of family. I said, “*Yoshi-san, you were a wonderful father because you cared so much about the happiness of your children when you divorced. Even now, you are a father to your three children*”. I wanted to tell you that even though you lost connections with your family, the fact that you were a father of three children will never be disappear from your stories of life and the memories of your children. Regardless of a series of disconnections and a feeling of abandonment, your life is always situated on a continuum.

With having so many disconnections from close relationships, what do you think when you come back for a conversation with me? Are you expecting a disconnection from me as well? Or did you find something different in our conversational space which might be hopeful and long-lasting? I hope this relationship will be stable, caring, and enduring as we go along. Thank you so much, Yoshi-san, for recalling and sharing your memories of your childhood and your family. I am looking forward to our next conversation. Next week, I will bring a duct tape for your ripped bags.

Sincerely,

Hiroko



Photo taken by Yoshi

Building a Road of Survival

May, 2015

Narrowing Road into the River

Dear Yoshi-san,

“No, no. It’s impossible to fix these”, you gently but clearly declined my offer when I brought for you duct tape to repair your ripped plastic bags. For me, your two pieces of luggage no longer seemed to maintain the shape of bags. Your bags multiplied into several smaller bags as things may have been falling out from countless holes. I wished I could do something for your

luggage, but I had no idea how I could help you without buying you a new bag which was not recommended by the support organization. Giving could be an easy and direct way to support others, so I found it very hard not being able to give and just standing back. Today, I brought for you a bottle of water instead of coffee. From a daily chat with a volunteer at the support center, I learned that coffee may cause dehydration and make you wander to find public washrooms. I realized that it is not easy to think of caring without knowing you and your life situations. My assumptions are always renewed by knowledge underpinned by the experiences. Yoshi-san, I am learning every day from you about how I would be able to perform care within our relational space in both practical and thoughtful ways.

The season has slowly changed from winter to spring; the sunshine has embraced more warmth and brightness and the air has become relaxed and calm. As this was the longest holiday week in Japan, a number of families and tourists were continuously walking on a sidewalk beside the church, spreading their cheerful voices and atmospheres into our meeting room. Meanwhile, in our chilly meeting room, you were quietly counting the number of snacks which I brought for you. I was quietly watching you mumbling the numbers and carefully sorting out the snacks. After you finished counting, you pushed exactly half of the snack to my side as usual. When I said “Thank you always”, you swiftly took out a stained bottle of green tea from your pocket and placed it on my side as well. Being surprised, I asked, “*Oh, it’s a green tea. Can I take this?*” and you replied “*Yes. Somebody gave it to me*”. This was most thoughtful and caring gift to me. It was very impressive that you also tried to give something to me. With your gesture, you taught me that our relationship was situated on equal, reciprocal ground and it was no longer a one-sided approach like a consultation. I realized how much we both have been caring for each other. Perhaps, from the beginning, our conversations themselves might have

already been a form of care; we may have initiated a conversation and invited more conversations because we both cared for each other. “*Arigato. Thank you so much*”, I opened the bottle and took a sip. Cheerful voices and bright sunlight coming from a window were pleasant to my senses and lifted up the chilled air in the meeting room.

While your imaginary camera was roving but slowly began to move forward, my vision was still stuck in your memories of childhood. “*I remember I made skis out of bamboo*”, you said in the last meeting, “*and I was almost dying because my skis were too slippery and I went to the other side of the mountain and couldn’t go back*”, and laughed. When skiing with your handmade skis, you lost your way back in deep snow, but fortunately somebody found you and saved your life. When you were a child, you used to play alone rather than playing with other children. You said you used to craft your own toys by observing other children; for example, you made skis and a sword out of bamboo. Surrounded by various disconnections and the silence of loneliness, you devised ways of having fun and retaining a child’s mind.

After your parents disappeared, you said you frequently went to a river alone for fishing. With a full bucket of small fishes, you went back home and cooked a porridge with fishes for yourself and your sister. “*I built a road...a road going up to the riverbank. な。道を作ってな。河原へ上る道を作るんよ*”. You told me that you built a road from your backyard to riverbank with old bricks, stones, and roof tiles discarded on the ground. You designed the road in a way that it got broader at the beginning and narrower at the end toward the inside of a river so that you could fasten a fish net at the tip of the road during a night. “*By doing so, I could get a lot of fishes in the morning*”. This road was a road of survival for you and your life is a life of building; it is as if you creatively devised your tools and build your life to ensure your survival. As I listened to

more stories of your adulthood, I could not help but recall this metaphorical image of narrowing road into a river in your childhood; all by yourself, you have been collecting pieces and building a road of your life which seems to get narrower and narrower, yet with a hope that things will get better at the end. To me, this narrowing road to a river is a sustaining image throughout your life stories.

Keep Building the Road of Life

“So, after you divorced at the age forty-two, did you leave your house?”

“Yes...because we divorced. My only desire was the happiness of my children...but I already gave it up, because, you know...it just made me feel miserable.”

“Okay.”

“So, I tried not to see my children anymore.”

“You tried not to see them?”

“Yes, yes. I tried to take a distance from them...far away...otherwise I could not bear with my feelings. But for a year after my divorce, I was always haunted by these distressing emotions and struggling so hard to escape from them. Then, I said to myself that my wife has a big family, so the kids will be happy without me.”

「じゃあ、42歳で離婚をして。離婚した後、家を出て行ったんですか？」

「は？うん。いやもう離婚したからね。もう後の思いは子どもの事だけを、幸せに暮らしてくれればええなという願いを持っていったんやけども。もうそれをするとな、自分が惨めになるからね。」

「そうですね。」

「それでもう、子どもを見ないようにしたんよ。」

「そうなんですか。もう自分から見ないようにしたんですか？」

「それで子どもが見えんとこ、見えんところを選んでな。そういう生活しよったからな。」

「そうそう。もう近くにおったらな、やっぱりあかんから。できるだけ遠くに。1年...くらいは自分がやっぱりこの寂しいっていうかね、そういう思いがあったからね。そういう思いをね、消そうと思って自分で色んな事しよったけどね。あつちは親戚が多いから幸せに暮らしてるやろうと思ってね。」

Reflecting on your divorce, you said, *“I cannot believe I lived through that moment... There should be a fortune or something because I am still alive now”*. Another disconnection from your family recapitulated your earlier disconnections from your family, with more intensive blows. You lost your family which was a significant part of your life for the last twenty years, while you simultaneously lost your house, children, and job. Your family must have been particularly important to give you a sense of belonging and of continuity in life. After your divorce, you moved to another province in dismay to avoid seeing your children and started to work as a day labor while sleeping in a skid row. Later, you worked as a dispatch worker across Japan, but job opportunities had become less frequent as the economy went down and you got older. *“In our job, if we made any mistake, we were immediately fired. We were not allowed to learn from the mistakes”* 失敗してな、初めてまた覚えてくるんやけどね。それが僕らの仕事は、もう失敗すると使ってくれへんのよ。Without any assurance, you worked under the pressure of sudden layoffs. You desperately tried to collect pieces to continue building the road of your life, but the resources became extremely scarce. Eventually, you became homeless and found yourself knocking on every door of factories for walk-in job hunting which was often not successful.

“When you slept outside and knocked on doors of factories, what did you think?”

“Hmm...all I thought was about money. I was poor because I didn't have money. If I had money, I didn't have to live in poverty and live such a life.”

“Did you earn enough money when you walked in factories for a job?”

“No. I was just a walk-in, so I couldn't stay long. Just temporarily.”

“When you were fired, did you immediately look for other factories?”

“Yes. This is how I earn money for a train to go to another factory.”

「その時はなんて思ってたんですか？野宿しながら工場に飛び込んで。」

「な、やっぱりお金やろうな。お金がないから貧乏しとるんやからな。お金があつたらな、貧しい生活せんでもええんやからね。」

「工場の飛び込みをしてる時は、結構お金稼げましたか？その時は。」

「いや、ね。飛び込みやから、そんなに長くはおられへんしね。その時だけのあれやからね。」

「また解雇されて、また他を探して歩くんですか？」

「それで、そこで電車賃を稼ぎよるんよ。」

It was shocking and hurtful to hear that you made money in order to get to another factory. It was a never-ending spiral of poverty. Standing on the ragged edge alone, you used up all of your resources and energies just to remain standing on the same edge without being able to secure a safe place. Knocking on numerous doors to find a job, you resisted being drawn into the hardships. Even if you had to spend most of your earnings for transportation, you had no choice but to keep moving in order to maintain your life, more importantly to ensure the basic survival of your life. This story, again, intertwined with your childhood stories – being separated from your parents, you went to the river to fish to survive every day and built the road to the river. You were continually and desperately building the road of your life by knocking on doors of factories. Even though you might have been feeling despair of loneliness, poverty, and uncertainty, I could see you embraced unbroken hope.

Eventually, having lost any prospect of getting a job, you moved into this town about seven years ago. After a few months of your arrival, you were offered an apartment arranged by the welfare program. Yet, for some reason, you had to leave the apartment; all of a sudden after three years of residence, you had to leave an apartment and lost all of your belongings there. Since then, you have been living as homeless in this town for about four years.

I can try to work even now...but I got tired of this society. Once getting old, nobody is interested in hiring me because many employers have strict age-limit...nobody will be interested in me...

仕事しようと思ったらな、いけるんやけどな。これがな、もう...嫌になっとるんよ。この世の中が。歳とってからではね、誰も相手にしてくれんからね。あの、大きな所はね。歳があるからね。年齢制限があるからね。誰も相手に...な。”

I felt so sad when I heard this, imagining your deep despair impinging your heart and your views of life. The multiple layers of harshness you have experienced in your life go beyond my possible verbal expressions. In society in Japan, when one gets older without a fixed address, it is very challenging to find a job. Without having a job and family members, it often becomes troublesome to contract for an apartment. Despite your continuous efforts, it seemed that you were persistently driven to the edge without having access to resources. Over and over again, you have been disconnected from your families, your stable income and employments, and the places of belonging, all of which might have forcefully distressed you and ultimately created the silence in your life stories and in the midst of your perceptions of life. Recalling these experiences, you expressed in discouraged tone:

Now, I'm in the lowest bottom of my life. Actually, I still cannot believe that I am living a life like this. Poverty has beaten me so hard, which made my heart weak and exhausted. Because I have been in poverty for a long time, I think my personality has turned selfish and nasty... I know a life is not about money...I know I'm the owner of my life and I should remain strong in my mind. But I think this poverty has finally screwed up my life. Now, I'm just living day by day.

もう今はどん底の、一番下におるからね。まさかな、自分がまさかこういう生活に入ると思わなかったからな、自分自身が。気持ちかな、やっぱり自分がな、貧しくなるやろ、な。自分の生活にな、余裕がないからね。それでもう、人間かな、汚くなったり、やらしくなったりな。気持ちはな、「人に負けまい」と思ってもな、やっぱりな、お金に負けてまうんよ。やっぱり自分がしていかなあかんのやけどな。それができるような強い心を本当は持たなあかんのよな。そやけど、やっぱり...負けてまうんやけどね。もう僕も今はその日その日で生きてるからな。

Your statement of “...just living day by day” coupled with your weary, interrupted voice still echoes in my mind and works on my emotions. I sensed your emotional pain as if your heart

gets lost in your life stories. Dissonance between your hope for life and your stories of life may either drain your energy or make you want to avoid telling further stories, which shapes your stories to live by⁶ (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In your reflection, poverty may signify not only financial poverty, but also the absence of a place of belonging and relationships. This experience of poverty might have left you the silence in your understandings of life and delineated your unfinished past, present, and future life stories. The way you composed your life stories may be a complex combination of denial, protection, and resistance. By retelling your experiences, you might be subject to the feelings of weakness, self-blame, or a withdrawal from further recollection of stories, but simultaneously you tightly grasp a sense of resistance to maximize your situation, like you dare to build the road to the river to chase more fishes into a fishnet. After our conversation, I tried to write down my perceptions of your stories in my journal, but it was difficult to write in organized language, so expressed in poem:

*Stories which are not given words yet.
They were woven into your memory,
Like almost invisible thin threads.
They are so fragile and fearful to appear.
Yet, these threads absorb and reflect the subtle light,
Which gives distinguishing colors to your stories.*

⁶ Stories to live by is a narrative conception of identity (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Co-building the Road in Relationship

“I used to work at the harbor and I saw many ships coming from Canada loaded with tons of lumber. I guess we took all of the trees in Canada...”, you said regretfully when looking at the photos of the Rocky Mountains which I brought for you. You continued, *“And I remember I saw some photos of foreign countries, maybe somewhere around Canada or America. Is your country, a country of pumpkin? I know people there have a special festival with pumpkins”*. I laughed and briefly explained the Halloween in Canada. You also laughed and were surprised that a celebration with pumpkins really exists in the world. As we gradually build a relationship, some threads of conversations emerged naturally and flowed smoothly. In another conversation, you said that you like watching the high school baseball tournaments. When I told you that I just saw on the news this morning that the final game was going to take place today, again you looked surprised and said:

Already, the final game? It shouldn't be. I didn't know it's already a final game because I haven't watched TV recently...I used to go to the stadium by a bicycle to watch the game because it's free to watch from the outfield. I could get there within one hour from here. If I don't have my luggage, I still want to go to the stadium again.

「もうそんなとんの。野球そないなとんの？ 僕見んからな。自転車で一時間あれば十分。外野におったらええ、無料やからな。荷物が無かったら見に行くんやけどな。」

In your comment, I felt a brave soul sustaining your life, but also perceived difficulties putting restrictions in your life that hurt my heart. While your luggage is a crucial part of your life, it also puts your life under control. When leaving the apartment, you said that you carried three luggage, but all of them were stolen or lost; one stolen at a bicycle shop and the other two lost in a coin locker because you were not able to pay for the balance due in order to open the locker. Also, your purse with valuables was stolen at the train station. You said in deserted tone, *“I cannot hold any luggage because they are easily stolen while I am sleeping. Indeed, my*

luggage was stolen more than twenty times. Then, I try to throw my things away as much as possible so that I have less luggage". Trying to image the degree of uncertainty and stress in your life where your belongings were often stolen, I asked about the most important things among your lost or stolen luggage. You answered. *"The important things...I would say that they were my family register...my bankbook... and my resident registration⁷"*. You worried that you had lost all the documents that the support organization had prepared for you when arranging an apartment several years ago. Wondering if you had still wished to hold the possibility to live in an apartment again, I asked:

"Do you still want to return to an apartment?"

"Not really. I'm no longer willing to live in an apartment. If I stay in an apartment, I would shut myself in a whole day. It's uncomfortable."

"I see. In our previous conversations, you said you have a house in your hometown. Do you still want to go back someday?"

"No. We just rented that house and I think the house was already pulled down."

Your life stories gave a tentative incarnation to your life in the making, which can only be seen from the angle situated through our relational space. I could sense that you and your life stories have been slightly shifting as I walk alongside you in your life journey. This transition made me feel both delightful and cautious about our relationship: a delight that you eventually took off the guard to be who you are, and a caution that you might have to confront the inescapable feelings of distress too clearly. I was constantly thinking how I could attend to you and your stories with a more caring mind.

⁷ In Japan, each family have to create a family register to the municipal government of their legal address as well as to register their current residential address to the municipal government of their current address.

When we were talking in the foyer, you sometimes said “hello” to people passing through the foyer. The other day when I saw you sitting in front of the McDonald’s in our night patrol round, you smiled at one female volunteer and said in friendly tone, “*It’s been a long time. How are you doing?*” I sensed that this friendliness is an inherent part of who you are. A volunteer at the support organization similarly told me that you used to be a friendly person, but all of sudden you withdrew yourself for some reason that you do not share with me. According to a staff member, a few months before I came to the support organization, you have recently started participating in the roundtable meetings and other activities again. Although I do not know what happened to you, I believe you had continuously been striving for your life and sustaining your strength and hope until you were ready to come back. After hearing this background story, I appreciated your participation even more, hoping our conversations nourishing to you and your soul as we go along together. With thankfulness to our relationship, I expressed to you:

I am grateful you engaged in our conversations by coming to every appointment and letting me take a journey into your life together. I want to tell you that you are always in connection with people around you and of course, with me, even if you won’t be able to see me for a while. Also even though you no longer keep in touch with your children, you are still connected to them. With your presence, you will continue impressing and inspiring many people in various meaningful ways. So, I am very thankful that you are here with me. Even when you feel tired and drawn into despair and hopelessness, please keep your strength and your positive attitudes to your life. Yoshi-san, I truly wish your life will be a full of happiness and hope.

私はこういう風にお話して下さることにいつも感謝しています。今はお子さんとの連絡は取ってなくても、吉岡さんは子ども3人の親だったという事実もすごく意味があると思います。吉岡さんはたぶん自分が知らない間でも色々な人に影響を与えて、生きていくと思います。ここにいる意味が絶対にあると思います。なので後ろ向きになりそうになっても何とか堪えて、前向きの気持ちを忘れないように。これから、どんどん良くなると思ってね。私も本当にそういう風に願ってます、Yoshiさんの人生が良くなるように。

One hour just passed and we were about to finish the conversation. Slowly I took an instant camera from my pocket, asking if you could take photos of places which are familiar to

you, instead of taking a walk with you outside the meeting room which was not allowed. You looked hesitant and said, *“But I am just hanging around here and no longer able to go on a trip”*. Yet, after I explained my intention again, you accepted my offer. When I saw you at the roundtable meeting on the following day, you gave me a gesture of taking photos and said, *“Now I have a thing to do”*. It was very pleasing to see your expression through which I could feel we were both contributing to our lives. In closing the conversation, I asked you:

“Where are you going after this?”

“Let see...I go to Ohana-batake (a flower garden in Japanese). I usually look at the flowers there. They are well maintained. I guess the seeds are coming from abroad.”

“Sounds good. Which garden do you go to see flowers?”

“Just across the train station. The roses are really beautiful now...”

Yoshi-san, thank you very much for coming to our conversation today and unfolding your challenging experiences and difficult emotions through your life stories. Again, thank you so much for being part of our conversations and our relationship which I believe will continue to compose your life and my life in the future.

Sincerely,

Hiroko

Building a Road of Life

June, 2015

The Smell of Bread

Dear Yoshi-san,

In the early morning, you were waiting for me in front of the church. You were sitting at an office entrance porch across the road. Beside you, your two new vinyl bags were peacefully settled. In a drizzling rain, you looked much skinnier than last week. Maybe, it was because you took off your big black jacket and changed it to a lighter windbreaker. The sky was cloudy and unsettled, telling us of the arrival of the gloomy rainy season in Japan. “Good morning, Yoshi-san”, quickly checking the courtyard of the church, I saw no one there, so we walked together into the church. This time, we were given a different meeting room next to the foyer. When entering the room, you said *“I remember I changed my clothes here last year”*. At that moment, I was not sure of what you said. Later I realized what you meant, when a staff member at the support organization showed me a video of the Christmas concert at the church. Dressed in a black tuxedo and a silk hat, you were singing in a choir in front of the full audience in the chapel. You sang shyly at the edge of the choir, but looked fulfilled when being surrounded by the big applause. It is also another dimension of you. Recalling your feelings of abandonment in childhood, your struggles after divorce, and your despair in the current life of being homeless, I have been wondering what made you come to our conversations and into our relationship. Eventually, I have come to understand your inherent strength to keep seeking for a place of belonging and your deep desire to be among people and relationships. It seems to me that

regardless of what happened in your life, you truly believe in people and deeply care for them. For you, perhaps, to be situated among people may be equal to embracing hope.

After we settled in a meeting room, I placed some snacks and a bottle of water on a table for you as usual. Then, you searched for something in your bag and stretched your hand to me; in your hand, there was a slice of bread. In a plastic package, I could see that it was the last piece of bread. As I was hesitant, you took a bread out of a package and gave it to me. I said, *“Thank you so much for your kindness, Yoshi-san. But please take this bread. I guess it’s an important food for you”*. I said so since I remember you once told me that you obtain decent meals only four times a week, but you insisted that I take this bread. I said *“Arigato”* again and took a slice of bread, which meant more than a bread to me. You kindly returned the bread into a package so that I can take it back home. Arigato, Yoshi-san. I still remember the fresh smell of bread.

Waling in the Rain without an Umbrella Again

“I try not to think about it...I mean anything”, you often avoided answering, when I asked questions relating to your life after becoming homeless. Among the few things you shared with me were your survival skills on the streets; for example, you have four different places to sit down in case someone takes over your spot or depending on the weather. Also you said that you no longer mind people’s gazes and attentions coming toward you while sitting outside. Recently, I have not seen you in front of the McDonald’s in the train station and I worried that you have lost your place to sit down. Now I see you have changed your spot since it was getting warmer. A noisy crowd of people was constantly coming in and out from the busy train station, but for me, the scenery was different without you. Reflecting on your life after becoming homeless, you disclosed your feelings:

I try not to think about my past and present because if I think about it, I feel miserable and cannot hope for the future. So, I always try to sleep before I start thinking. My personality is not straightforward any more. I would say this life is not a good life...

うん...。やっぱりね、過去のことばな、あんまり考えないようにしてるんよ。自分が惨めになるから。それで、前向いて進んで行こうとしてるからね。もう今はそういうあの...考えへんのよ。もうすぐに寝とうからね。人間がな、あの...な。まっすぐなように行かないようになったからな。もう...あんまりね良い人生じゃないよ、な。

The silence in your life stories may not be a void, rather it might also be one of your survival skills on the streets. Perhaps, you attempt and struggle not to think of your life as a journey in order to manage the pain caused by the disconnections in your life. One by one, you slowly collect the pieces and build the road of your life while paying attention to secure your footing and not to look back on the entire road. This may be how you maintain your strength for survival and your hope for the future. In our previous conversation, when I asked about your hope for the future, you said *“I have many hobbies, so I want to revisit my hobbies such as watching beautiful landscapes and historical buildings...I want to go on a trip to the places I have never been before”*. Today, I brought you a photography collection of the world heritage sites. Reading out every name and description, you were captivated by these photos. As you were looking at the Eiffel Tower, you envisaged, *“If I grew up in such a city, my life would be much different”*. Through looking at the photos, both of us traveled together across the world, while momentarily freed from the gravity and obstacles destined by our bodies.

Travelling to an imagination may also be part of your survival skills to temporarily find refuge from the reality and protect your heart from physical and emotional pain. Likewise, you also traveled to an imagination in the photos which you took with an instant camera. Your photos were all encircled by the unique silent and peaceful atmosphere, as each of them projected blooming flowers, the ocean and harbor, or the amusement park. Although most of photographs were snapshots of famous tourist attractions in this town, they were not neutral; rather they

encompassed your distinctive angles, desires, and your trajectory of life. For example, when you explained one of the photos with a famous children’s superhero called “Anpanman”, you said;

Can you see this round-face guy? He is a good guy. On the other side, there was the villain. Both are rotating around. Then, here I wanted to take photo of this little dog at the center because this dog slips into the basket and hides when the villain comes by.

うん。こいつはな、悪役とええ役があるんよ。それでな、これは...ええ役しとるんよ。それで、これが出てきとるやろ？
悪役が通ると、これがな、下に下がるんよ。潜るんよ。犬を撮ろうと思ったんよ。



I liked the way that you paid attention to a little dog, rather than the superhero, and that you did not include the villain in the same frame. Most of your photos were taken by the harbor and the amusement park nearby. When I asked why you liked to go to the harbor, you said, “Because there are lots of open spaces with many tourists and families, so I don’t stand out...I mean...I could be one of them” 海の方がな、広いやろ。そやからな。広かったら、一人くらいおっても分からへんのよ。

目立たんからな。Your eyes in the photos show your deliberations inward yourself and outward to the world. You carefully negotiated the space and the distance so that you will not be standing out, but also not be too remote from others in order to live among people. Here again is your strength and hope drawn from your journey through a series of beautiful and serene landscapes

in the photos. This may be a journey either to re-construct a new thread of life in the past or to picture a new outlook of life in the future. What do you see? What stories do you live in through these photos? These photos encouraged us to respond to each other through visual images which might embody his untold stories (Neumann, 1997).



*“I still cannot believe that I am living a life like this...”*まさかこないなと思わなかったからな。自分がな。 , you frequently said when you reflected on your current life of being homeless. You had never expected to experience homelessness. You struggled and continue struggling so hard to maintain your life. Yet, with depletion of any means, you were driven to homelessness. You seem to be still living in ambiguity and unknowingness while trying to understand your own life. You pause at times, but decide to keep walking. It seems, perhaps, that your puzzlement over your life after becoming homeless is like a recurrent melody of silence which you have woven

through your life. However, I could see, under your perplexity, was your strength, voice, and hope for finding a new way of reconciling your life. Emphasizing “but”, you disclosed:

But, you know...I have to keep moving forward, otherwise I don't know why I was born in this world and given this life. Well...even though I grew up in poverty, this is my life. There should be some Enn (an invisible power of connecting people by fate in Japanese) in my life. I assume that a life should be full of events...such as new connections with people. I think I am getting distressed in my life...but I think this is Enn that I could talk with you like this. If you have any good news, please share with me. This will also be my happiness and encouragement in my life.

な、前向きに行かないとな。何のために生まれてきたんか分からへん。やっぱり、貧乏で育ってもね。人生やからね、何かの縁があるはずや。縁があつたりね。もう色んなことが人生の中にあるからね。触れ合いがね。そやから、それも考えて生きよるんやけど。自分があかんようになってきよるような感じもしとるんやけど。あんたらみたいにして、こないして話できるのもな、なんかのこれも縁やからね。また良いことがあれば、また聞かせてもらえれば。僕も励みになるし嬉しいね。

Your comment deeply touched my heart and soothed the anxiety that still lingered from our first meeting. As I live in your life stories, you also live in mine. Unknowingly, both of us have built a relational bridge. I said, “*I agree with you. I also think this is Enn that I could talk with you over these three months. This was very meaningful for me to know you in my life and have conversations with you. Please stay connected*”. All of sudden, you took some papers out from your pocket; you kept all the slips that I gave to you with the date and time for the next appointment. You mumble the numbers while counting the slips and said, “*We already had ten conversations*”. Then, you continued:

Human beings...should say something to others. I should not keep quiet. If we speak, we can build a connection with others...I have never had a chance to talk with a young person like you. Now, I feel young and feel like coming back to my hopeful days.

人間はな...こないして物でも喋つとかなないとね。やっぱり黙ってたんではアカンわ。やっぱりね、人と人の繋がりが出来てね。僕はね、あのーあんたらみたいな若い子とね、話することが全然なかったからね。やっぱりな、自分も若くなって。気持ちが若くなって、また前向きに戻れるようにね。またなれるしね。

All of sudden, the door opened and an old man came into our room, saying “*Good morning*” in an unsuitably loud voice. A man seemed to mistake a room for his meeting. While I was explaining to him, I saw you getting ready to leave in the edge of my sight. Quickly saying “*Suimasen. Domo* (“Excuse me, thank you” in Japanese)”, you hastily took your luggage in both hands and left the room. You are leaving! I instantly realized that you got confused that I was going to have a meeting with this man. Being surprised, I run outside the room and shouted “*Yoshi-san! Arigato. Thank you very much!*” You were already a few meters away and did not seem to hear my voice. I was watching your back holding two big plastic bags in both hands. Seeing you walk in the drizzling rain without an umbrella will forever linger in my memory. I wrote a poem in my journal while reflecting on your life and our relationship:

Stretch your hand
 To get close to the sky
 Stretch your mind
 To grab the rainbow
 Stretch your legs
 To fly with birds

They will never leave you alone.
 They will never be out of your reach.

You sail in a boat floating high above the clouds
 To search for the warmth in your hand
 To uplift your life under the sunshine

This is your story of survival

This is your story of building a life.

This is our story of building a relationship.

A few days later, I saw you in the flower garden in one evening. In a busy traffic of people, you were quietly sitting on the stairs facing the flower garden. Bathing a gentle orange sunset, your back looked calm and relaxed. What were you thinking? The colorful roses were in full bloom. Crowds of people were coming and going. Yoshi-san, no matter what happens in your life, you will stay in my heart and your heart will grow evergreen.

Sincerely,

Hiroko



At flower garden

One Year Later

April 6th, 2016

Dear Yoshi-san,

One year later, I came back to Japan to negotiate the narrative account with you. Passing by the McDonald's in the busy train station, I hoped to see you there again, but I could not see you there. Finally, I saw you again at the soup kitchen. You sat alone at the edge of the soup kitchen as usual. Instead of carrying two big plastic bags in your both hands, you only had a light backpack. I was happy to find you at the soup kitchen, otherwise I had no clue about where you were staying. When I talked to you, you gave me a friendly greeting and a smile. You remembered that I promised to come back in spring, and asked me if I already finished my program. I was relieved that you seemed happy to meet me and willing to have a conversation again to negotiate the narrative account. Before I met you again for our conversation, I was thinking of the length of one year. For me, one year was felt as a short period of time. As I stood at the soup kitchen again, I did not feel the temporal gap from the last time I joined the soup kitchen a year ago. How did you experience one year, Yoshi-san? I heard from a staff at the support center that you no longer sit in front of the McDonald's these days. What happened in your life during this last year? What has our relationship cultivated in the absence of one year? The view of the train station without you looks empty and quiet.

At the soup kitchen, we agreed to meet again in the following week. A few minutes before our appointment time, you already waited for me in front of the meeting room with a

small backpack. Approaching you, I wondered what happened to your luggage and hoped your life has been calm and gentle to you. Later, you told me the two big plastic bags which you carried last year had been stolen. I re-imagined the precariousness of your life where you cannot even expect the security of your personal belongings. When I asked where you are staying these days, you looked hesitantly and dodged my questions. However, as if you tried to deny my concerns, your smile was impressive and you had a positive atmosphere around you, which was clearly different from the last year. You told me that since the end of the last year, you have not been coming to the support organization except for the soup kitchen, because your life has become busy these days. Although you avoided telling me the details, you implied that you have recently met a man who took you to many places. When I asked if he was your friend, you emphasized he was not a friend. Unsure about your new relationship, I felt the weight of one year; something in your life has changed and now you travel to many places. I hoped that now you travel as we dreamed together in the last year. I could see you daringly continue collecting pieces and building the road in your life.

In our reunion, I shared a small booklet with some translated excerpts from the narrative accounts attached with the photos you took with an instant camera last year. I assumed this way of negotiation might be more acceptable for you because I did not want to overwhelm you again as I did in our first meeting. When I gave you the booklet, I could see your eyes excitedly look at the photos. After you quietly listened to me reading out each translated excerpt, you kept the booklet in your backpack and quickly took out a bottle of tea for me, which reminded me of the continuity of the time we co-constructed our relationship and co-composed our stories.

“I live with weakness. When I am tired of my weakness, I just sleep” - this is what you said after you looked at the booklet. Although you never expected to become homeless and live a

harsh life, you skillfully acknowledged and tried to incorporate weakness into your narratives in less harmful ways. I wondered how your perception toward homelessness has changed since we started to know each other. You said to me, with an emphasizing tone, that I should live positively and enjoy a life that is given to me only once. Your strong, encouraging voice kindly conveyed intimacy and care in our relationship, which also seemed to speak to your soul. Thank you so much, Yoshi-san, for coming back to our conversations. I will live close to your life and hope our roads will continuously cross in the future.

Sincerely,

Hiroko

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[Booklet to Yoshi]⁸



Yoshi さん、

いろいろお話をしてくれて
本当にありがとうございました



最初にお会いした時を
覚えていまあか?
急いで帰ってしまいましたね

⁸ This is a part of what I shared with Yoshi.



小学校3年生の時に、
両親がいなくな、た話を
してくれてありがとうございます



雨の中、カサをささずに
歩いて帰る Yoshi さんの姿を
今でも覚えています



+k

両親がいなくなつてから
一人で大変な中、
がんばつてこられたのですね



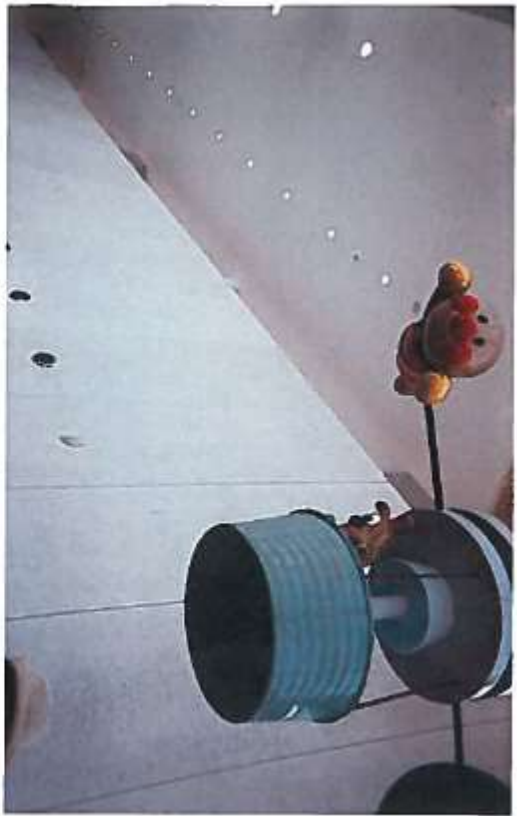
結婚して、3人の子どもの
父親になつたことを
話してくれてありがとう
です。いま



2.

子どもの頃に釣りをした話、
矢が糸田なる川へ向かう道の
ことを話してくれて

ありがとうございます



私もこうやって
お会いできたことは、
何かの縁だと思っております

Chapter 6: A Story of Striving for Home: Apapane

Apapane: “What is your plan?”

**Apapane: “No no. You should start talking, rather than I
talk.”**

**Apapane: “[pause]...*More about my life...*But I will just skip and
ignore the matters which I don’t want to talk.”**

Me: “Hmm...(wondering) What do we talk today?”

Me: “Well. In our last conversation, you shared a brief summary of your experiences. So, today I would like to hear more about your life.”

Me: “Of course. It’s normal that we have some difficult topics to share. You don’t have to tell me everything.”

Apapane: **“What is your plan?”**

Me: **“Hmm...What do we talk today?”**

Apapane: **“No no. You should start talking, rather than I talk.”**

Me: “Well. In our last conversation, you shared a brief summary of your life experiences. So, today, I would like to hear more about your life.”

Apapane: **“...*More about my life...*But I will just skip and ignore the matters which I don't want to talk.”**

Me: “Of course. It's normal that we have some difficult topics to share. You don't have to tell me everything.”

1. An Opening Tension

Tension seized my body when we started our first conversation. I felt as if we were shouting to each other from the edge of a cliff across a valley or as if we were not on the same page. Parallel to my tension, I was nervous and insecure about how this relationship would unfold since I sensed an implied distance between us. I was puzzled by this distance. I wondered if we both came to build a relationship through engaging in conversations or if it was only my wish to build a relationship with Apapane. Is it ‘our’ relationship or ‘my’ expectation for a

An Opening Tension

relationship that is placed between us in our first encounter? I was not sure what I should say next and

how to open up a conversation. I was awkward and perplexed at my understandings of the tension and the distance. This may come from the facts that I did not know Apapane very well and that I was still inexperienced as a narrative inquirer. I felt an uncomfortable clump right in the middle of my heart which interrupted the flow of my thinking. This noticeable and compounded tension had continued living inside me and been evolving throughout our conversations. After our first conversation, I wrote down my confused emotions in my journal:

I wondered what “the matters” he does not want to talk to me would be. Is he concerned about the kinds of questions he was going to be asked? What are these specific questions that he does not want to be asked? How can I address his potential concerns in our conversations to create a safe and comfortable space for him and for both of us? Can I speak out my internal questions to him? Is it safe for me to ask questions and is it safe for him to be asked? I could sense that he tried to protect something hidden inside his heart and I really do not want to harm Apapane.

(From journal entry written on March 13th, 2015)

I felt an awkward **distance** between me and him.

Is it hesitation?

Is it anxiety?

Is it protection?

Is it power?

Is it a 'Keep Out' area?

Is it a relationship?

The more I talked with Apapane, the more I began to realize who I am defined through his eyes. I felt as if I were a mindless intruder stepping into his safe zone, or a curious investigator trying to reveal his vulnerabilities. Also, I know we were not standing on the same even ground; I saw there was always a gap, more precisely, a difference in height between him and me. Is it coming from the culture in Japan where people are often hesitant to share their personal stories with others; from the undertone of age/gender in Japan in which older men were supposed to be stronger and more respected in general; from the labelling of ‘researcher’ and ‘participant’ whose potential power imbalances he wanted to resist; from stigmas and shames attached to homelessness which made him alert to signals that might devalue him in our conversations; or from freedom in building new relationships whereby people may choose and shape their creative identities?

It seemed as though both of us were living in tension while embracing a sense of fragility and uncertainty. Also, it seemed that he did not have an idea of building a relationship with me in his mind, which I found it difficult to continue a ‘conversation’. I wished that I would be able to act as an interviewer who would follow a list of questions and fill in a sheet with answers. It came to me whenever I attempted to grab a clue of relationship and a conversation in the midst of our first meeting, he attempted to avoid it as if there was nothing intersecting between us. While I was trying to make sense of my understandings of relationship to accommodate this emerging relational space, my perceived tension and puzzlement became more complicated and worrisome.

2. Looking Through the Window | wodniW eht hguorhT gnikoolL

Again, I look back on our first conversation. On the day of our first conversation, I was waiting for Apapane in a meeting room across the courtyard of the church. Apapane came a little late to our appointment time, but it was not surprising to me because I saw him from the window in a meeting room that he was enjoying a chat with some friends at a corner of the courtyard. As I knew him from the roundtable meeting he attended every Friday, I already had some impressions of him as a friendly person who always talked frankly and cheerfully with anyone. He was the only one who frequently brought discussion topics to the roundtable and responded to other's stories with curiosity, while many people at the table mostly stayed silent. Whenever he entered into a room where the roundtable meeting took place, he was like fresh air. While he was busily going in and out of the room to chat with friends sitting outside or give each of us some snacks he brought, he simultaneously invigorated people and the atmosphere in the room. During the roundtable meeting, he eagerly listened to people and willingly shared his stories, even though he frequently left the room with a cellphone or a cigarette. By watching him at the roundtable meeting, I could easily tell how important this space is for him and how much he took care of the relationships he has established here, though it has been almost ten years since he has managed his situation of being homeless.

After I heard a noisy clatter of a door knob at my back, Apapane hastily came into the meeting room, delivering fresh and light air into the room. Apapane was a 60-year-old man with grey short hair, always carrying a black backpack and wearing a sport cap. Pulling a chair out with a hurried noise, he said:

I haven't been here for more than two weeks and I was busy with other engagements this morning. So, I have many things to update my friends here. And I need to meet another friend at 3 pm. I used to work with him in the same company. So, could you please finish this meeting by 2 pm?

We started a conversation just past one o'clock, so I thought one hour was more than enough for our first conversation. His life seemed quite occupied with many appointments and friends. I could perceive from his brisk manner, how much he likes to socialize with people and puts values in nourishing his relationships. When I just inhaled the air to respond to him, his cellphone rang.

Ring ring ring....

HELLO!...もしもし!

His friendly loud voice poured into his cellphone echoed in a quiet meeting room which was a waiting lounge in the church. I was quietly paying attention to the echo of his voice coming down from the high ceiling. It was a phone call from his ex-co-worker whom he was going to meet today. After hanging up the phone, he turned back to his formal voice and told me, *“My friend wants to delay our meeting time, so I can spend one more hour here. Oh...whatever. I wanted to drink earlier today, ugh”*. He sounded a bit frustrated. I vaguely wondered if his way of saying *“I wanted to drink earlier today...”* meant he wanted to finish our conversation early.

Then, he seamlessly shared with me how often he used to hang out with his colleagues after work when he worked in a company, but now his social life has been narrowed down due to a limited budget. Before I even began a question, he quickly moved from one topic to another by talking about his new social life at a factory where he currently works. He told me that he likes a happy drink at a party, not a complaining drink. He continued telling me that he played a coordinating role when he found someone started to complain while drinking in a party. Then, he quickly returned to the topic of his social life in the previous workplace. In these ways, he offered me thorough explanations about what kind of role he played in respective moments of his life, all of which were positive and significant ones. He gave me a good comprehensive summary of his major life events in our first conversation; it was as if he had constantly been telling these experiences to others. I also remembered that, in our first conversation, he told me, *“Well...Nobody likes to hear people bragging. Those people may want to feel superiority by bragging. But I don't feel comfortable when people started bragging. So, I actually have many epic stories, but I will never brag myself.”* I perceived that he was carefully shaping who he was as he set up the atmosphere in our conversations.

During our first conversation, I spent much time listening to him, while keeping in mind not to impose questions he wanted to avoid, without even knowing the questions he wanted to avoid answering. While listening to him, I actively delved into my considerations about who I was going to be and who he wanted me to become in this space, and also how I could approach him in a way that could possibly reduce his defense coming from yet-unknown factors.

In the meeting room, Apapane sat on a chair facing a big window next to a door. From the wide window fronting to the courtyard, he could see people crossing the courtyard and people coming in and out from the support center office. As I was sitting in front of him across a small rectangular table, I frequently noticed his eyes were caught by the window and chasing people beyond the window. While we were talking, he observed the outside like he was watching a movie screen. In the middle of a conversation, all of sudden, he interrupted and said, *“Look at her. I see a little lady over there. She is looking at us. I’m sure she understands everything we are talking here because she has very good ears”*. Turning around, I saw one female staff member standing in front of the support organization. I could see how much he was caring about the gazes which might or might not be on him. According to his stories, she was the one who supported him while he was struggling with homelessness about ten years ago. He said that he was very appreciative of the supports offered by this lady and that even now he visited this lady when making any decisions in his life. He continued telling me that he also discussed with this lady participation in my study. He recurrently emphasized the closeness of his relationships through which he might imply that he had many people who cared for him. I wondered how these relationships shaped his lived and told experiences and how he intends to shape our relational space through displaying these relationships in front of me.

Apapane also mentioned his relationships with peers coming to the support organization. He told me that he has a good long-term relationship with them and that he knew many of them were gossiping about me with curiosity and suspicion. Whenever he talked about me, I felt like I was standing alone and being watched by him from a faraway place where he was surrounded by many relationships he comfortably belongs to. At such moments, I recalled my feelings of uprootedness when I first came to Canada: the moments when I lost my two suitcases, when I dropped all classes in my master program, and when I struggled alone during a night in a panic and despair. Then, I also remembered more recent feelings of foreignness when I stood amidst nostalgic but not fully familiar sceneries in my hometown in Japan, in addition to my feelings of nervousness and uncertainty when I visited the support organization and asked help for my study. Furthermore, my dormant memories of isolation in my childhood were also brought back; having grown up in a tension-filled family, I always struggled to find value in myself and found it difficult to be part of a community. In a classroom, especially my elementary school days often ended up my feelings of isolation among other classmates; it was difficult for me to recall. Whenever I concurrently called up these memories and emotions while engaging in our conversations, I felt as if my vulnerabilities were stirred up and my sensitivities were intensified. I found myself unconsciously become protective in this space, even though I strongly hoped to understand him better and build a trusting and caring relationship between us. I was frequently pulled back by my self-built tensions and my feelings of insecurity and disruption on the verge of our emerging relational space.

Apapane often storied himself through his relationships. I deeply respected that he was committed to shaping many close and caring relationships. In his stories, he often referred to himself as an outgoing person who really likes to meet people and to listen to people. For him,

relationships might be an important representation in understanding who he was, who he is, and who he is hoping to become in the future. His relationships might also serve as a cornerstone as he has been building coherence in his life stories with a sense of belonging and continuity.

Whenever I saw his eyes capturing a glimpse of the window in our meeting room, it seemed like he saw himself in the reflection in the window, like a mirror. I imagined he might also try to show himself to me through the reflections which appeared between him and the people beyond the window, through highlighting his relationships. I was very curious to know what he saw in the subtle reflections in the window and what sceneries and relationships he has seen and experienced across the window.

**You shouldn't put this story on your paper. My identity will immediately
come out.**

**Well...The lady over there knows it. And I guess the other staffs also
know this story, too.**

**If you put it on a paper, the staffs at the support center will instantly
identify with me.**

I understand. I will not write this story on my paper.

No worries. I won't tell this story to the support center as well.

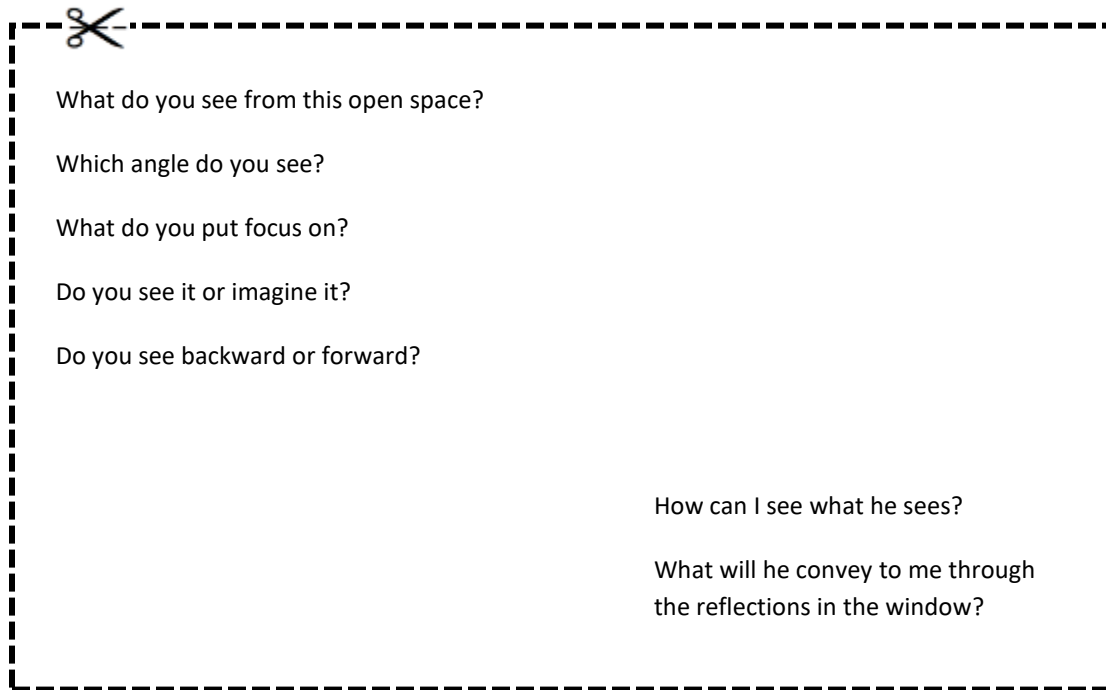
GAZES

Defense

gazes

Distance

3. Reflections in the Window



What do you see from this open space?

Which angle do you see?

What do you put focus on?

Do you see it or imagine it?

Do you see backward or forward?

How can I see what he sees?

What will he convey to me through the reflections in the window?

Reflection One: Finding a New Life through a Chocolate Factory

Apapane had so many layers in his life. These layers intricately overlap and interact with each other to shape his stories of life. Yet, what puzzled me was that it seems like these layers flickered and slipped away whenever I attempted to closely look at them. I sensed that he was afraid to be asked a question and my attention was often diverted whenever I was about to touch on these elusive layers in his life stories. One after another, he raised topics, such as about filtered water or a relationship between blood types and personalities, and kept talking. Not knowing where his vulnerabilities and defenses were embedded, I was uncertain if he allowed me to have a look at these layers within our relational space or if he wanted me to stay in a distance. We spent so much time on trivial chats. My 'researcher' part sometimes worried if it would shape a 'narrative account', but I want to listen to him more in order to shape a safe space for him and to respect what he wished to keep invisible from me. I was reminded of my own learnings and that relationships grow slowly and silently, like a poem is born in contemplation, like music is found in humming, and like a seed grows in the ground. I chose not to interrupt his talk...Situating myself as both a researcher and a person engaging in a relationship makes me feel vulnerable, but I hope this vulnerability might also be a place where I will be awakening to my ethical responsibilities in narrative inquiry...(Journal entry written on March 27th, 2015)

The first reflection that he saw and showed me through the window was the present moments of working at a chocolate factory. After his experience of being homeless, Apapane found a job at a chocolate factory when he was in his mid-fifties. Having worked there for five years, now he is playing a leadership role in one section where boxes of almonds are unpacked and screened for producing almond chocolates. With his leadership role, he often had to teach newcomers and follow up the works of others, which adds extra workloads to his job on an assembly line. He works hard at this factory regardless of day and night. He told me, sometimes, he has to work seven days straight with no day off, but he loves his job. Apapane said that he enjoys working at the factory filled with sweet scents of chocolates which simply makes him happy and brings him back to the memories of childhood. For Apapane, this sweet smell of chocolate symbolizes the new stage of his life and a sense of fulfillment after taking a long trek in his life through struggles.

I understood how he was proud of this job and also how this job has gradually transformed his life experience of being homeless into an honored tattoo of his continuous struggles and efforts. Apapane always brought a bag of chocolate to the roundtable meetings. As he was proudly introducing and distributing the chocolate produced in his factory, I noticed more clearly that he carried a different atmosphere from the other people attending to the roundtable, most of whom were already in their retirement age or not currently working. Watching him happily handing out a chocolate to each of us around the table, I observed a pattern that he was the one who offers to others and the others were the ones who receive from him. He sometimes encouraged his peers at the support organization to apply for any available jobs even though these jobs were outside of their familiar field. In fact, with his advice, some of his peers found jobs and started making money. I could see that Apapane is committed to giving. Experiencing

both the entry and the exit of homelessness, he knew the danger embedded in a life of homelessness that slowly but surely takes away one's energy and motivation to stand up again and leave a life on streets. He regards his experiences of being homeless in the past and now working at the factory, as a more realistic example of hope in order to support others who went through similar struggles and were most likely to be caught in a danger of being homeless.

Similarly, Apapane also plays a role as a senior at the chocolate factory. He said that he has some younger colleagues at the factory who respects him as a senior. He sometimes gives these colleagues life lessons by telling them, *"You should aim for the higher goals. Do not settle down in this life of working at a factory at your age"*. Also, he shared with me that he had once participated in a similar study performed by a university student in the past and decided to join my study this time, because he wanted to contribute to young scholars who might change the world in the future. Maybe, he was projecting his life onto the lives of a younger generation. I recalled that in our first conversation, Apapane told me that he has been very fortunate with relationships; whenever he was in difficult or hopeless situations, he always met someone who became a mentor in his life. As I tried to see the reflection in the window he showed me through the chocolate factory, I became more aware of his life; over the last ten years after his experience of being homeless, he found a new commitment. This commitment was to give, teach, and support people through his own life experiences, in the same way he was guided by his life mentors. Opening up the new stage of his life, Apapane has now found a new unique role as a mentor who went through the experiences of being homeless.

I could see from his stories that Apapane also embraces sensitivities toward relationships. Through this job at the chocolate factory, he said he has encountered new sorts of relationships which he had not experienced before. As many co-workers were middle-age

women at the factory, he sometimes felt awkward about how to get along well with them.

Making it sound funny, he said:

It's so scary if I make one enemy among those middle-aged women, all of them would be my enemy. So, I shouldn't call any of them as Oba-san (designation of middle-aged women in Japanese). I should politely call them as One-san (designation of young women in Japanese). It's never easy to build a good relationship with those middle-aged women.

However, he said he eventually got used to these new relational tactics and now he builds good relationships with most of the co-workers in the same assembly line, even though he knew some co-workers do not like him and avoid working on the same shift with him. During our conversations, he talked several times about people who avoid talking with him in the factory. He said he attempted to discuss misunderstandings with them, but it did not happen. I felt a hint of sadness in his tone and sensed a sensitivity ingrained in him toward relationships. In our meeting room, seeing him watching people outside through the window, I assumed relationships were an important element shaping his values.

In another approach, he further expressed the significance of relationships, by pointing out the importance of teamwork in an assembly line which does not work out well if somebody was not focusing on his/her part. He told me, *"One defective product means extra works for us since we have to check every single product before and after a week of that product"*. While adopting his mindfulness for relationship into his professional responsibility of teamwork, he works at the chocolate factory with pride and enthusiasm. Showing me his life at the factory through the window, he might see his own story of accomplishment and hope in the reflection. Working at the chocolate factory offered him a new momentum and aspect in understanding his life, while he expands the new relationships and explores the new roles in his next stage of life.

Would you like to use this napkin (a napkin with flower prints) to wrap your snacks?

What? What is this?

This is a paper napkin. Would you like to wrap your snacks with it for you to carry?

No...This napkin (flower prints on a napkin) can invite some misunderstandings if I have such a stuff...

Okay. That's totally fine. Are you going to the roundtable meeting from now?

Yes.

Me, too. I'm going.

You shouldn't come with me. Some people would suspect us. Right now, I know some people are suspicious of us, looking at us with strange gazes.

What is misunderstanding?

What is strange gazes?

Who am I?

Reflection Two: Shifting Identity at a Shipbuilding Company

After a month, we obtained a rhythm to arrange our meeting every Friday before the roundtable meeting at the support organization. I usually come early and wait for him in a chilly meeting room. After several minutes, Apapane comes into the meeting room carrying a cheerful and bright outlook. As the season is changing into spring, I hope the beautiful cherry blossoms which can be seen from the window in our meeting room entertain his eyes. I still feel a hint of vigilance when he spoke to me, which made me stiff and afraid to ask questions which might touch on 'the matters' that he does not want to answer. But as I eventually took my armour off during our conversations, I realized that he actually spoke in a gentle way and tried to stop and listen to me whenever I started to speak. I perceived his sensitivity and carefulness in our conversation. I deeply appreciate that Apapane comes back to our meeting every week. Yet, I feel an unsettling tension sitting inside me before starting a conversation, worrying if I might not be able to engage in a conversation and instead, spend time on exchanging cover stories. I have been confused and annoyed by these ambivalent feelings and my perceived vulnerability toward our relationship and in shaping our relational space. (Journal entry written on April 15th, 2015)

Apapane's life was full of upheavals while going through many struggles for survival before becoming homeless. The sceneries he recollected by looking through the window were not always comforting and encouraging to him. He told me that he used to work at a company producing a variety of transportation vehicles such as air planes, ships, submarines, convoys, and tanks. From his childhood, Apapane felt a special fondness for ships. His long-term dream of building ships encouraged him to work at one of the largest ship-building companies in Japan after finishing his high school.

However, after several years, the ship-building industry had gone downhill in Japan and increasingly transferred to other Asian countries with lower material and human resources costs. At such transitioning moments in the ship-building industry in Japan, he was shifted to a different section in the company which mainly dealt with designing heat power plants. Sadly,

this new assigned job no longer satisfied his passion for ship-building. He recalled that he was extremely busy when he was working at this section for about twenty years with many trips abroad to teach and build power plants. After he was promoted, his work got even busier and he sometimes had to work more than twelve hours a day, almost every day regardless of a weekend.

Apapane also encountered many complex political issues within the company which resulted in putting huge mental pressures on him. He criticized that the rights of employees are not protected enough in many companies in Japan. When he was working in the company, he experienced the complexity of power relationships and the vulnerability of employees. For example, when he once worked on a nuclear energy design team, he saw the standard values were often manipulated by the authorities, even though he thought those changes were unreasonable. He was tired of the hierarchical nature of his work at the company; he learned from his work that ‘who’ said was more important than ‘what’ was said in making a contract with clients. Due to the hard work and the mental stress, he suffered from depression by which his personal life was affected. Apapane said that he frequently encountered helplessness and vulnerability as a worker in the company. He was careful as he got tired of these power dynamics and tension-filled strategies to build relationships in society. I wondered how his vigilance to the power dynamics affected our tensions in our relational space and shape his stories. I perceived a complex web of power against which he has continuously been fighting throughout his life.

Looking back to those days of working at the ship-building company, Apapane said, “*If I kept working at the same company until my age, my life would have been terrible. Because I quit my job and entered into a new world, I got to know many new people and spent a totally different life. So now, this is the best moment in my life*” まあおったら僕、ひよっとしたら入院して、もう廃人同然になってたかも分からんしね。あのまあ、こんな世界に入って、こういう色んな人と出会ってね、また違う人生が歩めました。

今がめっちゃくちゃ楽しいんです。In Japan, people are likely to be always busy with working. I remember from my own experience of working as a nurse in Japan, it was normal that I work overtime for four to five hours. I was always exhausted when I went home and I thought my life was only devoted to a life as a nurse, not to myself. After one year of working, I made a decision to quit my job and go abroad to study nursing which was one of my dreams in my life. It was by no means an easy process for me to actually go abroad, adjust myself to a new language and culture in Canada, and start studying in the graduate program. However, if I did not choose to come to Canada, I would never be able to meet wonderful people here, expand my visions, deepen my thought, and live in a totally different world with diverse cultures.

His comments resonated with my experiences of going abroad. Now, looking back at my life, I am glad that I made a decision to leave Japan because I discovered a new dimension of myself by being surrounded by a new environment and new relationships. I was often regretful that I separated myself from my family and my familiar life in Japan, and used to think of my decision to go abroad as being too reckless. Yet, my impressions toward my decision have been shifting since I have lived in Canada for nine years. His comments gave me an opportunity to look back my decision to study in Canada. As he often admired that I chose to go abroad alone for study, I wondered if my stories also resonated with his stories and gave him another layer to his telling and re-telling of his lived experiences.

Other than depression, Apapane suffered from many health issues during his work at the ship-building company, which caused twists in reflections of the window through which he saw himself. He was injured when he was 21 years old. While he was working outside, his leg was caught in a huge crane. It took him about six months to return to a workplace. Another big health

issue occurred when he was in his forties - he was diagnosed as Guillain-Barre syndrome. When he was on a business trip in Japan, he suddenly fell down. He was immediately taken by ambulance to a nearby hospital. He said he was kept alive in a vegetative level for about three months, recalling the moment when he could not eat and even close his eyes. I tried to imagine that moment; it must be scary to lose consciousness all of sudden and wake up to realize one's situation with limited mobility. Apapane shared this difficult experience of his disease in our first meeting. Listening to his voice again in the recorder, I recognized his voice sounded rather detached and less emotional, like he was explaining other's experiences, not expressing his own experiences of going through these tough moments.

Additionally, I noticed his disconnected way of talking was sustained throughout our conversations, which sometimes made it difficult for me to emotionally attend to his stories. He must have been distressed at his realization of his physical condition that was out of his control and that perhaps he would never recover from associated disabilities. However, he made fun of this experience by telling to me that he underwent these misfortunes because he did not pay enough money to the temple in his *yaku-doshi* (an unlucky year determined by the Japanese fortune calendar). After three months at a hospital far away from his hometown, he was finally transported to a hospital back in his hometown. After coming back to this town, he was hospitalized for another year. Gradually, he recovered until he could move his body by himself and move with a wheelchair, a walking frame and then crutches. Apapane also highlighted to me that even during his stay in the hospital, he was busy with his work because many colleagues constantly visited him to discuss matters related to his work. While listening to his stories, I saw a strong and capable image of himself he was shaping in the reflection of the window, even though his disease sounded a tough experience.

When he was discharged from the hospital, he was issued a physical disability certificate from the government. With this certificate, people can access to special welfare services such as a free pass for public transportations, but he told me that he was not aware of those entitlements for a long time. I wondered if he did not want to recognize himself as ‘a disabled person’. Now, although he still feels awkward in one arm and leg, he has no problem in his daily life activities. He once tried to return his physical disability certificate to the government, but he was told to keep it in case his disease returns. When he frankly told me, “*Anyway, I am a sort of disabled person*” だから一応僕障害者なんです, I sensed his resistance to the labeling of disability by highlighting his current condition, in which he has overcome his disabilities and obtained independence again.

Apapane told me that through his sufferings, he learned more about relationships; he mentioned that on one hand, many colleagues and business partners came to visit him at the hospital, on the other hand, some people whom he thought were his best friends, had never visited him. Again, I imagined how valuable relationships were for him and how sensitive he was toward relationships. I tried to understand impact when he found out that he was disconnected from the relationships he had established, while I was imagining his interruptions, discouragement, and anger. Apapane has continuously been conscious and careful with the continuity and discontinuity of the relationships that powerfully affect his understandings of life.

Again, I supposed it must be challenging moment in his life when he lost his consciousness all of sudden, found himself unable to move his body, was hospitalized for a prolonged period of time, and was given a new disability identification. He said that he also had to go through many painful and scary examinations of cerebrospinal fluid to monitor his conditions. Listening to his stories, I was unknowingly waiting for him to complain of these

situations and to share with me his emotions. However, he emphasized that these experiences were neither a tragedy nor bad luck in his understandings, by saying:

Rather than I felt scared, I tried to think it as one of my life processes. If I felt desperate such as “why did this happen to me?”, my life would end at that moment. So, I tried to think about these events only as a part of my life process, otherwise I would have to live in despair and literally put an end to my life. I never became hopeless because I want every event in my life to be meaningful for my future, even though I felt numb in many parts of my body for a long period of time.

It is impressive to know how he felt while living in the midst of such moments, but his reflections of his disease were characterized by his resiliency. I was not sure if his positive reflections were also affected by what he wanted to bring and show me in our relationship. Rather than being depressed, he made sense of these difficult experiences as a learning process in his life. Then, he continued talking about how he tried hard to recover from his disabilities. For example, he decided to give up his driver's license and instead walked as much as possible without using any transportations. With intensified focus on enhancing and maintaining his health, he started going to a hot spring to strengthen and take care of his muscles and also started drinking only natural purified water which he obtained from a mountain. While explaining how much he paid attention to his health, I perceived that he demonstrated to me his strong power of determination to recover from the disease. In these stories, he put emphasis on how much he was determined to make whatever efforts to get rid of any negative influences caused by the disease and disabilities. When I further inquired into his interpretations of the disease, Apapane shared how he understood these tough moments in a good way. He elaborated:

Conscious thinking will eventually seep into our unconscious thinking. So, we need to consciously think in positive ways, so that someday it will be part of an unconscious thinking process. We need to plant positive thinking into our body.

I was very impressed by his words and appreciated that he taught me through his life experiences. Living in the midst of the conversations with Apapane, I tried to understand who I am to him and who he wishes to become in shaping our relational space together.

I think I will be able to finish my workload by the end of May.

Thank you so much for thinking about the workload, but it is not an obligation to have ten conversations.

So, please do a good job and show me when it is done.

Of course. I will do my best. I will share a rough draft before going to Canada. And when I come back to Japan next year, I will share what I write.

Do you also bring this paper to share with the support center?

I don't plan to show this account to the support center.

But I guess they would be very interested in reading your paper...

Vigilance

Relationship

Resistance

Reflection Three: Childhood Story about Water

Today, I had a different impression of Apapane in our conversation. In the beginning of our conversations, he confessed that he has been very busy with dealing with some complex issues related to his welfare supports given by the government. He said he started dealing with these issues almost at the same time as he started a conversation with me in March. In our past conversations, I have not heard this story from him before. From his annoyed tone, I sensed that it is pretty troublesome to manage those issues all by himself while taking care of another personal issue which also requires unfamiliar legal procedures. In my impression, whenever he shared his life experiences with me, he always made them sound decent, hopeful, or positive at the end. But this time, for the first time, he let his stories vulnerable and unfinished in front of me.

I remember that he looked different when he hesitantly shared these stories with me. I felt as if our distance became closer in our relational space. Also, I wondered if these issues might have contributed to building a tension in himself from our first conversation. Or the window through which he saw the sceneries and the reflection of himself might also function as a shield by which he could take a distance from taxing life issues. Thank you very much for sharing these difficult stories with me, Apapane.

As we come to the meeting room and start living in our relational space, we also start living alongside our own vulnerability and the vulnerability of the other. At times, I was hesitant or reluctant to step into our relational space, wondering or/and imagining how it would negatively affect my own vulnerability and that of Apapane. But, as long as we engage in a shared time and place through our conversations, I believe we take a small step forward day by day, whenever we feel ready. Today, I wanted to ask him to write an annals or do a memory box, but after quick considerations, I gave up asking because I do not want to accidentally step into his vulnerability and 'the matter' he does not want to talk.

Relationships grow slowly. Relationship is a negotiation while going back and forth. I should not hurry.

(Journal entry written on May 8th, 2015)

Apapane talked a lot about his experiences in adulthood without my prompting questions, but he did not eagerly share a lot about his childhood and his family unless I brought up the topics and asked questions. Although I was afraid if this would be ‘the matter’ that he did not want to talk about, I dared to ask because I hoped to know more about his life in temporal continuum. He did not seem willing to talk about his childhood experiences at length, but he answered my questions. Briefly and slowly he started talking about his experiences in childhood.

He was born in this town as the youngest son with three older sisters. He grew up and has been living in this town for sixty years. Apapane does not remember his father because he died when Apapane was one-year-old. His mother died when he was forty years old, one year before the big earthquake hit this town. Apapane said it was the toughest moment in his life to overcome the death of his mother. In the year following his mother’s death, a big earthquake hit this town. Because of the earthquake, his house was broken and he had to live in a temporary shelter for several months. In the year after the earthquake, he fell down during the business trip and suffered from the Guillain-Barre syndrome. I wondered if multiple acute stresses, including his mother’s death and the earthquake in addition to his busy work at the ship-building company might have caused the disease. He sometimes spoke about these painful three years in our conversations while relating the period to 厄年 *yaku-doshi* (an unlucky year according to the Japanese fortune calendar). It has left an impression in my mind that whenever he talked about his difficult life events in the past, he often referred them to *yaku-doshi*. He deeply believed in the Japanese fortune and attempted to make sense of his difficulties according to the fortune calendar. I know many people in Japan visit a temple in their *yaku-doshi* and pray for the purification of misfortune, but I have not made strong connections between my *yaku-doshi* and

my difficulties in life. His interpretation of the hardship in life was a new aspect to me. In some sense, I thought it is a creative way of integrating difficulties into a life process.

He did not share a lot about his family and I am not sure about what feelings he held behind his avoidance to talk. Among the few things he talked about his family, was that after his mother died, he had not been in touch with his three sisters for a long time. However, he revealed that his girlfriend has become an important part of his family. He said he has been in a relationship with her for a long time. Similar to his family, he did not talk a lot about his girlfriend, unless I asked a question, but it seemed to me that he was simply shy to talk about her. From his hesitant smile whenever he told me a story about his relationship with her, I could tell how this relationship is meaningfully situated in his current life and offering him the experiences of family and a sense of belonging. Apapane sometimes implied in our conversations that his girlfriend was worried or even jealous that he was having a conversation with me, 'a young woman'. He occasionally received a phone call from her during our meeting, which abruptly thrust a blank page into our conversations. I was puzzled and felt sorry whenever I was faced with these implications. I was not sure how I could address her concerns and handle with my tension emerging from it. During our conversations, I sometimes escaped into my imagination about how our relational space would be differently unfolded if I were a man or an older woman.

When I asked him about his experiences of childhood, he shared stories of several accidents; he said he had suffered from many water-related misfortunes in his childhood. First, he fell into a toilet septic tank when he was a small child. Then, when he was six years old, he broke his leg because he was stuck in a water ditch on a sidewalk. At the age of eight, the most unforgettable accident happened when he went to the harbor to play with friends. He and his

friends were chasing each other at the harbor while crossing over anchored ships alongside the quay. After they went home, Apapane noticed one of his friends were missing. Later, Apapane heard that his friend's body was found at the harbor. He was deeply shocked by his friend's death. He said that he still remembers the deep sorrow in his body. Since then, he said he tried to pay more attention to others, rather than to himself. Around the age of 12, when he fell into a canal at the harbor, he started to think that he might have some special connections with the water. Apapane reflected that these water-related accidents in his childhood had also influenced his motivation to work at a shipbuilding company, in addition to his fondness for ships. Furthermore, after he started working at the shipbuilding company, he actively attempted to overcome his fear of water by frequently going scuba diving with his colleagues. Apapane said that he was proud that he finally overcome his fear of water. I was impressed by his braveness to confront his fear. It seems that he went through many difficult experiences from his childhood to adulthood, but he never gave up his strength to overcome and resist any negative influences. Listening to his stories of predicaments about water, I thought that his attitudes of confrontation and determination might embody and constitute his stories to live by; Apapane continues to sustaining his stories to live by, which is his stories of identity, through conquering his hardships.

Hardships

Confrontation

Determination

Transformation

She said to me this morning, “You must be going to see her again”

Is she jealous?

Well. She is anxious because I told her everything about this meeting.

Please invite her to this meeting if it would reduce her anxiety.

I don't think she is ready to meet you. She asked me “What is she like?

Is she beautiful?” Then, I told her “She is already married!”, but she

insisted “It doesn't matter if she is beautiful blah blah blah...”.

Okay...Is she likely to worry too much?

Yes. She is likely to expand her imagination when she worries.

GEN DER

ANX IETY

RELATION SHIPS

Reflection Four: Interrupted Life

Today, when I asked Apapane to consider if he wished to use a pseudonym or a real name, he immediately replied “Could you use Apapane as my name? There used to be a racing horse named Apapane. I really adored this horse.” I didn’t know that he likes horse racing. I was curious, so I asked several questions as to why he has chosen this name. He did not talk a lot and finally said I should go online for more information about this horse. After the conversation, I checked websites; Apapane won many horse races from 2009 and retired due to an injury in 2012.

I am still wondering what kind of images he was willing to show me in the reflection of the window. Does he want to show a strong image of himself like a horse? Within the hiatus of occasional blank pages, creativity, improvisation, imagination, ambiguity, hope, and tension are clumsily intermingling to bring words to unarticulated emotions and stories. Even if we cannot come as closer as I expected in our first meeting, at least I hope we are both able to live in a trusting relationship, wishing the blank pages would become a medium of our relationship, a buffer of our tensions, and a shield of our lived vulnerabilities...

I only shout in my notebook.

(Journal entry written on May 15th, 2015)

Actually, I had many opportunities to go abroad while I was working at the ship-building company. But, I wanted to visit countries where I have never been before. If my life would become unstable in the future with no money, I would never be able to go abroad. So, I didn’t want to miss this chance. And at that point, the company was promoting buyouts among its employees with a large severance package. Then, I decided to quit my job because I wanted to go away from Japan. And thinking about how many years left in my life at my age of 51 or 52, I thought this might be the only opportunity that I have enough money to go abroad. I knew that money would be gone if I kept using it. I know I was reckless. But, as long as I have money, I wanted to enjoy my life to the fullest extent.

あの、仕事を辞めて、工作中やったらいつでも行く機会があったんですけどね。ただ、行ってない所とか、そういう類で。この先、例えばお金がなくなって、生活も安定しないでしょ。安定しない状態で、ここしかないという感覚でね。ちょっと日本を離れてみたいなと思って、離れたんですよ。そやから出来ないこと結構...人生で 51、52 歳くらいで辞めて。それでその時に、あと先何年生きられるのかな。もし、お金があるのはこの時期だけやと言うことで、とりあえずね。お金はまあ、当然使えば無くなるんですけどね。ある内に楽しもうという事でやったんですよ。

After thirty years of working at the ship-building company, Apapane made a big decision to start a new life. About ten years ago, he decided to quit his job at the age of fifty-one. Being exhausted with his hard work and various unendurable work-related stresses, he wanted to do something else until he became 60 years old. He said after quitting his job, he went on a trip to Brazil for seven months which was originally planned for three months. Then, he alluded to the fact that he had spent all of his savings for that trip. Apapane clearly looked confused and awkward to me while he was talking about his trip in Brazil. My tension increased as I touched on this topic, wondering if it was ‘the matter’. Yet, I was eager to know what happened to him before becoming homeless and I assumed this trip might be a crucial point that caused him to become homeless. To my questions, he gave me only brief or uncertain answers and it seemed like he wanted to change the topic. During his stay in Brazil, he said he stayed in a hotel and hired a translator and two bodyguards because the country was not safe. He said he saw many children playing soccer or dancing the samba at the corner of streets. After being asked several short questions about his trip, he took a pause and said in a tensed voice, “*I’m scared what questions I will be asked next*”. Realizing his intensified tension, I immediately stopped talking about his trip in Brazil. I wonder what specifically made him feel uncomfortable about being asked about his trip. I felt sorry if this conversation reminded Apapane of difficult experiences or painful emotions. Perhaps, this was an unpleasant topic for him to talk with me in this particular space. I also felt deeply confused. I was willing to know what was hidden behind his hesitation

to talk, but I was afraid to ask any further questions because I did not want to disturb him anymore. Building trust was my priority in our relational space.

When he returned from his trip to Brazil, he said he had used up all of his severance allowance which sounded like a remarkable amount to me. As he had planned to go on a trip for three months, he had paid the rent only for three months in advance. After his extended seven-month trip, Apapane found that all of his belongings in his apartment had been taken out by the owner. When he lost his apartment, he also lost all of his belongings and the items related to his memories. At that moment, I recalled our first conversation; when I asked him if he could take some pictures with an instant camera, he refused my request because visible items such as pictures reminded him of the painful memory of losing his properties and memory items. Despite vagueness hidden within his stories, I clearly sensed his despair and distress when he had no money left, lost his apartment and belongings, and was losing a place of belonging. After he did couch-surfing at ex-colleagues' places and stayed at hotels for a while, he completely lost a place for sleeping and became homeless.

Before becoming homeless, Apapane attempted to apply for the welfare program by himself by visiting welfare offices several times, but he was rejected. He recalled and reflected on that moment:

The government refuses individual visitors at the door. They didn't even let me go inside and talk with a person in charge. So, until I finished up all of my small residual money, I had to visit several municipal offices across the town to apply for the welfare

program. But, after asking a few quick questions about my job or my money, all of them similarly said no and declined my claim at the door.

それでね、やっぱりね、あのー行政っていうのはね、一人で行っても門前払いです。ほんならもう、しゃあないなと。ほんならまあちょっと...有り金持ってるお金を使い果たすまで、何回か役所の方に行きましたわ。でも同じようにね、同じような感覚で門前払いですわ。

Telling his experiences at the welfare offices, he shared his impressions of surveillance when applying for the welfare programs. The welfare offices required more detailed explanations from him about why he was in financial difficulties. Especially, they were skeptical of his request after knowing that he had worked at the large company for thirty years and quit the job a few months ago. Apapane felt uncomfortable to give every detail to the welfare officials and insisted by saying, *“My history is not important here. At this moment, I am in need of help in my current situations!”* Yet, he was still required to give them the details of why he lost all of his money and why he claimed welfare supports. In Japan, the government is very careful about benefit frauds especially in the public assistance program for low-income individuals and families. Linking with these experiences, Apapane recalled that when he had accessed the support organization for the first time, his history was taken in an interview. When people lose means to support themselves and have to rely on public supports, their lives and histories are often required be revealed to others’ eyes and assessed by them. This form of surveillance may be performed in various forms and endorsed as a necessary step to receive any publicly-offered welfare supports. Yet, this can be an embarrassing experience to welfare recipients which may make them feel more vulnerable in front of observing eyes and result in a lack of independence and freedom. I wondered if Apapane was similarly afraid of this kind of surveillance through our conversations.

Eventually, Apapane had to give up asking for supports from the welfare programs which was actually the very last resort for him in order to prevent him from becoming homeless. He disclosed his feelings of helplessness and uncertainty amidst this transitional period into becoming homeless:

I was not willing to receive the public assistance program to be honest, but I had no other choices left. Actually, I was more unwilling to rely on people such as my friends or my ex-colleagues. I know this unwillingness was coming from my pride which I think was too high. So, I thought it was better to rely on the welfare, yet consequently I was rejected many times. Then, without any other resources, I said to myself 'Okay. Let's become homeless for a while', even though I was not sure how long it would take...one week or one month. I was carelessly thinking 'while living on streets as a homeless for a while, I would probably think about my future in terms of how to address this situation'. But, I did not have any knowledge and information, so actually I could not think anything about my future after becoming homeless.

そもそも生活保護を受けるのはちょっと抵抗があったんですよ。ただ...結局何もなくなって。それで、人に頼る...友達とか先輩とかそういう人がおったんですけどね。そこへ頼るとなった時には、どうしてもね。自分でも、あの...抵抗...どない言うかな、プライドがかなり持ってたからね。だったら行政にちょっとすがろうかと言う感じで行ったんですけど。でも、最終的には、もう却下されてしまったんですけどね。まあしゃあない、よしホームレス...まあ1週間、1か月になるか分からんけど、とりあえずじっくり考えようかと。考えようかと言っても、情報がほとんどなかったですから。

After losing a place to sleep, he went to a park and slept on a bench. That was his first experience of being homeless. Although Apapane chose to stay in the same town after becoming homeless, he chose to sleep away from his neighbor because of the shame and embarrassment. In his first night at a park, he met one man who was also homeless. Apapane was invited by him to sleep together under the eaves of a cafeteria at a public library. There, he met three other men sleeping together. He soon found out that they were using illicit substances and always

participated in nasty gossips. Apapane told me that he was scared to be involved with those people and become a target of gossip. At such moment, he was found by one female staff member from the support organization who was on night patrol. As she offered him a rice ball and a cup of warm miso soup, she encouraged him to visit the support center. Finally, Apapane was successfully connected to the welfare program with assistance from the support organization after one week of being homeless.

I perceived, and he also acknowledged, that he was very fortunate that he was connected to the support organization at this early moment of being homeless. Recollecting his memories of being homeless, Apapane said, *“The first week was tolerable. Somebody brought expired bento boxes from somewhere and we shared food together. Unexpectedly, things worked out well and I thought being homeless was not actually too bad.”* However, he promptly added, *“But, one week was enough for me to be homeless. I cannot imagine how others continue to homeless and living this sort of life for many years”*. If a staff member did not come to his place near the public library and urge him to visit the center, Apapane might have settled into chronic homelessness and might not have been able to return to an apartment after one week of being homeless.

Apapane went to the support organization next day. Since then, he has established a close relationship with the support organization until now. With their supports, he was successfully given an apartment and the monthly financial supports from the public assistance program. After one week of being homeless, he finally returned to a life away from the streets. After returning to an apartment, he tried hard to regain his independence in life. Apapane said he went to the soup kitchen only for a month, saying, *“I do not want to rely on others for my life”*. Apapane was determined to re-establish his life on his own. After he secured a place to live, he was encouraged to find a job. Yet, it was not easy for him to find full-time employment at his

age of over 50. While changing several part-time jobs, he struggled to find a stable job. He said he went to many job fairs and applied to more than a hundred job interviews in one year, but they were not successful. Being discouraged, he realized, *“No matter how hard I tried to find a job, it is almost impossible to find a full-time job in such social situations”*. Although being daunted by the societal preference of younger workforce and the declining economy, Apapane never gave up his job-hunting. Finally, after one year of struggle, he had found a full-time contract work at the chocolate factory in this town.

His stories of confrontation and determination have continuously sustained his life; again he had overcome another hardship of becoming homeless by making enormous efforts to return to an independent life with an apartment and a stable job. Living alongside his stories, I imagined his life like a voyage without a map; laboring through the rough waves, Apapane never gave up and kept moving forward with a hope that someday he could reach a place where he would start a new life. While calling up and re-living those moments, Apapane cordially expressed, *“Pain and effort will never betray me...and I was very fortunate with my relationships”* 必ず苦勞って言うのは嘘をつかないかな。それと人に恵まれました、周りの人にね。 . Embracing deep appreciation to people, Apapane dared to resist multiple difficulties in his life and has continuously enriched his life with his power of confrontation and determination.

I really appreciate that you came here to have a conversation with me so far. I guess it is hard for you to take time in your busy life schedule.

No. It's not hard at all.

Okay. Good to hear that.

I come here to visit the lady at the support center. I just take this opportunity to come this meeting anyway.

It's good to know that you think in such way.

This meeting is not my main purpose to come here.

I see. You have other reasons to come to the support center, but you kindly come to this meeting as well.

Reflection Five: Deep Gratitude to the Support Center

Apapane sometimes brought me some snacks from the chocolate factory where he works. One day, he brought me a huge box of snacks to the meeting. I was surprised and asked "What is it!?" He said he won a bingo game at the factory. While showing the box to me, he happily explained about the rule of the bingo game which is regularly held by the factory; if he buys the designated snacks appeared on each square of a bingo card, he can mark out a square accordingly. Then, in an excited voice, he said, "I'm gonna give these snacks to the people at the table, too!" I could sense how much he cares for people there and cherishes the place. He always expresses, through his stories, his life, and his visible/invisible signs, how much he recognizes the worth of his relationships. As I saw him frequently watching people through the window in our meeting room, I perceived that, to him, the window might also represent the connection with people outside, more specifically, a reassurance that he dwells in familiar place and a security of belonging to the place and the relationships here. Other than a screen, a mirror, and a shield, the window in our meeting room might also embody a bridge by which he was seeing the relationships in and through the window.

(Journal entry written on May 29th, 2015)

Apapane stressed, *"Knowing people at the support center was part of the turning point in my life"*. 教会と出会ったことが人生の分岐点 He was deeply thankful to the people at the support organization and that they have been generously providing supports to him whenever he needed help and care. He recalled when he was unsuccessful in a job interview, the staff members always gave him an encouragement and advised him not to give up. He told me, *"I'm always supported by this church (which means the support organization for Apapane), so this is why I want to be part of your study to help you. I don't have any reason to say no, if it was a request coming from the church"*.

Particularly, Apapane seemed to have a trusting relationship with one of the staff members at the support organization who had first found him sleeping outside and encouraged him to visit the support organization located at the church. Whenever he has any concerns,

questions, or new changes in his life, he always comes to the support organization to visit her. He said that he has recently introduced his girlfriend to the lady. He said, *“After going above fifty years old...and having lost my parents, I think this place is like a new home for me. And the lady here...she is like my mother”* この 50 歳を超えてから、ある意味では...まあ両親も亡くなったんで。ここがね、第二の故郷みたいな感じなんです。それで、まあ...oo さんは母親みたいな感じです。He feels a special connection and a deep gratitude to the support organization and the lady working there.

At the support organization, Apapane regularly joins the weekly roundtable meeting on Fridays. He enjoys this meeting very much as he is allowed to talk about anything. Knowing that his presence is always welcomed and his stories are listened to, gives him a sense of acceptance. He wishes, *“If there were the roundtable meeting every day here, I would come here every day”*. I understand how important this place is for Apapane to be able to belong and share stories with others. This also reminded me of my experiences of going to a weekly roundtable meeting at the University of Alberta where researchers and students studying narrative inquiry come together, share their stories, and respond to each other. Although I was hesitant to speak in English in front of many people at first, I have eventually realized that people at the table were very open, caring, and willing to listen to each other, which removed my anxiety and taught me a joy of sharing stories and listening to others. I feel very fortunate that I belong to a community in Canada which lets me to live in relation to others through situating my own life alongside others' lives. Living alongside his stories of the roundtable meeting, I simultaneously lived in my stories of community. While travelling to his worlds, I began to see myself and regard my communities and relationships in Canada as an analogy to my home and my family.

During one conversation, people at the church knocked on the door of our meeting room and shared some cherries they just harvested from the garden. The cherries looked so beautiful and we were both impressed. After they left, he quickly asked me, “*Can I share these cherries with people at the table?*” これゆうゆうで配ったらだめですか？ I realized how the roundtable meeting is a valuable community for Apapane and the people at the table are important peers for him. His life has continuously been imbued with appreciation for relationships and yearning to live in stable and trusting relationships. Through the support organization, he has found a new home with new family and friends. Living in and alongside his stories, I started to recognize that relationships might signify a home for Apapane. It seems that in his vision of home, people in his relationships are like a family who lovingly partake in his life together. In his life’s view, his relationships, especially those which he has built through the support organization, may serve as a home for Apapane where he holds close to a sense of belonging without a fear of betrayal, disconnections, surveillance, and judgements.

Have you studied psychology?

Yes, I did in my undergraduate.

Did you?

Yes.

Oh boy...Then, do you read people's mind?

Well. I naturally tend to think what others think.

Oh my god. Maybe, you are reading my mind...

(laugh)

(laugh)

4. Looking Backward and Forward Through the Window

“I have never thought about becoming homeless in my life, but I had no alternative other than to become homeless”. いやーもう、野宿なんてね、考えてもなかったけど、仕方なかったから。Apapane had never expected to become homeless in his life. I wonder if anyone anticipates to be homeless in their lives. I imagine it must be challenging to recognize being homeless as a part of one’s life, and then to make it tangible in front of one’s eyes by telling stories. Re-visiting experiences of being homeless, Apapane is still trying to make sense of those moments. Much like when he interpreted his disease and disability in the past as ‘a life process’, he keeps attempting to figure out the meaning of his experience of being homeless by saying:

Well...I would say rather than a hardship, as I had no such experiences of being homeless in my life, I was groping about how to address that situation. Like, I was walking in the darkness...I mean I had no information and knowledge at all to hang onto. Well...now I guess I went through a valuable experience I can rarely experience.

そう...大変というよりね。経験してないでしょ。そういう経験がね。だから、自分でどういう風に解決できないかなと色々ね、模索しながらね。だから、全く暗中模索の状態ですね。だから情報もないし、そういう知識もないしね。だからまあ、その時も一つの、めったに経験できない経験をさせてもらったんですよ。

I sensed a hint of alienation within his voice toward his experiences of being homeless. His experience of being homeless in the past might still perplex him to make sense into his coherence in his life stories. In our conversation, he demonstrated his braveness to verbalize some of these difficult experiences to me. Various difficulties which Apapane has chosen to story to me were the threads of his life, each of which shape and characterize his stories to live by and our relational space. These threads of his life were also tightly interwoven with his strength of confrontation, his determination, and his sensitivities for relationships. However, he might still be pulled back in reconciliation of some experiences that he found difficult to tell and

share with others. The dilemma which he embraces might have arisen from a distance between his expressed stories and his embraced experiences. He implied this sense of alienation and the distance towards his own experiences of being homeless by saying:

Looking back my life, I have many unpleasant stories. I have many stories which I'm not willing to tell. When I reflect on my life, I have many painful stories, though I also have good stories. To be honest, a part of myself is telling me that I do not want to talk everything about my difficulties in life because it means I have to re-experience all kinds of negative emotions. I feel these emotions are lingering at a corner of my mind, but I just want to let them sleep.

だけど自分で振り返ってみて、いろいろと嫌な話もあるんですよ。話したくない話もあるんですよ。やけど、結構僕の人生をずっと振り返ってみてね、良い話もあれば、めちゃくちゃ苦しい嫌やという話もたくさんあるんですけどね。それを全て語りたくない自分もあるんですよ。辛いなという時もあるしね、しんどくなる時もあるしね。あのーやっぱり、頭の中で片隅にはあるんですよ。だけどそれはずっと眠ってます。

His comment took my heart into a swirl of his frustrations. I considered the potential impacts and the meanings of unpacking these difficult experiences for Apapane in our relational space. I wondered how our relationship has been shaped by his difficult experiences which he shared with me and by stories which he decided not to disclose between us. Through the window in our small meeting room, Apapane frequently took me backward to his journey and showed me multiple sceneries and relationships while being cognizant of himself or both of us standing in front of the window. Stumbling over the rumination of an ethical and relational approach, I had been sensitively living within our relationship while holding tension and vulnerability. Yet, he was also soaked in these unfolding moments, being afraid to re-encounter the painful emotions which agonized or discouraged him in the past. Throughout his life, he strived hard to overcome various difficulties and to transform his striving into his strength to build a new 'home'.

However, recalling his past inevitably pulled him back to these extremely vulnerable feelings against which he has constantly been resisting and taking a distance. From our first conversation, I strongly sensed that he has been very careful not to lose his power and control in our relationship. His carefulness shaped a complex tension interlaced by countless fears, worries, sensitivities, imaginations, and hopes. What could I have done in our relational space to alleviate his tensions and my vulnerability?

Apapane was uniquely standing at an in-between place. He was drawn by two opposing directions: between a sentiment for his past of being homeless and a resistance to break away from the past and move forward into the future. On one hand, Apapane understands people who are homeless very well as an insider, but on the other hand, he also watches them as an outsider. For example, he sometimes criticized people who are homeless for prolonged period of time, as those who do not like to live in relation with others and stubbornly choose to value their individual beliefs. Also, I sensed that he considered himself as being different from his peers at the support organization, in that he put an end to his life of being homeless and reconstructed a new life. In front of his peers, he plays a distinctive role as a broker mediating between a life of being homeless and a life outside of the streets. Likewise, in front of others like me as a researcher, he plays a role of ambassador to introduce a life of being homeless.

Apapane continued talking about being homeless as both insider and outsider: *“When people have been homeless for a prolonged period of time, it is very challenging for them to restart their lives in an apartment. Even if they are given an apartment and a monthly financial support, they are likely to return to a life of homelessness”*. でもその人達はね、長いことそういう生活をしたらね、それがもう身に染みてるから、いざこの家を与えられて、それで生活保護のお金を貰って、それで生活しよっても長

続きしないんですよ。またホームレスに戻ってしまうんですよ Although he often observed and described people who are homeless as an outsider during our conversations, he was still going back and forth between his insider's and outsider's point of view. Apapane also deeply sympathizes with people who are homeless. He said:

When I happen to see people who are homeless on the streets, I feel like talking to them. But, I found another part of me wanting to avoid them. So, I have both sides. On one side, I really want to offer my hands to help them or even give something. But I also have another side...the opposite side of me.

振り返ってみたらね。だから今そういう生活してる人をたまたまね、見かけたらね。声をかけても良いのかなとか言いながらね。だけど...ちょっと自分が彼らのところから避ける自分もあるんですよ。だから、両面持ってますね。だから、ちょっと手を差し伸べてあげたいなという自分があるんですけどね。それで、ちょっと恵んであげようかな...というのはあるんですけどね。でも、違う自分が...その反対の自分もあるんですよ。

For Apapane, people who are living homeless are 'peers' and he deeply sympathizes with their sufferings and wants to help, but also they are 'others' whom he finds it difficult to understand. Within the window in our meeting room he might be puzzled by the fluid reflections of himself alongside changing inflections of light, while balancing between attachment and resistance toward people who are homeless and to his own experiences of being homeless.

When I asked him what home is for him, Apapane answered "*It is a place for rest without being seen by others*", but not a place to 'live'. Apapane emphasized that a home is a place which guarantees a safe place for sleeping. According to him, if we 'live' in a home, we are likely to shut ourselves up and push ourselves inward to live in isolation. He said home is a place to prepare ourselves to 'live' outside, which might be comparable to a bridge between people and the society. From our conversations over the three months, I appreciate, more than anything, his deep desire to live in relationships, which directly or indirectly motivated him to

join my study. During our conversations, Apapane often repeated, “*I really like associating with people*” 僕結構ね、人が大好きなんです and that he enjoys listening to people with a hope that he might get something interesting or learn different perspectives from them. Furthermore, Apapane clearly expressed his belief in living among relationships as:

There is always a limitation to what one person can experience in one life. However, if people listen to others' stories or watch people even a little bit, we can learn from them to change and improve our lives. So we need to live with others through conversations, otherwise we can rarely get any new knowledge and information.

自分一人で出来る範囲って言ったらね、もう知れてます。ほんのちょっぴり。やっぱり色々な人の話を聞いたり、それでやってる事を見てね、人のフリみて我がふり直せて言葉ありますやん。だから、やっぱり人と接しなければね、会話もしてなければね、知識とか情報とかっていうのはね、なかなか無いと思いますよ。

Apapane understands relationship with reference to hope and growth, which might have been underpinned by his experiences of meeting his life mentors during hardships and of making connections with the support organization. For Apapane, a home is a place which offers him a necessary private space for maintenance which prepares him to go outside. For him, since a home importantly symbolizes a connection to the world, being homeless means an isolation from the world, which totally conflicts with his principle to live among relationships.

While looking backward, Apapane has also continuously been looking forward through the window in our meeting room. In my impressions, his backward looking stories always encompassed a momentum toward his forward-looking stories. Now, his future is closely related to a relationship with his girlfriend. He told me that he plans to move to her apartment soon to live together. He also said that he wants to plan a trip to visit her hometown someday. Yet, he added, because of his unlucky period by the Japanese fortune calendar, he is living in frustration.

He told me that in addition to his unlucky years, he has experienced hardships every twelve years in his life. And this year will be a difficult year as well, according to his twelve-year cycle. So, he was very careful and afraid to make a big decision and cause any troubles to himself and to his girlfriend. Despite being annoyed by his difficult memories, Apapane dared to proceed his life with hope, like he has been doing in the past. Apapane told me that he also wishes to see himself as a supporter in society. He hopes to continue working at the chocolate factory until he turns sixty-five years old. Then, he deeply hopes to contribute to the support organization in order to give back something in appreciation for the supports he was given.

Apapane's life is a life of striving for a home. Despite many critical hardships which caught him one after another in his life, he has never given up, forged ahead of his life, and chosen to live among hope and relationships. Even in rough transitions, he has never been drowning in misery or relinquished his control to others. He continued to strive until he could achieve his intended goals. Whenever he overcame the difficulties, he has found new sceneries, new relationships, and renewed reflections of himself through/within the window. Thank you very much, Apapane for showing me various dimensions of your life through the window in our meeting room. After Apapane left our meeting room when we finished our last conversation, I was looking at the window, trying to see some remnant of him and our relationships, but all I could see was a peaceful sunny courtyard of the church. Someday, I hope our relationship will be also a part of scenery which he sees through the window.

How did you think about our meetings? Do you feel tired after having ten conversations?

Umm... I am not tired at all.

Glad to hear that.

Well...Looking back my life...I mean...my past again, I was telling to myself “Oh...I was too reckless” or “I should reflect on my life more”. To be honest, I was reluctant to turn around and confront my past, but... [Sigh and pause] Still I don't even know if this was good or bad. There is a complicated feeling in myself which I can't even express.

He swiftly left a meeting room with a hesitant smile

Clutter of a door knob

Slam



5. Reflections in the Window: Afterward

My tension came back again into my body as a noticeable feeling when a female staff member at the support center called Apapane's cellphone. I did not remember how many times she called his cellphone with no answers and call-backs. I came back to my hometown in Japan after one year of having our conversations in order to negotiate the narrative account with him. The prolonged waiting time was frustrating for me since there were only a few weeks left in my stay in Japan. Also, after I returned to the support organization and their activities again, I found out that Apapane no longer came to the weekly roundtable meeting, which he used to attend every week and cared so deeply about. When I asked about how Apapane is doing to the support organization, one staff member told me that he might not want to meet me again because of his life events, without telling me the reasons. The blank empty pages compiled as interruptions inflated within the stories of our relationship. Standing alone in front of a blank page, all I could do was to wait for him. I was filled with uneasiness, but with hope that he would call back soon.

Apapane finally called us back when a staff lady, whom he called 'my second mother', called his cellphone and urged him to meet me again. Apapane told us that his job had been extremely busy recently and could not call us back. I was relieved that we could finally meet again. Yet, after the phone call, the staff lady told me that it may be the very last meeting with Apapane. I wondered what happened in his life and how his life has been shaped differently in the last year.

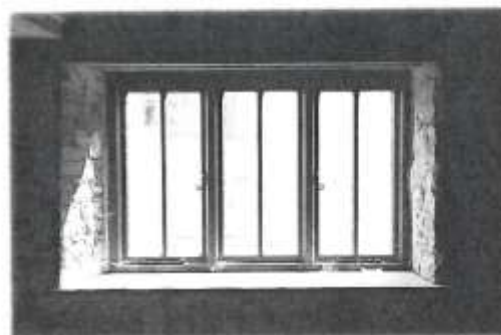
We met again in the small meeting room where we used to have conversations last year. It was raining, so from the window, he could only see the quiet courtyard. Apapane looked slightly tense to me, but his friendly and cheerful way of talking reminded me of Apapane from our conversations in the last year. After we briefly chatted, I shared with him the translated

summary of the narrative account which is organized into a small booklet. While he was surprised to realize my tensions during our past conversations, he was also happy to read how his life was brought together into a paper. After I shared the narrative account, he awkwardly told me that since we finished the conversations last year, he stopped coming to the support organization as well as the weekly roundtable meeting. Then, he continued saying that the anxiety of his girlfriend had increased after our meetings in the last year and that she did not even allow him to come to the support organization and meet people whom she does not know. Another blank page added in my mind. At the moment, I saw the existence of his girlfriend very clearly through Apapane and was surprised to recognize how closely our relationship was linked to his relationship with his girlfriend. Recalling the significance for Apapane to meet his peers and join the weekly roundtable meeting at the support organization, I also tried to imagine how he experienced this transition. During a years of absence since we left our last conversation, our relationship complicatedly affected his other relationships and his life in unexpected ways. I realized that when I talked to Apapane, I was also talking to his girlfriend through his relationships. I wondered how Apapane had storied our relationship and me to his girlfriend. Also, I wondered what kind of stories his girlfriend had lived and told about our relationship and me as a female and a researcher.

Apapane dwells in conflicting impressions toward his experiences of being homeless. *“I don’t want to remember my life of being homeless”*, Apapane told me when I gave him the translated summary of the narrative account, *“But this (booklet) is like the only photo album of my life since I lost all of my memory things in the earthquake”*. At the corner of my mind, I was not sure if I could give him a booklet which might call up his painful memories of losing his memory-related items. I was also afraid of how this summary might add to his girlfriend’s

anxiety and affect Apapane's life. With mixed emotions, I wondered how this summary of the narrative account might give him different aspects and impressions toward his interpretations of what it means to be homeless in his life. Although I knew that I should admit that it was our very last meeting, with a little hope for a continued relationship, I told him at the end, "*When I came back again, I will share my updates with you*", but he briefly said, "*You don't need to tell me your updates. You can tell them to the support center and I would eventually know*". He swiftly left the room. From the window in the meeting room, Apapane is perhaps watching the whole new sceneries colored by the new stage of his life living with his girlfriend. I hope his life will be surrounded by warm and caring relationships. I continue to live alongside his life and within our relationships in my memories and imaginary landscapes, by filling up these metaphorical blank pages left within this narrative account.

[Booklet to Apapane]¹



1. Looking through the window
2. Finding a New Role through a Chocolate Factory
3. Shifted identity at a Ship Company
4. Childhood story
5. Interrupted Life during a Week of Homeless
6. Deep Gratitude to the Support Center
7. Looking Backward and Forward through the Window
8. Opening guzzlement

1. 窓から見える景色
2. チョコレート工場を通じて得た新たな役割
3. 船会社を通して経験した変化する自己像
4. 子ども時代のストーリー
5. 中断されたホームレスの一週間
6. 支援センターへの感謝
7. 人生の窓から見える過去と未来
8. 最初の戸惑い

¹ They are a part of the booklet that I shared with Apapane.

1. Looking through the window

I was waiting for him in a meeting room across the courtyard of the church. Apapan came a little late to our appointment time, but it was not unexpected because I saw him from the window in a meeting room that he was enjoying a chat with some friends in a corner of the courtyard. After entering the meeting room, he said "I have an appointment to meet my ex-colleague from 3pm. So, could you please finish this meeting by 2pm?". We started a conversation just past one o'clock, so I thought one hour was more than enough for our first conversation. His life seemed quite busy with many appointments and friends. I could perceive from his brisk manner, how much he likes to socialize with people and puts values in maintaining his relationships.

1. 窓から見える景色

私は教会の中庭の先にあるミーティングルームでアババネさんを持っていました。アババネさんは少し遅れて来ましたが、ミーティングルームの窓からアババネさんが友人と楽しそうに話している姿が見えていたので驚きませんでした。ミーティングルームに入ってきた後、「今日の3時から昔の同僚と会うので、これを2時くらいで終わらせてください」とアババネさんは言いました。私たちは1時過ぎから会話を始めたので、最初のミーティングということ考えると1時間もあれば十分だと思いました。アババネさんは用事がたくさんあるようでした。アババネさんがどれだけ人と交流することが好きで、人との関係性に価値を置いているのかを感じ取ることができました。

2. Finding a New Role through a Chocolate Factory

Apapane said that he enjoys working at the factory filled with sweet scents of chocolates which simply made him happy and brought him back to the memories of childhood. For Apapane, this sweet smell of chocolate symbolizes the new stage of life and a sense of fulfillment for him after taking a long trek in his life with many battles and struggles. He is committed to giving. Experiencing both the entry and the exit of homelessness, he learned a danger embedded in a life of homeless which gradually but surely undermines the energy and motivation from people who become homeless to stand up again and change their lives. He revealed his experiences of both being homeless and working at the factory as a more practical and accessible example of hope in order to support his peers who had similar struggles and were most likely to be caught in a danger of being homeless

2. チョコレート工場を通じて得た新たな役割

アパパネさんは子どもの頃の思い出や幸せな気持ちと呼び起こしてくれるチョコレート甘い香りに包まれた工場で働くことを楽しんでいきます。アパパネさんにとって、チョコレート甘い匂いは、様々な戦いや葛藤を乗り越えた後の、人生の新たなステージと達成感を象徴するものでした。そして人生の新しいステージにおいて、アパパネさんは「与える」ことに従事しています。ホームレスへの入り口と出口の両方を経験したアパパネさんは、ホームレス生活に潜む危険をよく知っています。それは人々から徐々にエネルギーと意欲を奪い、もう一度立ち上がってホームレスから脱却することを阻止してしまいます。アパパネさんは自分自身のホームレスの過去と、現在工場です仕事をしている生活より実践的で身近な希望の具本として、支援団体に來ている同じ葛藤を共有する仲間たちを支えるために共有しています。そして仲間たちがホームレスの危険に飲み込まれないようにサポートしていきます。

3. Shifted Identity at a Ship Company

From his childhood, Apupane had a special fondness for ships. His long-term dream of making ships encouraged him to go to a technical high school and he successfully started working at one of the biggest ship companies in Japan after finishing high school at the age of eighteen. When he was working in the company, he experienced the complexity of power relationships and the vulnerability of employees. Due to the hard works and the mental stress, he suffered from a depression and his personal life was stripped. Other than a depression, Apupane suffered from many health issues during his work in the company. He got injured when he was 21 years old. While he was working outside, his leg was caught in a huge crane. Another big health issue occurred when he was in the forties; when he was 41 years old, he was diagnosed as Guillain-Barre syndrome. Now, although he still feels awkward in his right arm and leg, he has no problem in his daily life activities.

3. 船会社を通して経験した変化する自己像

子ども時代から、アパパネさんは船に突別な思い入れがありました。船を作りたいたいという長年の夢は、アパパネさんが工業高校に進学し、18歳で卒業した後は日本で屈指の造船会社に就職することへの原動力となりました。会社で働いている間は、アパパネさんは様々な複雑な権力関係や、労働者という立場の弱さを経験しました。仕事での重労働と精神的なストレスにより、アパパネさんはうつを患い、仕事以外の生活にも影響が及びました。会社で働いている間、うつ以外にも、アパパネさんはたぐさんの健康に関する問題を経験しました。21歳の時に外で作業をしている間、巨大なクレーンに足を挟まれてケガをしました。40代では、別の大きな健康問題がアパパネさんを襲いました。41歳の時に、アパパネさんはギランバレー症候群と診断されました。今でも右足と右腕に違和感が残るものの、現在は日常生活に問題はないということです。

4. Childhood story

Appane said it was the toughest moment in his life to overcome the death of his mother. In the following year of his mother's death, a big earthquake hit this town. Because of the earthquake, his apartment was completely broken and he had to live in a temporary shelter for about six months. In the next year of the earthquake, he fell down during the business trip and suffered from the Guillain-Barre syndrome. I wondered if multiple acute stresses of mother's death and the earthquake in addition to his busy work at the ship company have caused the disease. Now, he is not in frequent contact with his three older sisters, but he said his girlfriend is an important part of his family.

4. 子ども時代のストーリー

アパネさんにとって、母親の死を乗り越える時が一番辛かったと振り返っています。母親の死の翌年には、大きな地震が町を襲いました。この地震の影響で、アパネさんのアパートは崩壊し、半年ほど避難所で生活しなければならなくなりました。そして地震の翌年、アパネさんは出張中に倒れて、ギランバレー症候群を患いました。母親の死と地震に加えて、仕事での重労働という様々な急激なストレスが重なったことが病気を引き起こしたのではないかと感じました。現在、アパネさんは3人の姉妹とは連絡を取っていませんが、ガールフレンドが大事な家族の一部であると教えてくれました。

5. Interrupted Life during a Week of Homeless

After thirty years of working at the ship company, Apapane made a big decision to start a new life. About ten years ago from now, he decided to quit his job at the ship company at the age of fifty-one. Being exhausted with his hard works and various unendurable work-related stresses, he wanted to do something else until he became 60 years old. He said after quitting his job, he went on a trip to Brazil for seven months which was originally planned for three months. After his extended seven-month trip, Apapane found that all of his belongings in his apartment was taken out by the owner. When he lost his apartment, he also lost all of the items related to his memories. After he did couch-surfing at ex-colleagues' house or stayed at hotels for a while, he lost a place for sleep and become homeless.

5. 中断されたホームレスの一週間

船会社に30年ほど勤めた後、アパパネさんは新しい生活を始めるために大きな決断をしました。今から10年ほど前に、51歳で仕事を辞めることを決意しました。仕事での重労働と、耐えきれない程の様々なストレスに疲れ果ててしまい、60歳になるまでに何か違うことがしてみたいと思いました。仕事を辞めた後、アパパネさんはブラジルに旅行に行つたと言いました。最初は3か月の予定が最終的には7か月の旅行になったそうです。7か月の長期旅行の後、アパパネさんは自分のアパートの荷物が大家さんにより撤去されてしまったことを知りました。アパートを失ったのと同時に、思い出のあるものもすべて失いました。しばらく昔の同僚の家を転々としたり、ホテル住まいをした後、アパパネさんは寝る場所を失い、ホームレスになりました。

6. Deep Gratitude to the Support Center

Ayapanne asserted that knowing people at the support center is definitely the turning point in his life. He was deeply thankful to the people at the support center and the fact that they have been generously providing supports to him whenever he needed their supports. "After going above fifty years old...and having lost my parents, I think this place is like a new home for me. And the lady here...she is like my mother", said Ayapanne. He feels a special connection and a deep gratitude to the support center and the lady there.

6. 支援センターへの感謝

アハバネさんは支援センターと出会ったことが人生の分岐点だったと言っていました。アハバネさんは支援センターの人々がいつも快く必要な時に必要なサポートを提供してくれたことに深く感謝しています。「この50歳を超えてから、ある意味では…まあ両親も亡くなったんで。ここがね、第二の故郷みたいな感じなんです。それで、まあ…そのスタッフの方は母親みたいな感じです。」とアハバネさんは言いました。アハバネさんは支援センターと支援してくれたスタッフに対して特別なつながりと深い感謝を感じています。

7. Looking Backward and Forward through the Window

Additionally, Apapane was uniquely standing on an in-between place. He was drawn by two opposing directions: between a sentiment for his past of being homeless and a resistance to break away from the past and move forward to the future. On one hand, Apapane understands people who are homeless very well as an insider who underwent homelessness, but on the other hand, he also watches them as an outsider who got out of homelessness. In front of his peers, he plays a distinctive role as the broker mediating between a life of being homeless and a life outside of the streets. And in front of the others like me as a researcher, he plays a role as the ambassador to introduce a life of being homeless.

7. 人生の窓から見える過去と未来

さらにアパパネさんはユニークな立場に立っています。アパパネさんは二つの対立する方向に引っ張られています：自分自身のホームレスの過去に対する心情とその過去を断ち切って未来へ前進したいという思いの間です。一方では、アパパネさんは経験者としてホームレスの人々をとても良く理解しています。しかしもう一方で、ホームレスを脱却した立場としてホームレスの人々を外から見ると一面もあります。ホームレスの仲間の中では、アパパネさんはホームレスとホームレス脱却後の生活を繋ぐ媒介者として、そして私を含むそれ以外の人々に対しては、ホームレスの生活を紹介する案内人としての異なる役割を使い分けています。

Chapter 7: A Story of Choosing Home: Ama

On the New Year's Day at the Harbor



Cargo vessel at the harbor (Photo taken by Ama)

Dingdong...dingdong...dingdong...

The gongs spread the roaring sounds in every direction and the whistles blowing all together from huge cargo steamers produce the overwhelming vibe of celebration at the beginning of a New Year. Fascinated by the ringing, Ama was standing right in the middle of the large commercial harbor where many cargo vessels constantly arrive and leave without a break. The harbor was filled with the lively atmosphere; a countless amount of freight was loaded and unloaded in and out from gigantic vessels and the bustling traffics on the dock among foreigners and workers uplifted the air. Regardless of day and night, these cargo vessels were restlessly

coming from the United States, Russia, Canada, and African countries to mainly bring lumber, rubber, and tobacco to Japan and then leaving to their countries with goods such as fabrics or machinery components. This was in the post-war period after World War II when Japanese society was boosted with the ambition for the recovery from the losses and damages caused by the war. Additionally, the post-war booming economy further assisted this momentum to be geared toward the development for modernization in Japan. As construction was one of the essential industries during the post-war period in Japan, tons of lumbers were imported every day from the harbor and busily transported across Japan via canals and railways.

Holding a tall bamboo stick with a small metal hook at a tip, called *ケントビ* (*ken-tobi*), Ama stopped his busy working hands and took a deep breath of the fresh cold night air of the New Year. *“There used to be more than ten piers at the harbor and a full line-up of vessels on New Year’s Day, all of which created such a magnificent view. Those sceneries and sounds...I still have a special feeling for it”*. By saying so, Ama briefly closed his eyes and traveled inward to feel these nostalgic moments and sceneries. I also travelled to my imaginations beside him. He had been working at the harbor for forty years since he was sixteen years old. Helping his father’s lumber company, he worked almost 24/7 to unload logs from foreign cargo vessels, bundle them to make a raft, and carry them into a lumber pond. Looking at his rugged thick fingers placed on the table, I could feel that those days of working with lumber do not simply occupy a half of Ama’s life, but significantly account for his life stories. His heart is still living at the harbor, being surrounded by huge cargo vessels, the overwhelming whistles, and the uplifting vigor on the deck, while simultaneously living in the present. In ruminations about his life, my imaginative viewpoints are roving here and there: through both wandering in the sky above the harbor and watching us from the ceiling of our meeting room. Where will Ama take me and

himself through our relational journey? What kinds of stories are we going to co-compose in this small meeting room? While imaginarily standing in the middle of the harbor on New Year's Day, I felt an excitement to this new adventure. Something unknown yet.

Opening a Relational Space at a Meeting Room



A meeting room (Photo taken by a researcher)

何からお話しましょうか...まず生い立ちから話しましょうか。

“So...where should I start.... Ok, I will start from my childhood stories”.

Dear Ama,

After I briefly talked to you a week ago to obtain consent for the study, we met for the first time in this meeting room: a small meeting room which is usually used as a kids' recreation room at the church. The room was equipped with a cheerful and relaxed atmosphere with many

colorful paintings hanging on the wall and toys and books disorderly laid everywhere. Since this meeting room is facing a spacious courtyard of the church, bright sunlight gently and abundantly pours into the room. This is in the middle of March. The season is slowly transitioning from winter to spring, so the cool air inside the meeting room and the warm sunshine coming from the outside was sufficiently comfortable and presented a hopeful contrast.

While I was waiting for you in the meeting room before you came in, my mind was filled with wonders, questions, worries, and feelings of uncertainty for initiating a new conversation and a new relationship. Yet, these feelings were not too overwhelming because I already knew you from the soup kitchen. Whenever I saw you at the soup kitchen, I had an impression of you as a gentle older man who always puts a smile and carries a soft atmosphere. At the soup kitchen, after quickly finishing your meal, you willingly came out to the kitchen area to help wash the dishes for everyone. As the soup kitchen was operated in an outside ground, there was no access to hot water. As the water coming from the tap was extremely cold in the winter, it was no wonder that washing dishes for a hundred of people was definitely not preferred work for many people there. However, you were always among a few of them who volunteered to wash dishes and even remained at the soup kitchen until its closing to help clean up chairs and tents. Your supportive attitude at the soup kitchen was impressive. I wondered what underpins your willingness for this kind of voluntary participation. At the same time, you were also a humble and quiet person who did not try to show off your contributions to others. When everything was cleaned and closed at the soup kitchen, you quickly and quietly left the place. While people were cooking at the kitchen, you usually sat alone on the same spot at the corner of the soup kitchen. Despite being surrounded by people and noisy conversations, you sat in silence while hanging your head down or sometimes hiding your head with a newspaper. As I was recalling you at the

soup kitchen, I became more curious to hear what life experiences you went through and what life stories you were going to share with me.

Shortly after, you came into the meeting room. You wore a few layers of hard-shell winter jackets and, from the opened zipper, I could see a blue plaid shirt on the top and black baggy pants on the bottom. You dressed nicely and I could easily see that you maintained your clothes very well. Around your waist, you wore a big leather fanny bag which was swollen to the maximum with too many things inside. Pulling a chair, facing toward me across the table, you warmly said hello to me with a gentle smile and immediately began to talk, "*So...where should I start...Ok, I will start from my childhood stories*". Then, you started telling me a story that you were born in a small rural town, and soon moved into this town with your family at the age of three. The way you talked to me was friendly, always accompanied by a hesitant gentle smile. I could feel a hint of nervousness in your vibrant voice, but I could also feel you tried to suppress your nervousness by daringly trusting this space and me which were yet unfamiliar to him.

You placed your arms on a table with your finger softly crossed, while your back was keeping a short distance from the back of a metal chair. Gently looking at me, you tried to shape and engage in a conversation with me. In your sparkling eyes, I saw your braveness, kindness, acceptance, and sensitivity, which let me to feel much closer to you and helped me to talk at ease. For you, it must be a tension-filled moment to start a conversation with me in this closed environment, yet you courageously came forward to be fully present in this space. Also, I was deeply touched by how you chose to start a conversation: breaking the ice is not always an easy thing to do. Recalling you, diligently washing the dishes for everyone at the soup kitchen, I perceived your care to me and to this conversational space: at our very first moment of

conversation, I was deeply supported by your caring heart which might have been lived out throughout your life and would also sustain in our relationship.

After you briefly talked about your previous work at the harbor, you started telling me about your experiences of becoming homeless. You shared with me some difficult experiences of being homeless, such as how you were hit by cans or plastic bottles by passers-by while sleeping on a street and how your wallet was almost stolen at the McDonalds when you were asked by young people where a washroom was. Despite your troubled tone, you did not convey reluctance in disclosing your stories of being homeless to me. From the way you recalled your experiences, I sensed that you commit yourself to your experiences of being homeless, rather than being annoyed by the stigma and shame attached to homelessness in Japan.

After sharing some difficulties of life on the streets, you shared some good experiences of being homeless, such as after becoming homeless, you experienced the warmth of people's kindness more than before. You said, "*After becoming homeless, I really appreciate that many people have supported me. Homelessness is now a good experience for me, even though I had never thought about becoming homeless in my life*". 僕もホームレスになって、皆に支えられて今までやってこれたのが有難いですね。もう良い人生経験になりましたわ。昔はこんな夢にも思ってたしね。By saying so, you illuminated the different angles of understanding homelessness and changed my assumptions that being homeless only involves stressful, uncomfortable, and uneasy experiences from which everyone wishes to escape. In our first conversation, I was struck by how you expressed gratitude to people without complaining about your life or blaming anyone for the injustice. When I listened to your difficult stories of being homeless, I also recognized regrets and frustration embedded in your stories, but you did not imply anger or hatred towards others. You

sometimes named yourself as “...*me as a homeless*” in our conversation, as if it was a matter of fact or a designation unbound to any connotations. I wonder how you went through all of the transitions and struggles in life, until you arrived at calling yourself as ‘a homeless’. Does your mind sit in peace without being bothered by the labels, stigmas, and shames attached to homelessness in Japan? Or did you give up fighting with these troubling dominant stories about being homeless in Japan? Or are you still fighting with them? Are there hidden stories shaping your life in the making?

In response to your stories, I also shared my experience of coming to Canada alone, such as my feelings of loneliness and struggles without family and friends and the lack of a familiar language and culture. After listening to my stories, you sympathetically said, “*I can totally understand your difficulties of living alone. It must have been very hard for you to adjust to a new environment*” それでも向こうに行って一人で大変でしたね、分かります。Your sympathy obviously began to characterize the atmosphere between us in the meeting room. I felt both of us were willing to engage in a conversation and contribute to our relationships, which embraced hopeful possibilities for our evolving relational space. When I showed some pictures of Canada, you asked me how much money you need to save to go to Canada. You were interested in seeing Niagara Falls and dreamed of your trip through these photos. Although our space of coming together has just begun, I immediately perceived there was a sense of care supporting and guiding our potential relational space. I hope this sense of care will encourage us to playfully co-compose our relational space and live alongside each other’s stories with loving perception (Lugones, 1987). Inspired by Lugones (1987), I hope we will co-create a world where we are open to multiple possibilities to shape our identities while we also take hold of the coherence of who we uniquely are, with identification in relation to each other.

After we finished our first conversation, I asked you if we could meet again next week. You took a brief pause and hesitantly said, “*What kinds of stories I can tell you...I think I have talked everything to you*” それは話が...どうい話...もうほとんど喋りました。 I sensed your anxiety of continuing a conversation with me. I told you, “*If you don't feel uncomfortable, I would like to continue a conversation with you in which both of us feel safe and listened. You don't need to worry about what kinds of stories you are going to share with me and you can decide which stories you will talk about*”. Although you sounded a bit hesitant to come back next week, we promised to meet again. I was unsure, wondering if it was not your expectation to talk with me regularly or if you are anxious to continue conversations with me. I imagined how much energy and courage would be required when entering into a new relationship and making commitment to come conversations. We just opened up a space and took one step toward to build a relational space together. I hope this process will be enduring, evolving, and caring for both of us.

Very sincerely,

Hiroko

Special Attachment to the Town



Wooden bench near the harbor (Photo taken by Ama)

やっぱり家族と一緒にあっていかだの仕事してた時が、それが一番よかったね。

“That was the happiest moment in my life when I was with my family and working at the harbor for making いかだ¹(ikada)...”

Ama shared some stories about his work at the harbor that he helped his father’s lumber business by making いかだ¹(*ikada*). Over our three-month conversations with Ama, I realized *ikada* was an important keyword to express his life, as he brought up this word frequently in our conversations. He took a picture above to explain to me the average size of lumber which he used to deal with at the harbor to make *ikada*. In spite of his smaller build compared to other workers, Ama daringly tackled massive logs which are usually a few meters in length and a half meter in width, only with a tall bamboo pole. He frequently worked through day and night and

¹ Ikada いかだ¹ means a wooden raft in Japanese.

sometimes spent a night on the bottom of a ship to unload lumber. After unloading the lumber, he worked on an unstable wooden board floating on the ocean to make *いかだ* (*ikada*) under the bright summer sunshine or within the cold winds in the winter. Often, he was called up in the middle of a night to come to the harbor whenever a cargo vessel arrived. Due to the pre-determined time for each vessel at the harbor, he and other workers were rushed to drop off about fifty tons of lumber into the canal in one night. When there were no cargo vessels at the harbor, he shouldered a few meters of logs with other workers out of a lumber pond to dry them on the ground and bring them to a sawmill. As he worked diligently almost every day with no fixed day off, his life was occupied by this job for forty years. When he said, “*Without the lumber, my life was nothing*” 材木を取ったらないもんね、僕ね, I deeply respected him and understood how he was proud of his work at the harbor. His confidence had been cultivated through managing all the hard work with the lumber. Also, his excitement was uplifted whenever he turned his thoughts toward the unknown foreign countries where the lumber was coming from. When he shared his memories at the harbor with me, his sparkling eyes and his elevated voice captured the evidence that he loved his lumber job in every possible way. *いかだ* (*ikada*) is his story to live by and his lumber job at the harbor might have meant a ‘home’ for him where all sorts of good memories and self-defining stories are embraced within (Nelson, 2001).

Lumber also reminds him of his memories related to his beloved family. Since Ama was not married, his parents were the most important members in his family. “*My parents gave me a lot of love. Especially, I was spoiled by my father*” もう小さいころから可愛がられてね、親からも。もう父親からなんかね、怒られたことないです。Since he was small, his father frequently took him to a mountain to show him how trees were cut down and hauled through a thick wire from a mountaintop into a

valley. Ama also told me that his father once took him to a small island nearby his town to show him how his father and other workers were collecting logs from a big shipwreck. From his child's eyes, the lumber must have appeared as enormous entities and all the work required to handle lumber might have given him inspiration, excitement, and hope for something beyond possible imagination. Also, for Ama, the lumber may represent a life of his father who bravely returned from the war as a soldier and who strived to maintain and develop his lumber business in the post-war period. More importantly, the lumber is also related to a feeling of love and care that he was given generously from his father. In relation to the lumber, Ama often calls up the memories of horses which his father took good care of, in order to assist with the transportation of the lumber. Ama recalled when he took horses to a field close to the lumber pond, one horse ran away and he desperately searched for it with his father until midnight. Nurtured through all these adventurous experiences offered by his caring father, Ama grew up to be a gentle man. As Ama deeply sympathized with a crying horse while it was lifting heavy lumber, he became firmly determined to succeed to his father's lumber business.

His mother was also a caring person; she planted potatoes in an empty space, trying to secure food for a family when the food supplies were extremely scarce after the war. Ama particularly remembered the moment when his town was the target of bombing during the war when he was five years old; when he was escaping from the bombing with his mother and grandmother, his mother protected him from a burning blanket flying over him, though she got burnt. Ama also vividly described the scenery; after escaping from the bombing, he was looking toward the harbor from the top of a building together with his mother and grandmother. Ama said, *"My mother pointed to the harbor and said to me 'Look at this!'. Then, I saw numerous bombs falling onto the harbor like a curtain"*. It was a horrific memory of the war, but for him, it

also built the memory of his mother's love, care, and protection. Later, after his father died when Ama was in his early fifties, he continued to live with his mother in an apartment. While he was working at the harbor, his mother always prepared meals for him and maintained the apartment. Ama felt nostalgia when he helped his mother by removing bones from small dried fishes to cook miso soup. Every spring, he still misses his favorite 若竹煮 (*wakatake-ni*²) which his mother cooked for him. His memories of his caring mother cultivated a sense of safety and the comfort of belonging in Ama. For Ama, the memories of his mother may intimately shape his memories of home where his mother was always providing care and preparing warm meals.

His memory of home resonates with my experience of home in Japan. I sometimes miss my mother's sweet scrambled egg which she often cooked for me and my sister. I know it is a simple recipe to cook, but I have never been able to replicate the same taste. When I try to recall the taste, I spontaneously remember a feeling of security and comfort to be at home with my mother and sister, which brings me back in time and still makes these emotions close and fresh.

"I think I was fortunate with my family" もう家族には恵まれてましたわ。His memories of childhood were filled with happiness and peace as Ama had been surrounded the love of his parents. He also had two older brothers and one younger sister, with whom he got along well until their parents died. Ama told me that he learned how to swim from his older brothers at a canal close to the lumber pond. After school, he often went to the harbor with his friends and got on a boat to play adventure. His childhood experiences were intimately rooted in this town, particularly around the harbor. As he has been living and working in the same town throughout his life, he has a special geographical attachment to this town which is a significant analogy for

² 若竹煮 (*wakatake-ni*) means a traditional Japanese food of simmered young bamboo shoots with seaweed.

his love to his parents and his confidence in his lumber work. Having lived in this town for more than seventy years, Ama perceives a sense of home in this town. The landscapes in this town might be comparable to a photo album of his life history. He said he hopes to live in this town until he dies. For Ama, living in this town is a way of honoring the lives of his parents and staying connected to everything that he cherishes in his life. Living in this town is continuously shaping who he was, who he is, and who he is becoming amidst a constant flux of time. Like an anchor, this town helped him to find coherence of life and invited him to acknowledge the path he has hitherto walked in his life. Even if he does not currently have a specific 'home' with a visible roof and walls, Ama is still living in his mental 'home' surrounded by the familiar landscapes, accompanied by the treasured memories of his family and his lumber work which bring him the nostalgic sentiments of home and belonging.

Home is closely related to geographic landscapes. When I just came to Canada, I often closed my eyes and pictured my home in Japan. I missed the firework from a baseball stadium which I saw from the balcony at home, missed the noisy song of cricket and cicada in my backyard, and missed the favorite smell of night which I often breathed from the window in my room. All of these memories remind me of home and are deeply embedded in this town. For some reason, my mother recently had to move and sell our house where we have lived over thirty years. I feel sad as if I am losing my home in Japan. I feel sad that these views, noises, and smells from my home will no longer be accessible in reality. I asked my mother to stay in the same town if possible, because I do not want the entire landscapes only available in my memories. I know how important it is for Ama to stay in this town where he grew up and worked in order to keep living in a sentiment of home. However, at the same time, I understand how distressing it is that some pieces of landscapes are changing and no longer

accessible to him...



A quiet pier at the harbor (Photo taken by Ama)

“That was the happiest moment in my life when I was living with my family and doing いかだ (ikada)”, Ama said. He told me that he was the happiest in his forties when both of his parents were alive and healthy and when he engaged in his favorite lumber job at the harbor. Showing me a pictures of the harbor, he continued talking:

Now, almost nothing remains here at the harbor. Most piers were landfilled already or transformed into a family fishing place. There were many freighters at the train stations which are now removed to build parks and apartments. Also, there were a number of sawmills and storehouses at the harbor, but they were also gone or renovated into factories or shopping malls. This warehouse on the right side of the photo only remains the same from the old good days. The lumber pond in another

photo used to be covered with many bunches of lumber, but now it became an anchorage for personal sailboats. I'm very surprised and sad to see these changes in the sceneries... It's so scary to look back on the memories...



Empty lumber pond (Photo taken by Ama)

Whenever he recalled the golden age of the harbor, it was as if he was actually seeing these sceneries in front of his eyes. Also, whenever he explained to me how these sceneries have been changed, it was as if he was left behind in the temporal and emotional hollow. The lone shadow projected in the photos that he took may symbolize the separation of his body and soul between the silent and the busy harbor, or may embody a reunion between his past and current life. Through his mind's eye, he was still vividly looking at the vigorous harbor which he had lived in for forty years. Transition of time and inevitable conversions of his cherished landscapes were by no means distressing to him. Ama said that he had not been to the harbor for a long time

since he lost his lumber work, but because I gave him an instant camera, he decided to walk through these sceneries again. Listening to him saying “*The remnants of the past are all gone. It’s such an empty feeling to see these sceneries...it is just so sad*” もう昔の面影が全然なしでね。もうわびしいですよ。さびしい, I imagined his emotional pain of losing the familiar landscapes. I deeply appreciate him for taking the courage to revisit the harbor and encounter the transitions the time brought. I am also thankful for his kindness to show me both the sceneries of past and present which became visible through his stories.

Time is always a medium for either desirable or undesirable changes. After the post-war period, the booming construction industry had declined and the lumber was not imported frequently from the harbor. Also, due to geographical reasons, the harbor in this town became less suitable for anchoring huge cargo steamers. After Ama’s father died, his older brother took over his lumber business. However, his older brother attempted to shift the business from the declining lumber business to a more solid transportation business. Contrary to Ama’s strong desire to respect his father’s legacy by maintaining his lumber business, his older brother started to disregard the orders related to the lumber and, instead, threw more energy to attract transportation-related orders. Because of this conflict with his older brother, Ama had eventually become isolated in the family. As his older brother’s family increasingly took dominance over this whole family business, Ama had to back down and worked as a driver for moving services and other deliveries across Japan. Yet, Ama had been secretly hoping to revitalize and return to the lumber business someday, but this turned out to be an unfulfilled dream. Eventually, Ama was given limited job opportunities from his older brother and completely lost his job just before he turned sixty years of age. Soon after Ama noticed that his older brother took away a car which

his father used to carry the lumber and had particularly given to Ama, he realized that he was excluded from his family network altogether.

Making *いかだ* (*ikada*) at the harbor was absolutely one of the brilliant moments in his life, to which he had devoted all of his efforts, care, and passion for forty years. In addition to his despair of his brother's decision of abandoning the lumber business, he was excluded from the family business and lost the car which was an important remembrance of his father. All of these disheartening events took place in a short period of time. How much pain and struggles were loaded on his shoulder all of sudden? Being disconnected from the lumber work and excluded from the family business were like losing places of homecoming and a treasured bond with his respected father. It is almost like his body was forcefully detached from an important thread which was deeply interwoven in his understanding of life and identity. Ama said, "*When I lost my job and my important car, my life started getting off track*". Before he turned sixty years old, he was unable to see where his life was taking him in the future.

I cannot find a word which could possibly express the sorrow, pain, and frustration that you might have felt during this period. How did you feel when you found out you are about to be cut off from the family business and the family network?

That must be an extremely scary feeling to see something important is falling out of your reach...

Falling off Pieces of Life

Dear Ama-san,

As soon as we started our second meeting, you told me, "*I have something to do next month, so I cannot make it to this meeting anymore. I have told you everything*". もう来月は用事が

出来て来れません。もう全て話しましたから。I was very sad because I could tell from your voice and gesture that you were firmly determined to quit our conversations. Is it related to your emotional burden that you have to look back on your difficult past, especially around these painful chaotic moments of being detached from your lumber work and family? Or is this meeting itself a physical restriction for you by taking up your time and energy in your current life? I am sorry if I made you re-experience distressing emotions through our conversations. I am sorry if I took up your important time for sleeping, collecting cans, and doing other things.

Although I feel sad that you plan to end our conversations, I understand you; I imagined if I were in your situation, I might have done the same. It requires a big commitment to build and engage in a relationship, which at times creates a tension that drives oneself to re-design one's life according to that relationship. Our relationship might not have been anticipated if I were not here as a researcher who intended a series of conversations. As the beginning of our relational space was initiated with an intention, I guess it is no wonder that there is a huge tension which needs to be actively negotiated until we started to build a relationship. Our differences in gender and age might also make this tension more complicated and perplexing; there was little readily accessible common ground between us. I sensed that we are both living in and perplexed by our shared tensions. Indeed, I do not want to force you to share stories if it is too difficult for you to tell and live in our relationship. Yet, I truly wish our relational space would continue to endure and unfold between us through these tensions. I appreciate that you have taken me to your journey so far and opened up our relationship. I hope you would come back into our relational space again. I started our second conversation while puzzling over the complexities of co-composing a relational inquiry.

In closing our second conversation, you asked me if I had an extra cup. I went into the kitchen to get a paper cup for you. Then, you poured a half of coffee which I brought for you and shared it with me. I was very touched by your kindness. While we were drinking coffee and having trivial chats, you looked slightly different to me. You, whom I saw without a recorder and questions in my head, looked much more friendly and closer than you, whom I saw during our recorded conversation. In return, I realized how much I was caught in ideas which distracted me from fully engaging in our relational space and composing my life alongside you. While drinking coffee, I came to realize that I might have attended to this relational space with my intentions as a researcher and that you might have tried so hard to respond to my intentions by giving me the ‘information’ about your life experiences, rather than ‘stories’. In my understanding, information is different from a story, in that information is likely to shape a one-sided form of communication which would be depleted when all information is shared. On the other hand, a story pays more attention to emotions and impressions through which it communicates in relational ways and stories will endlessly evolve. I wonder what kind of conversation would invite a communication through stories, rather than an exchange of information. I tried to imagine who I am in your eyes and in our relational space, but this identity of mine may only be visible in your eyes and never becomes clear to my eyes. When we finished the coffee, you said *“I cannot meet next week, but a week after might work for me to meet”*. We always negotiate how we establish and dwell in our relational space together, while also negotiating who each of us is and who each of us is becoming at the intersection of our respective lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). While finding a balance, we seek to make sense of our relational space to incorporate into our own ongoing lives. I hope that eventually we create a relational space where we comfortably engage in telling and listening to stories and where we live alongside each other

in ethical ways. Thank you so much, Ama-san, for continuing with building our relational space together and choosing to live within our relationship alongside your life.

With much gratitude,

Hiroko



Broken pillar under a highway (Photo taken by Ama)

もう生活が360度変わって。絶望でしたね。もう...もう、このまま死んでしまいたかったね。

“My life was completely changed. I was in despair and wished to die at that moment”.

Shortly after he was fired from his family business, a big earthquake hit the town. It was a 7.0 magnitude earthquake which killed more than 6,500 people and injured over 40,000 people in the town. It was one of the historic natural disasters in Japan which caused a huge casualty and damage. Because of this earthquake, Ama’s apartment was severely broken down and he and his elderly mother had to escape from the apartment. After they took a refuge in a temporary shelter,

they were assigned a small cabin which the government built as a temporary housing unit until people moved into stable housing. Due to the serious damages from the earthquake, Ama could not take anything from his apartment and lost all of his belongings and memory items. As a result of the acute stress, his elderly mother became ill and passed away at a hospital several months after the earthquake. Following the series of tragedies of losing his lumber work, his employment and income, and his father's car, Ama lost all of his belongings including his apartment where he had lived for many years and his caring mother who played a key role in sustaining Ama's life. Ama said, "*My life was completely changed. I was in despair and wished to die at that moment*" もう生活が 360 度変わって。絶望でしたね。もう...もう、このまま死んでしまいたかったね。In his heavy voice, I felt deep helplessness. Ama took a photo of a big overhead highway which fell down because of the earthquake. After twenty years, a part of pillar is still preserved as a remembrance of the disasters caused by the earthquake.

Looking at the disconnected joints and shaved surface of the pillar in the photo, I pictured your damaged heart which is still retained in your memory like this pillar. "*I will never be able to forget that moment. It was too painful for me*" あの当時、忘れられへんね。苦しかった、かなり。... These moments of loss are like unresolved fragments lingering in your mind and reminding you of a scar in your memory. I wonder if telling these experiences intensifies the pain of your scar. How is your pain interpreted in your present life? Do you recall this pain in reminiscence? Or are you still suffering from it as an unsettled and ongoing pain?

After his mother died, Ama was referred to an apartment with a low-priced rent which the government prepared and subsidized for people who lost their housing in the earthquake. However, shortly after he started living in an apartment alone, he had to leave there due to

arrears in rent. When Ama left the apartment, he became homeless for the first time without any resources and relationships supporting his life. After becoming homeless, he tried very hard to find a job, but he was not successful. In Japan, when people are over the age of sixty, it becomes extremely difficult to find stable employment. Ama said, *“Many employers prefer young workforces, so it was very challenging for me to win a job against younger applicants. I was completely excluded from the circle.”* Ama also went to the employment service center for elderly people, called “silver human resource center”, located in every municipality across Japan, which provides working opportunities for older people who have retired. However, he was required to bring a resident registration as a proof of his current address. As he lost his apartment, he could not obtain a resident registration from his municipal government. Also, he learned that job opportunities are not as frequent as he expected and the payment is usually made a month later, which did not meet his urgent financial needs. Losing hope for making money by himself, Ama was completely at a loss and lived in confusion. Although he was desperate to find a job, a job was not available for him. Trying to survive, he had to scavenge a garbage bag for food, which, he said, made him terribly miserable and weak.

Ama told me that, after a while, he finally went to the government office to ask for help from the welfare program. However, after being asked several questions, he was rejected to obtain welfare supports; *“They said that I should ask my siblings for support”*. After losing his parents, he lost contact with his siblings. He was given a pre-paid cellphone from his younger sister, but it was only for receiving her calls which seldom rang. He said, *“I didn’t want to bother my sister anyways”*. Left alone without any means and resources, Ama lost control over his own life. Imagining his situation, it must have been an intensely scary experience just to watch one’s own pieces of life falling down one by one without being able to do anything.

Alongside the complex issues laid at the larger political and social levels, his life slowly started changing. Desperately clinging to the edge, he was shouting for help, but no one was giving their hands to help him. The only way out from this spiral for Ama was upholding his resistance and independence - which was to survive on streets.

What is the experience of clinging to what seemed to be an edge? It must have been a huge heartbreaking decision to let your hand off the edge, especially after you attempted so hard to save yourself. I truly respect your strength and suffering that were storied in that moment.

As Ama had been spending more time on the streets, he learned many survival skills from peers. First, he obtained the information about when and where he could obtain a meal at soup kitchens operated across town. He found out that there were four to five meal services in this town, offered by various non-profit organizations. Secondly, he learned from peers that he could get help from one supporting group with an application for the welfare services. After a few years of being homeless, Ama was exhausted from his harsh life on the streets without money. So, he went to that supporting group to ask for assistance to apply for welfare supports. With their assistance, Ama successfully obtained an apartment and financial support from the welfare program. Ama told me, *“People at the welfare office didn’t help me when I was alone, but they helped me when an organization was behind me. The power of organizations is way stronger than I thought.”* 引きあってくれませんか、個人で行っても。やっぱり組織には物を言いますね。

When people become homeless, they are likely to be alone and excluded from supporting networks and resources. Yet, I learned from Ama’s stories that when people are alone in their most vulnerable situations, the necessary supports are not accessible to them. I remember the news in Japan that a mother and a daughter who had been rejected to receive welfare supports

were found dead due to starvation a few years later. Regardless of unique life situations and special needs of each individual, people who meet the criteria of the welfare program would be eligible for welfare supports. Also, the voice of individuals who are in desperate need of help tend to be tenuous. Unless their needs are defined as ‘urgent life-threatening needs’ which requires immediate actions, their voices are not paid close attention. I begin to wonder if there is a hidden selection process in society in regard to who will be willingly heard, who will be visible in favor, and who will be supported among people who are living in various precarious situations. If Ama had not asked for help from a supporting group, he would have never been able to obtain an apartment and financial support from the public assistance program. His voice would have probably not been heard if he was struggling alone. Living alone in society becomes complicated without money, a job, a family, or other support networks, which ultimately undermines the quality of life and even threatens the basic physical survival. However, after three years, Ama left his apartment. Making an annoyed face, he said in an unusually angry tone:

A welfare staff visited my apartment and checked my room once in a few weeks. I was annoyed by their visits. As my apartment was regularly checked by a staff, I felt obliged to clean up my apartment, do laundry, and hang out my futon outside for sterilizing under the sunshine. All of these housekeeping chores were really troublesome to me. And I felt bored to stay in the apartment alone. So, I had been getting tired of that life and thought it was much better to live without an apartment. I don't like to be restricted by others.

あのー訪問に来たりね、部屋を見に来たりね。それが嫌で。あと掃除が大義で。それで二日に1回とか布団を干さんとあかんでしょ。それを取り入れるのに縛られるし。もうそれで、家にじーっと退屈で。そのアパートとかね、おらんほうがいいです。もう縛られるのが嫌でね。

Because of his perceived burden that his life was under regular inspection and he had to maintain his apartment daily, he made a decision to leave the apartment. Perhaps, this apartment was not a 'home' for Ama when he experienced his life under the surveillance and a control of others. He did not want to give up his freedom and independence in life. It seems losing his autonomy no longer means a life for Ama. There was a conflict between a 'life' which he envisioned to sustain and a 'home' which was offered to him by welfare. He had chosen his 'life' over a 'home'. Living on a street provided more sense of life to him, rather than living in an apartment alone. Although leaving the apartment also meant that he was no longer able to obtain a monthly financial support from the public assistance program, he returned to the streets- this time, with a positive decision of becoming homeless. From that moment, his attitude toward homelessness has gradually been shifting from the passive consequence to the active choosing.

Having lived in this town, you can easily see how the landscape of this town is changing.

Similarly, whenever I go back to Japan, I am always surprised to see how the landscape has been transformed in my hometown. While the familiar landscape is shifting, my vision is also shifting; having lived in Canada for nine years, what used to be familiar in Japan is no longer familiar to me. How is your vision shifting? When you chose to become homeless, how did you see your familiar landscapes? What new landscapes have you found in familiar views? What impressions and meanings did those new landscapes give to you?

In the second time of becoming homeless, Ama learned from his peers how to make money while living on the streets. From peers, he discovered that he could make money by collecting aluminum cans and bringing them to a recycling center. Without knowing how to effectively collect cans, he started going through each vending machine and garbage box, which

did not produce enough money. In addition, he began to worry about his health conditions which had been affected by his prolonged life on streets. Being concerned about his health situations, he decided to return to an apartment again. He asked the same supporting group for assistance and he was given an apartment and a monthly financial support again from the welfare program.

However, he made a decision to leave the apartment again. While he was living in his apartment and receiving a monthly financial support, Ama continued to collect aluminum cans to earn some extra money about 30,000 yen (about 300 dollars) a month. Yet, the government officials investigated his work and deducted the amount of his income from his monthly financial support. Even if he worked hard to make some money, his effort was not rewarded as a form of an extra income. Ama said he wished to manage his life by making money by himself, but because of the unavailability of work opportunities, he had to depend on the welfare program. Once he received the welfare support, any attempts to work and make extra money was not considered to be acceptable. Recognizing the futility of his efforts of collecting aluminum cans, he made a decision, *“I will concentrate on collecting cans and maintaining my life all by myself”* もう缶一本に絞るわと思って。

Ama became homeless again after having lived in an apartment twice. Rather than relying on the public assistance program, he has chosen to become homeless and live on his own. Through his life on street, Ama had found a new passion for life, which might project his earlier life experiences when he was diligently working at the harbor by making *ikada*. He frequently described himself as a single-minded and stubborn person which, he said, he had inherited from his grandfather and father. Once he made his decision of becoming homeless, he was firmly determined to spend all of his time, energy, and enthusiasm toward the new job of collecting aluminum cans, which importantly helped preserve a sense of control over his life. This strong

determination might be implanted as an intergenerational story in Ama. His motivation for work was lived through the moments when he was working at the harbor since he was sixteen. However difficult the life of being homeless would turn out to be, he made a decision to become homeless, as he realized this was the only way he could maintain his independence, freedom, and autonomy in building and sustaining his own life and his stories of life.



A place where Ama collects aluminum cans (Photo taken by Ama)

もう缶一本に絞るわと思って。

“I will concentrate on collecting cans and making my life by myself.”

Collecting Cans for the Survival on Streets



Pile of aluminum cans which Ama collected (Photo taken by Ama)

もうそやから、アルミ缶パツと見たら、「あ、お金が落ちとう！」って思っって。

“So, whenever I see aluminum cans in a garbage bag, I immediately think ‘Yay I found money!’”

Amidst a long journey of seeking a new place to belong and settle down, he arrived at a new stage of his life: living as a homeless and collecting aluminum cans for his life. Ama has been collecting aluminum cans for about ten years in this town. Collecting cans signifies not only essential part of his life through which he perceives a sense of control and independence, but also an important full-time job which pays him according to his efforts and outcomes. His comment of *“The more I collect cans, the more I can make money”* あれはすればする程お金になるから might mean more than the meanings expressed in words. I felt a sense of achievement in his words. With his age of seventy-five and living outside the social support networks, this job is the last resort to ensure his survival on the streets and an important means to sustain his stories to live

by. Every day, Ama wakes up early in the morning and looks for aluminum cans using his bicycle. Wednesday is the trash collection day when people bring garbage bags to the garbage stations, so Wednesday is the busiest day for Ama. He goes through every garbage station across the city to find garbage bags, select aluminum cans among other garbage, and organize them into plastic bags. He runs his bicycle more than 80 kilometers from dawn to dusk to collect aluminum cans. As this town has many steep hills surrounded by the mountains, it must not be easy for him to ride a bicycle, stop at every garbage station, and carry heavy bags of aluminum cans.

In this photo, there were almost 20 kilograms of cans. I bundle all of them together with a string so that I put them on my bicycle. With this amount, I could get 2000 yen (approximately 20 dollars). But it was a good day. On average, I collect around 10 kilograms which is equivalent to less than 1000 yen (approximately 10 dollars)³. It is always a big competition with 同業者 dogyousha⁴ and the garbage trucks. I regret so much if garbage bags are already taken away when I get there. So, whenever I see aluminum cans in a garbage bag, I immediately think ‘I found money!’

While looking at your fingers dancing on the edge of a table, I noticed your voice got excited when you were talking about your work of collecting cans, just like when you were talking about your lumber work at the harbor. Looking at your neatly-organized bags of cans in a photo, I feel how much you are proud of this job and how important this job is for you in many ways. I was also affirmed through your work of collecting cans about how diligently you had worked at the harbor.

³ The average cost of living in Japan is about 20 dollars. For example, the average bento box costs around 5 dollars in Japan.

⁴ 同業者 dogyousha means ‘people in the same business’ in Japanese.

Although he confronted a barrier to stay connected to the mainstream society through family supports, employment, or welfare services, Ama has discovered his own way of staying connected to the world shaped and shared with others, through a channel of his self-established job. He told me that he is careful not to mess up the garbage stations after he took aluminum cans, because he does not give neighbors negative impressions about his life. Collecting cans is an important means of making money, yet at the same time, it might be an important medium for him to remain visible to others and also to make others visible to him. Ama enjoys his work of collecting cans from which he makes money with his own hands, and efforts, though it is definitely never easy for him.

With less than 1000 yen (about 10 dollars) for a day which he earns from collecting cans, he precisely and carefully manages his daily routines. With his daily income, he eats breakfast at McDonalds in the morning, buys a beef rice bowl in the evening, and goes to the public bath house to take a shower. He even tries to save a small amount of money in case of emergency. However, the income is constantly unstable and unpredictable. When he cannot carry all the garbage bags on his bicycle, he hides some of the bags full of aluminum cans behind the bush. Yet, Ama feels resentful and sad when he found these bags were stolen. Even sometimes, a peer who kindly offered to watch the bags for him stole them and made money out of them. As his income is not always guaranteed, Ama always verges on constant physical and emotional fatigue.

Additionally, Ama complained that the cashing rate for aluminum has dropped these days, so he had to work even harder to make ends meet. Also, the city government has recently banned anyone to collect recyclable wastes from garbage stations with the fine less than 200,000 yen (approximately 2,000 dollars), which largely threatens his life. Yet, he somehow found a

way to slip through this ordinance as some people kindly turned a blind eye to him. In convinced tone, Ama said, *“This is a matter of life or death. I cannot simply give up my life because of these regulations”*. Ama was deeply committed to his job, but various factors disturbed his job which directly affected his daily income and, more importantly, his health and well-beings. Like he used to work at the harbor day in and day out, he never takes a day off from collecting cans. In such way, his storied landscape at the harbor might have continuously been sustained and lived in him in a different way. Ama said that he is no longer disturbed by people’s gazes anymore, otherwise he cannot sustain his life on the streets. From his gentle tone of saying *“Let them think whatever they want”*, I imagined both a turmoil that he might had gone through and a persistence that he had patiently acquired in order to secure a peace in his mind. Now, Ama is very proud of his work of collecting aluminum cans and the fact that he does not rely on anyone for supports. Ama strongly wishes that he continues to collect aluminum cans and make money as long as possible in order to build and design his life at his own will.

Negotiating a Place in the Public



A sheet of cardboard on which Ama sleeps everyday (Photo taken by Ama)

死活問題や！

“It’s a matter of life or death!”

I usually sleep alone unless somebody comes to sleep next to me. Sometimes, I wake up to find a stranger sleeping next to me. But I prefer to be alone. I used to hang out with peers on the streets, but I quit socializing with them. Being in a community on the streets can sometimes be troubling that requires many complex tactics. It’s much better to be alone. As you can see in the photo, I sleep on the ground...(silence)...like an animal. I never be able to sleep well. I wake up every twenty or thirty minutes during a night. As it’s getting warm here, there are increasing number of bugs making annoying sounds around me.

I lost my words when you said “...like an animal” and it still echoes in my mind. I can vividly

recall your voice and face when you said this; your voice and face encompassed an indication of humiliation and discomfort, though you seemed to mask them with calmness. I was not sure how to respond to you in relational ways amidst my confusion. It must be so difficult for you to express your situation as *'like an animal'*...

Having lost his own private space that is often established by a visible boundary given by a roof and walls, Ama has to constantly negotiate his private space within the public space. His occupied space on the street is never going to be his own place guaranteed by security and privacy, as long as he stays in the public. I try to imagine a life where there is no visible boundary between one's private place and the public space. It must be a very uncomfortable, stressful, and unsafe experience to always be seen by others. Ama told me while he was sleeping on a street, a stranger tapped his shoulder and began to talk to Ama. When he quickly woke up with being surprised and scared, the stranger begged him for money. Sleeping at the edge of the public space makes Ama vulnerable to the countless impacts and dangers which could have been prevented within the boundary of the private space. While being in the public space, it is difficult to have control over an environment, as the space is always shared with others and collective decisions are respected in the public. When being attached with the stigma and shame toward homelessness shaped by society, sleeping outside gets more complicated and is linked to a target of intolerance or elimination. After becoming homeless, Ama has continuously been negotiating his private space within the public space, where he could reside and sleep at least temporarily. However, it seems an extremely challenging process. Recurrently, he was unwelcomed in the public space, fighting for his place, and managed to borrow a small place in the public to dwell his life and body.

Being unwelcomed in the public. After becoming homeless, he has been striving hard to find a safe place for living, especially a place for sleeping. When Ama just became homeless and fell asleep on a bench at a park, someone threw a firecracker at him while he was sleeping. He had to keep walking every day until he found a safe place for sleep. Yet, Ama disclosed, wherever he settled, people randomly threw cans or plastic bottles at him or shouted at him “You are the obstruction of the view” 目障りや or “You use our taxes which we worked to pay” ただで税金をもらってええな。わしら仕事してるんやで。 So, he had to build up an enclosure with a cardboard to make himself invisible from the public eyes. One day when he found refuge in front of a closed store at midnight, somebody came and kicked him out by saying this place was the property of the store. When he once set up a temporary tent for sleep close to the city hall, the city officials found the tent and told him to move immediately. Nowhere is guaranteed as a safe place for fall asleep. It seems there are many invisible boundaries even within the public space where not everyone is allowed to share. Reflecting on his daily struggles within unwelcoming public places, Ama expressed his frustration and distress by saying:

I always feel I'm despised by others just because I am homeless, but I have already given up to fight with these stigmas because these people would never understand how I live. Even a city official demanded me to get a job, but no matter how hard I try, it is no longer possible for me to find a job with my age.

For me, your comments sounded like feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness. For you, these feelings might be more painful and perturbing than being homeless and living on streets. You said you find no safe physical places of belonging on the streets, but even inside your heart, you may also be distressed to find a place of belonging - a

secured feeling which allows you to remain and feel respected as who you are. I imagined your heart; while your body is wandering the streets to find a place for sleep, your heart is also wandering to rest within your mind. Ama-san, even when you feel you are displaced from a safe place for sleep, please do not feel uprooted from who you are, in which your life is always storied in a continuum with your beloved people and landscapes.

Ama said he is always afraid if anything happens to him during his sleep. Sleeping outside is both a physically and mentally draining experience for Ama. Ama is suffering from a chronic lack of a quality sleep after becoming homeless. Nothing is guaranteed in the life of being homeless. In the summer, Ama sleeps on a sheet of cardboard on a street, using his bicycle as a protecting wall from various possible dangers. However, it is more challenging for Ama to sleep in the winter. When it is extremely cold in winter, he finds it hard to sleep outside. There is a temporary shelter in the town where he can take refuge from the coldness of winter. Yet, Ama did not like to sleep in a shelter because he said the blanket has many bedbugs. Instead of going to a shelter, he goes to McDonalds which is open 24 hours. However, if he falls a sleep there, a staff comes and wakes him up, telling him that if he sleeps again, he has to leave the store immediately. Ama said sorry to a staff and tried hard not to sleep despite his fatigue coming from a lack of sleep. Sleeping in the public space is not welcomed. In exchange for securing a warm place for a night in a café or a restaurant, he was not allowed to sleep even after a long day of collecting cans.

Other than the difficulty of finding a place to sleep, his belongings are often stolen by others. Among his belongings, a blanket is the most frequently stolen item because he cannot carry a blanket on his bicycle during the daytime. Often, he has to sleep outside without a blanket in a freezing winter night. He further revealed that he found it extremely difficult to sleep

outside when he caught a flu. I wonder how these uncertainties and difficulties affect his understandings of life; without a safe place and a blanket for sleep, how does he make sense of his coherence of life? Whether he is awake or sleeping, hostile eyes are penetrating his body by telling him that he was not welcomed in the public space. In such way, his sleep and health and well-being are forcefully infringed by strangers. What is more, whenever he heard the news about random murders or other terrible incidents involving people who are homeless in Japan, Ama feels tremendously horrified to sleep outside, but he said he has no choice while constantly and carefully negotiating a place for sleep in the unwelcoming public space.

Fighting for a place in the public. In the face of the cold unwelcomeness in the public space, Ama still needs to find a place for sleep. Ama said he used to be a quiet and shy person, but his personality has changed after becoming homeless; he said, *“I changed to a more aggressive and assertive person because I am the only one who can protect my life after my parent died”*. One day, Ama once attempted to sleep in front of a train station after the final train was gone, but a security guard came and told him that it is their property. After entreating to a security guard, Ama resisted him by shouting *“I only sleep here and never block your way. I will leave here before the first train. You should just let me sleep here! Please don’t be so unkind!”* However, a security guard gave him a final warning if he did not move immediately, he would call a police. Ama hopelessly had to leave the space to find another place for sleep. He has been searching for a place – a place where he can take at least a short good night sleep. Despite a painful feeling of being unwelcomed, he daringly continues fighting for a place to sleep, but his fighting was recurrently pushed back.

After a long rough search for a sleeping place, he finally found a place for sleep about five years ago in front of an old shopping mall called the Park Mall. Yet, it too was not a smooth

process for him to settle down in this current place. Ama frequently had to fight with a security guard at the Park Mall who, whenever he found Ama, tried to kick him out. Through the countless arguments with a security guard at the Park Mall, Ama desperately shouted “*It is a matter of life or death! Let me sleep here!!!*” After many fights, Ama had somehow found a way to stay there over night; he sneaked in front of the Park Mall after it was closed and whenever he found a security guard coming, he took his belongings away and hid until a security guard left. Ama has to wake up and leave there before the cleaning company arrives at the Park Mall in the early morning. Sometimes, other people came to sleep at the same spot and Ama was involved in their fights, which ended up he had to call a police to settle down. He repeatedly had to fight with people in order to secure a place and a peace for sleep. He took a photo of his current sleeping place at the Park Mall. In the photo, this liminal space covered by two sheets of cardboards is the place he borrows for a moment. After the long tumultuous and unfriendly fighting on the streets, he finally won his private space which quietly and temporarily appeared at the edge of the public space.

When you said “*It’s a matter of life or death!*”, it struck my heart. I was trying to understand a complex web of power which attempts to infuse a certain set of judgements and values into our unconscious thinking. I wondered what makes a priority; is it people’s life, an authority for property, or a security/cleanness of landscape? I sometimes heard the news that self-made tents built by people who are homeless in Japan were removed by the government in order to protect the townscape. When I walked on an underground passage in a subway station in Japan, I see many strange bumps alongside the edge of the passage. At such moments, I stopped and ruminated over my wonders; whose life is important and whose life is not, and how a life is understood and situated in society. Have we ever thought about people who are not allowed to rest? Ama-san, I sensed how desperate you were trying to find a place for sleep and how brave you were to stand up and speak out for your life amidst inhospitableness. Your life is the most important.

Borrowing a place in the public. Ama finally obtained a place for sleep in the entrance of the Park Mall, yet he always has to sneak in and borrow a place to obtain a temporary place for sleep. Ama said:

I once overslept after 6 am. Then, a security guard came. Yelling at me “You should not sleep here!”, he kicked the cardboard on which I was sleeping. But it was my fault...that I slept in, so I quickly closed the cardboard and left there in a hurry.

そこで一回寝過ごしてね。6時過ぎまで寝とったら、ガードマンが来てね。「ここで寝たらあかん」言うて、ボンッって段ボールを蹴られて。でもこっちが悪いから、寝過ごしてるから。急いで畳んで出たんやけどね。

Ama does not have a place of his own. Even with his desperate need to sleep, he felt sorry to occupy other's place. He momentarily borrows a place to sleep in the public space which is likely to be exposed to unfriendly public eyes and judgements. Sleeping outside is always accompanied with dangers, discomfort, and uneasiness. Yet, Ama said he eventually has felt much more comfortable to sleep in front of the Park Mall, as he got acquainted with an old lady there who saves some aluminum cans for him. Also, coming to know him better, a security guard at the Park Mall no longer attempts to drive him away. Although Ama feels stressful to have no secure place to settle down, he does not want to return to an apartment. This transitory place was a vital place where Ama wins and finds to sleep after his long fighting.

Sleeping is the most necessary and vulnerable moment for any living being. What meaning does it enclose that Ama has to sleep in the public space without any guarantees for safety, comfort, and privacy? What impacts does it have to Ama's life and health to continuously be situated on the borderline between private and public spaces? I wrote a poem in an attempt to live alongside his storied landscapes and inquire into my thoughts brought forth by his life.

He was told to leave

Who told him?

Even if he wants to leave, he cannot

Whose power?

His independence, freedom, minimized

Whose life?

The only way left is to become homeless

Is it what he wanted?

Losing a private space

Moving into a temporal space

Where private place, public place meet briefly

Who defines the place?

Unwelcomed, fight, and borrow a space for sleep

In the morning,

The trace of his life is dissolved like a wave washes a beach

Did I see the wave?

Who will remember the cardboard?

Who will touch the scar?

His life is calling

Who will feel for his desperate shout?

Is this a temporal life or a life in-between placed in oblivion?

*His life hold the weight
of stories.*

Holding Unexamined Health Concerns



In front of the Park Mall (Photo taken by Ama)

もう病院行っても悪いって言われるの分かってるからね。

*“I know everywhere in my body is getting worse,
so I don’t want to hear that my body is becoming weak and ill...”*

Turning to 75 years of age, aging has become a critical concern for Ama. In addition to his older age, due to the hard work of collecting cans and the harsh sleeping conditions, Ama suffers from chronic fatigue and a lack of sleep which significantly diminishes his subjective health status. Frequently disclosing his serious health concerns in our conversations, he told:

When I ride my bicycle on a steep uphill, I sometimes have a chest pain and difficulty in breath. So, I have to stop for a while, lean on my bicycle, and take a deep breath until these symptoms are gone. I think I have some serious issues with my heart and lungs.

He thinks that his health condition has constantly been diminishing since becoming homeless. As the Park Mall is located next to the big highway, he is worried if he inhales a lot of exhaust gas while he is sleeping. Also, as he often takes a break in a lounge room at a *pachinko*⁵, he said he always had to inhale the smoke of cigarettes there, even though he does not smoke. Saying, “*I am afraid of pneumonia which I know is the most popular disease among elderly people*”, Ama believes that his lungs are particularly affected by all of these toxic gases coupled with his age and a life style of sleeping outside. Although he makes efforts to buy a salad or a vegetable juice to “*enhance the immune system*”, Ama is seriously troubled by his perceptions that his health condition is getting extremely poor, which gives him anxious prospects for his future. When he sadly expressed, “*I don’t think I can live more than 10 years...*”, his distress toward his health conditions became more distinct to me. His recognition of his declining health has become a huge threat for Ama, which may potentially rupture the coherence of life that he worked hard to rebuild after becoming homeless.

Whenever he feels sick, he goes to a drug store to purchase over-the-counter medicine out of his pocket which he saved from his daily income. Ama said, “*My little savings were always taken by the medicine, but I don’t want to see a doctor, which would cost me much more money.*” He attempts to ease his symptoms by taking general cold-relief medications or digestive medicines on his own judgement. Yet, the anxiety underlying his health concerns would never be alleviated by managing his symptoms temporarily. Ama is deeply concerned about leaving his health conditions unexamined. However, he also knew he has avoided visiting a clinic. He does not want to pay expensive fees since he does not enroll in the national health insurance plan. The reason of his hesitation is also not simply about the cost, accompanying to visiting a clinic.

⁵ *Pachinko* means a gambling pinball parlor in Japanese.

Ama strongly desires to continue his life of being homeless because this is the life he has chosen and established through various pains and struggles. He is afraid if his current life will have to be changed due to his declining health conditions. For Ama, going to see a doctor is almost equal to putting an end to his life on the streets. Ama continued:

I know everywhere in my body is getting worse, so I don't want to hear that my body is becoming weak and ill. Above all, I am quite sure if I go to a clinic, a doctor will tell me that I have to be hospitalized because of my poor health conditions. I am afraid that if I am hospitalized at this age, it would be the end of my life.

Even if he has to buy an expensive box of cold medication for more than 1500 yen (approximately 15 dollars), it is worth for him as long as he can continue his life on the streets. Ama sometimes buys an energy drink which costs almost three dollars, which is a big spending considering that he lives on 10 dollars a day. Yet, by drinking an energy drink, he tries to distract himself from the fear and anxiety of his declining health conditions.

Another reason he avoids visiting a clinic comes from a deep suspicion toward medical treatments. His mistrust towards health care intensifies as he carefully pays attention to the news related to medical incidents. He said:

I am particularly afraid of a surgery. I heard many bad news about surgery such as doctor's failures, medical errors, or infection after surgery. I'm so fearful to hear from a doctor that I need a surgery. Also, I heard that the prescribed medications are much stronger than the over-the-counter medicines, so I am also scared of its side effects...

Whenever he heard from the media or from his peers about terrible experiences of surgery, his anxiety for visiting a clinic and distrust for health care were exacerbated.

He told me that in the past, he called the ambulance a few times. First, when his cough was too consistent and severe, he had no other choice but to call the ambulance. In a hospital, his coughing was settled down with an intravenous drip. They also took his blood for testing and he was told by a physician that he should come back for the result the next day. However, since he was very fearful to know about his blood test result, he did not go back to the hospital. Later, he called the ambulance again with a strong cough. At that time, he was told to stay in a hospital to go through the basic health examinations. However, he firmly resisted these examinations and he was finally allowed to leave the hospital after he signed an oath that he will never blame the hospital for his health conditions. In the third time he called the ambulance, he was told, “Oh, it’s you again. You should take a taxi.”, though at the end, he was taken to the hospital for treatment. These experiences with the emergency also made him reluctant to visit a clinic and call the ambulance again, which may disconnect Ama from possible health care supports. In addition, going to a hospital also means that he is going to be connected with the welfare services again. He thought being referred to the welfare services means he has to return to a life in an apartment. Since Ama wishes to continue living on the streets, he tries to repress his health concerns with retail medicines and energy drinks, until his health conditions get out of his control.

However, he is living in ambivalence. He said:

At the same time, I know that I need to see a doctor as soon as possible until it is too late.

If there is an effective treatment to my condition, I want to go to a hospital immediately.

But if it is not perfectly cured, it’s much better to cope with the conditions by myself.

Actually, I do not have a courage to take a step forward. 踏み切れませんわ。

Taking a step forward might mean giving up his freedom and independence which he has recurrently built and defended desperately throughout his life. It must be a difficult decision as maintaining his freedom and independence was exactly the reason why he gave up an apartment and chose to become homeless. When he asked me, “*How much money will it cost if I obtain a medical treatment at a clinic?*” or “*Can I get a treatment without being referred to the welfare services?*”, I could see his anxiety is underpinned by many uncertainties and ambivalence. Ama is standing on a verge of a conflict between his concerns for unexamined health conditions and his strong desire to remain in his current life on the streets. I wish I could give him more helpful advices and support him in practical ways.

Amidst his confusions, he also desires to return to an apartment at the end of his life. Saying “*I want to die on たたみ tatami⁶ when the time comes. I mean...I don't want to die on streets*” でも死ぬときはやっぱり畳の上で死にたいですね。あの...路上で死にたくないです。 , Ama hesitantly laughed and quickly added “*Well, I know I am a very selfish person*”. He always carries a pre-paid cellphone which is not charged to make a phone call. Ama said, “*I'm waiting for my sister's call, but I guess she is busy, but when I die, I want my sister to come see me*”. For Ama, his sister is an important connection to his family. He said that he never told his sister that he is homeless, but he has a hope to meet his sister again before his life ends. Feeling his aging body, he vaguely envisions the end of his life while keeping a balance between his uncertainties and hope.

When you said “*I'm going to be a 無縁仏 muen-botoke⁷...*”, your voice left me a deep sense of loneliness. Whenever I visit my grandmother, I go to the graveyard to visit the grave of my ancestors to

⁶ たたみ (*tatami*) means a mat made of tightly-woven rice straw which is the traditional flooring material in Japanese housing.

⁷ 無縁仏 (*muen-botoke*) means a person who died without anyone to take care of her/his grave in Japanese.

express thankfulness for my life. Visiting ancestors' grave is considered as an important practice in Japan to honor the lives of people who have preceded us and given life for us. After visiting and taking care of the grave, I always go to the corner of the graveyard where many graves of 無縁仏 *muen-botoke* are placed. Looking at abandoned graves with moss and damages, I wonder about stories behind these graves and a life of people inside. Having no one to take care of a grave may be linked with possibility that their life stories are also forgotten when their body dies. I imagined the difficulty of thinking oneself to be 無縁仏 *muen-botoke* in the future...

I hope for a world where one can make decisions about not only how one wants to live, but also how one wants to die at the end of a life. I wonder what his end of life will be... I am sure Ama must be wondering so much about his end of life and feel disturbed by many vexing uncertainties in his life circumstances. Nobody knows how one's life will end when they are dying. The end of life may be a sort of enigma with a lot of unpredictability for everyone; but the end of life may significantly determine one's impression of a whole life to oneself and others. I saw many people dying when I was working in a hospital as a nurse. I saw patients who died while being surrounded by many family members in tears. Also, I saw patients who quietly died in loneliness without anyone attending. Experiences patients' death as a nurse, I was always thinking about the meaning of life. Whenever I saw patients who died lonely and whose bodies were handled like an object, I thought about stories of their lives and, more deeply, what it is to be a human. We cannot avoid death as long as we live. I hope Ama's end of life will be peaceful. I deeply hope he would be able to say that 'this life was my life' at the end of his life. I wrote a poem while reflecting on Ama's stories and imagining precariousness he might experience:

Homelessness, better than under the roof

With no other way, become homeless.

To remain homeless, abandon health

To remain homeless, compromise life

Feel like walking in the mud,

With a fear of getting stuck

Feel like walking on a bridge,

With a fear of falling down

My connection to a life is my breath

My connection to a future is my walk

Looking at moving clouds in the sky,

My only hope

Today quietly pours into tomorrow

Praying for the Future

Dear Ama,

Our relational space is more and more shaped by a sense of care. Now, it becomes our habit to share a coffee and have a little chat after we finished a conversation. *“I haven't seen you for a while. I wonder about how you are doing...”* You worried about me because I have not been able to join the soup kitchen for a while as I was busy with transcribing the conversations. I felt an increased sense of care and connection between you and me. The more I think about what home means to you, the more it takes me to think about what homeless means to you. When I automatically turn on the light, TV, and air conditioner in my apartment, I am caught in a brief moment of thinking of you and about the experiences of home and homeless. I am surprised how I take it for granted that I live under a roof with safety, comfort, and privacy that I enjoy every day. When I slip into a warm futon, I thought of you sleeping on a cardboard under a winter jacket while being scared to be hit by a can again. You added an important layer of thinking in my life. Thank you, Ama-san. I have become more conscious to my unconsciousness which I hope to embrace throughout my whole life.

When you said, *“It is a God's will that I could meet you”* これも神の導きですわ。I was very happy that you accepted our relationship into your stories of life. I remember, in one conversation, you sang a psalm to me, “What a friend we have in Jesus”. You found a faith in Christianity and now this faith gives you a sense of home. The more I know about your life, the more I realized that you have never stopped seeking for a place where you could live in connection with others. After a long search, you have found a place of belonging at soup

kitchens across the town and a church where you feel protected by your faith. You have never isolated yourself by withdrawing into your internal world, even though you prefer to be alone.

Throughout our conversations, I frequently felt resonances with you because I am also someone who prefers to be alone, but desires to be in relationships. And similar to you, even though I prefer to be in relationships, I am also afraid to be in relationships. You always keep the door open for a new possibility of life. This may have been a reason why you have chosen to have conversations with me. I always appreciate the care which is reciprocal among us. You told me that you frequently recall your memories in your mind, but you have never shared your life experiences with others before. You also revealed that after we started our conversations, you could share a story of your childhood in a mass at the church, which you had been avoiding for a long time because you were afraid of speaking in front of many people. I was very glad to hear that we are affecting each other to compose our lives. Ama-san, I truly respect your strength to come here, to look back on your life, and to decide to tell your experiences in this relational space with me. I will never forget you and your stories which now significantly shape my body and my stories.

Warmly,

Hiroko



Blooming cherry blossoms at the church (Photo taken by a researcher)

今この生活でも、試練のうちの一つやろうね。もうひと花咲かしたいね。

“This life...I think this life as a homeless is one of the trials given by God.

I hope one more flower will bloom in my life.”

Since becoming homeless, Ama has been visiting several soup kitchens offered by various non-profit organizations to get a meal. One of the soup kitchens was operated by one Christian church in this town. As Ama has been there to have a meal every week, he was invited to join a Sunday mass. Then, through attending the mass, he became interested in the Bible. As he read the Bible in the Sunday mass, he eventually found the verses in the Bible meaningful and inspiring for his life. According to Ama, these verses added new layers to understand his life and

to make sense of his life of being homeless in different ways. When he turned 65 years old, he decided to undergo a baptism with the encouragement from people at the church. Ama said:

To be honest, I didn't even understand the meaning of baptism, but anyway I did. After the baptism, nothing has particularly changed in my life. But I still enjoy reading the Bible so much. That is the most beneficial thing for me undergoing the baptism. And I also pray whenever I want, because I feel like somebody is listening to me through a prayer. Even if it is an illusion, this feeling of being listened to pretty much eases my mind. I also pray for my health...If I pray, I slightly feel better and relieved.

もう祈ってばかりして。祈って、それしとったらちょっと気分的に安心してきます。

I do not believe in a particular religion, but I frequently pray. My grandfather gave me a special phrase for prayer when I was a child and I still treasure this phrase. I warmly remember his gentle voice of saying this prayer at the temple or in front of me whenever I cried. Prayer may give you a feeling of connection within yourself or with something bigger than us. This feeling of connection may give you a space to listen and respond to your voices which might often be interrupted by the noises outside.

In Japan, it is not common that people believe in a specific religion. Older generations such as Ama's are more likely to believe in various forms of Japanese Buddhism, but it has become less common to believe in a religion in Japan. In the most difficult moments in his life when he became homeless, his life was helped by the meals offered by the soup kitchens as well as by supports and care given by the people at the church. Ama has found a new hope through the teachings in the Bible. Ama also found a new home through a feeling of being connected with people at the church. Especially, Ama has established a very good relationship with one male priest. Ama pleasingly told me that, after our conversation, he was going to visit the priest

in a hospital who recently went through a back surgery. He feels close to the priest because this priest took good care of him; the priest frequently visited Ama and gave a blanket and a meal while Ama was uneasily sleeping outside. He appreciates the supports from the priest and cherishes this relationship. While attending the soup kitchen and the mass at the church, Ama creates and expands a new network after becoming homeless. In this way, he might have established a place of belonging, a new home, in this town.

Ama often invited me to join a Saturday lecture or a Sunday mass at the church. In the last weekend of my stay in Japan in 2015, I decided to join a Sunday mass at the church where Ama belongs. I realized that I was not allowed to meet participants outside the church by the support organization, but I was curious to see the church where Ama feel such a close connection. When I entered the church, he was already sitting at a back corner of a bench. I quickly sat on the other edge of the same bench. Soon after mass started, he looked very lively and different from him when I saw in the soup kitchen or in our conversations; he was singing a hymn and reading out the Bible verse louder than anyone. After mass, he excitedly introduced me to a female pastor whom he was familiar with. He seemed bright, while he was introducing me to the pastor.

In our last conversation, when I asked Ama how he thinks of his experience of being homeless in his life, he replied:

This life...I think this life as a homeless is one of the trials given by God. Now getting older, I guess this is the worst part of my life. I never thought about my life as a homeless. When I overcome these difficulties accompanying with being homeless, I believe something better will happen in my life.

Ama tries to make sense of his difficulties and his current life of being homeless by viewing it through the lens of his belief. His faith in Christianity is linked to his hope for the better in the future. In one conversation, I made a rough sketch of annals of his life and shared them with Ama. Pointing at the future arrow written in the annals, he envisioned his hopeful future plan:

I hope to continue this life of being homeless. My first goal is to watch the Olympic Games in Tokyo in 2020. In 2020, I will be 80 years old. At least I want to continue this life by 2020. Then, the next goal is to see the wedding ceremony of the prince's daughter. In such way, I want to keep this life style until I am 100 years old without becoming ill.

Ama added that he hopes to be independent in his life without bothering anyone. He said that he does not want to take people's time by taking care of him. I hope he could continue his life according to his future plan. Yet, at the same time, I wonder how he would be encountering the necessary transitions in his life and how he would make adjustment to his envisioned future plan. I hope, whatever happens in his life, he would be the one who makes a decision. I pray that Ama will not stop hoping for the future even when he feels hopelessness and vulnerable at times.

Although Ama had never anticipated his life of being homeless, he has never become devastated and given up his hope for the future and his life lived in relation to others. Ama often expresses gratitude for the supports which have been given to him after he became homeless. He said, *"I want to give something back to people's kindness. One way to express gratitude is to help volunteers at the soup kitchen."* Ama is afraid that if he helps cooking at the soup kitchen, he may contaminate meals because, he said, he may carry some virus by dealing with garbage every day. He decides not to join the cooking. Instead, he willingly helps wash dishes because he thinks this is the only way he could express thankfulness for the kindness of supports. His care

for others has been sustained throughout his life, into his stories of being homeless, which may relate him back to the memories of his caring parents.

When I asked him if he has anything to say to others or society, he told me:

Many people these days are self-centered, thinking about their own benefits. Each of us should get together to think about the shared benefit of society. We, as homeless people, have our own unique life stories, though we are frequently troubled by misfortune. These people are often left alone from their parents and other families. They can be stubborn and selfish to some degree. But, everyone had one's own life which is by no means identical with others. Our unique way of life should be recognized and respected.

もう今の社会は自分さえ良かったらええように考えてね。やっぱり、一人ひとりがもっと団結せんと。自分それぞれの生い立ちがあつて。それで...逆境に悩まされて。それで自分と同じような立場になったと思ってます。親からも兄弟からも見捨てられて、まあ言うたらね。それで悪く言えば自分から出た錆で...わがままで我を張って。もう人それぞれ生き方があるんやっていう気持ちで。

His life is a life of choosing home. Despite various misfortunes and difficulties in his life, he repeatedly strived hard to re-establish his life. He has never given up control of his life. Even if he had no other choice but to become homeless, he dared to choose homelessness to protect and remain who he is. His strength, gentleness, and hope are shaping his perception and understanding of his current life of being homeless. His message to society is his cry that each one of us should be recognized and be a part of the world. Once I asked him about what is home, he answered:

Home can take any shapes. For many people, house is a home. But for me, a home is a place where there are people around me. If I stay in a room, I will be alone and isolated. After all, I rather prefer a place where I can live among many people.

やっぱり、家も良いし、人がいる所もいいし。家におってもどうしても引きこもるでしょ、一人やから。やっぱり人のたくさんいる所がいいね。

Again, I was confronted with a critical question of what is home and what is homeless. Is Ama homeless? Who define homelessness? How was my assumptions of homelessness in Japan shaped? I am challenging my way of knowing.

In our last conversation, Ama told me, *“I feel much younger because I have never had this kind of opportunity to talk with a young person. Three months passed so quickly. I’m sure I would never have this opportunity twice in my life. Please visit here whenever you have a chance”* こういうこと二度とないと思いますわ。I could perceive how much he has appreciated this space of our coming together. Toward the end of our conversations, I noticed he asked more questions of me, rather than me asking questions. I believe our conversations continue to evolve and enrich as both of us continue to live in and with our stories.

Ama has chosen a life as homeless. He has regained his independence and opened a new world after becoming homeless. In closing our last conversation, with a determined tone, he shared his hope with me, *“I pray one more flower will bloom in my life”*. もうひと花咲かしたいね。At the end of our last conversation, I asked him to shake hands. Since people usually bow as a way of greeting in Japan and do not usually touch the body of others, Ama looked a bit hesitant, but soon he agreed to shake hands. I still remember your surprised voice when we shake hands; he expressly said, *“Wow, it’s so WARM!”* 暖かい! I hope Ama will continue to be given a warm touch both physically and emotionally from people while being situated in trusting and caring relationships and communities.

Keep Hoping for the Future: Our Reunion

Dear Ama-san,

When I returned to the support organization a year later, I heard that you just came back from the hospital a few weeks ago. While listening to a staff member telling me the details about what happened to you in the last few months, I was carefully recalling our conversations in the last year. You expressed clearly that you were very afraid of going to a hospital and being given a diagnosis for your health conditions. Last year, you even told to me that going to a hospital meant to put an end to your current life of being homeless which you have re-established and settled in for a long time. I imagined and perceived your heartache when you were sent to the hospital. I am worried how you manage your life after leaving a hospital. Also, I wonder how you will story this experience to me when we meet again.

A few days later, I found you at the soup kitchen. You sat on a root of a tree alone, under the subtle shadow to escape from the already invigorating sunshine of April. As I was walking toward you, I was feeling a density of the time that had passed between us for a year and thinking about the meanings that time intersects again at our relational space. You looked slightly skinnier than the last year and your navy-blue hat, that you also wore the last year, was fading its bright color. Yet, when I said hello to you, you greeted me with your warm soft smile which has not changed at all from the last year. Relief and comfort quickly sooth my worries and connected a temporal gap in our relational space. After I asked a question about what happened to your life during the past year, you quickly pulled many packages of your medications out from a pocket and said, "*My only wish was not to be hospitalized, but the bad dream came true*" with a shy smile. Then, you told me that you were sent to a hospital by an ambulance and hospitalized

for one week. Though wanting to hear more about your stories, I stopped asking questions in this open space and instead, asked you if we could have a conversation again. “*But...what stories can I tell...*” saying so, you obviously looked hesitant, but after I explained that I brought a booklet of the narrative account and wanted to share it with you, we promised to meet again at the support organization two weeks later.

You came much earlier to our appointment time and slept on a chair in the courtyard of the church, like you always did last year. In the same meeting room where we used to have conversations, we continued our conversation. After we comfortably sat on a chair, our conversation immediately started as if there was no temporary gap of one year between us. You started telling me that the winter was particularly cold this year in Japan and, on some very cold nights, you had a lot of difficulties in sleeping outside, which resulted in extreme fatigue in your body. After those tough nights, you felt something wrong in your body and decided to come to the free X-ray screening held at the support organization. After having the X-ray, you were told that your heart conditions were not quite well and you needed to be sent to a hospital by an ambulance immediately, though you refused to go there. From the emotional way you talked, it sounded like you were also surprised and still could not believe what happened to you all of a sudden. Leaving behind your bicycle loaded with many important belongings, you had no choice but to go to a hospital holding lots of anxieties and uncertainties. Imagining this dramatic situation, I thought it must have been very difficult for you to see your own life changing in front of you in such ways.

While you were hospitalized, you persistently rejected the examinations that a doctor strongly recommended to you because you were scared of the risks accompanying them. You told me that you also insisted on leaving the hospital as soon as possible, by telling me,

“Because it was very uncomfortable to sleep on a mattress!” You were discharged after one week after going through only basic treatments. Again, I perceived your strong determination to continue your life of being homeless, especially when I heard that you resumed collecting aluminum cans right after you got out from the hospital. Even with the serious health concerns that finally became manifest through a series of these events, you never lost the control over your life’s decision making.

“I want to see people around me...I mean, I don’t want to shut myself up”, you added, after you explained to me that a social worker at the hospital strongly advised you to apply for the public assistance program and live in an apartment, but you declined that offer. You have always been consistent in living a life of being homeless with your desire to be situated among people. Without obtaining the public assistance program, you are also not eligible to receive welfare supports for medical expenses. Although you need to visit the hospital regularly, you have to pay the full amount for doctor’s fee and prescribed medications without health insurance. Also, the hospital where he is supposed to see the doctor is located far from his living area, which means he has to pay for transportation to the hospital. With an annoyed voice, you said:

I used up all of my little savings for my hospital visits and medications. Now, I need to save at least 600 yen (about 6 dollars) a day to prepare for my next visit to the hospital. Since then, I have to skip either my meals, laundry, or taking shower to save money.

In order to pay the necessary fees for the next appointment at the hospital, you have to keep on collecting aluminum cans even harder than before. You said that you often feel palpitation and out of breath after discharged from the hospital, as you feel sick of the smell from the remaining beer in cans and tired of crushing all aluminum cans by foot. Yet, you understood that you have to do this in order to maintain your life. Puzzled over this paradoxical situation, I

sensed your quality of life was obviously compromised for the sake of maintaining your health, though, in fact, both quality of life and your health are closely linked. As if you reinforced my perplexities to make this contradiction decisive, you revealed to me that you were thinking to quit going to the hospital after a few more visits because of the financial burden. You also told me that you do not follow the directions for his medications, so that you can save the tablets. At that moment, the only thing I could do was to ask you to visit the hospital regularly and take the medication as indicated since it was very important to continue your life as you wish. Actually, you knew many people including healthcare providers and the people at the support organization suggested him to receive welfare supports and live in an apartment, otherwise you may fall down again and even worse, may become paralyzed which would completely change your life style. However, you are determined to manage your health all by yourself by saying, *“I used to overcome the flu with over-the-counter medicine, so I believe that I can do the same to my current conditions”*. At this ethical moment, I encountered a dilemma to hear his comment because I was concerned about his health, but at the same time, I remind myself of the respect for various values and views of life.

As I heard you talking, I was living in uncertainty and frustration in regard to not being able to find a solution to your situations. The commonly-held value of living under the roof does not agree with your desire of living on the streets. Social welfare systems could not satisfy your health care needs. Listening to you saying, *“I don’t want to live in an apartment. Living in a small room is so stressful to me”*, I want to respect your decision, yet this was also particularly challenging for me as I am closely living alongside your life. You told me that you started to pay more attentions to your health after having the diagnosis. For example, you tried to take as many vegetables as possible by grinding carrots or apples into yogurt, or take good proteins by soaking

dried fish in honey. When I looked up the internet for the foods which were good for your heart conditions, I remember you were very curiously listening and tried to memorize those foods. You also told me that you kept praying the Bible phrases to ease your anxiety. I realized how much you struggled to find a balance between your health concerns and your hope amidst confusion. When you said, *“Next time, I hope to share a good news with you, though this time was a bad news”*, I sensed hope and strength that you have cultivated in your life have continuously been sustaining your stories to live by. I genuinely hope that you continue choosing your life even if you encounter a need for transition to change your life style in the future.

I made a small booklet for you with a translated summary of the narrative accounts and the photos you took with an instant camera last year. Taking a quick glance at the booklet and the thickness of the narrative account, you were surprised that your life stories took a visible form and became such extensive stories. After I read out the summary to you, you told me, *“This is all about my life”*. When I was about to offer the booklet to you, you gently said, *“I know about my life, so it’s better for you to take this book”*. Then, you asked me if I have an extra cup. Running to the kitchen, I felt my heart was filled with warmth brought by the memories that we shared in our relational space last year. You poured a half of the bottled water in a cup and shared it with me. Ama-san, I appreciate that you always tried to give to me in various ways. I learned a lot from you. I will embrace the booklet as I continue to live alongside your life. At the end of our conversation, you showed your bicycle to me; it was loaded with countless stuff on both sides, front and back. Seeing your bicycle, I respect your life journey even more and your braveness of your decisions with which you dared to break through the obstacles in your life. Thank you very much for coming back. I was so glad to see you and talk with you again. I hope

to meet you again when I come back in Japan. I hope our time will continue to intersect and conversation will ever continue in the future.

Warmly,

Hiroko

Relational Journey Continued

On a hot sunny day, I went to the harbor alone, carrying an instant camera and the photos which Ama took last year. After taking up the stairs from the dark and cold subway station, I had to shield my eyes from the glaring sunshine. Slowly opening my eyes, all I could see was a row of huge warehouses, construction sites, and a highway. It was quiet and I could not see anyone there, except alley cats taking a peek at me over rusty signboards. Without having any ideas where Ama took these photos exactly, I decided to take a walk to the harbor.

As I walked on a sidewalk, I noticed that I almost lost a sense of distance by being surrounded by gigantic warehouses and large driveways. Frequently being stuck by abandoned streets or dead ends, I was wandering to the harbor, spending more time than I thought. As I kept on walking under the glaring sunshine, I was recurrently thinking of Ama: his busy life at the harbor, his sentiments of re-visiting the harbor, and his kindness for taking time and efforts to take pictures for me. As my senses were absorbed by the new sceneries, conversations with Ama were recalled and improvised at intervals of my thinking as I travelled to his worlds. What was this place like when you were working? Where are the most impressive views for you? What memories do you have in these particular places? How did you feel when you re-visited the place? Looking at many English signs at old brick buildings and warehouses, I perceived the

uniqueness of this place when he was working more than forty years ago in Japan. Also, I tried to picture the vigorous days where many people, vehicles, ships and cargos were coming and going endlessly, through which I saw Ama diligently working with lumber. *“It’s sad that the sceneries at the harbor have changed a lot”*, I remember you told me when showing the picture of the harbor. In my eyes, it seemed the old sceneries mostly remained, but perhaps in your eyes, you saw more clearly that something important was missing; that might be sceneries, people, noise, vigor, or a connection to your memories as a worker.

Finally reaching to the harbor, I inhaled the quiet and peaceful smell of the ocean. As I enjoyed the walk into the new scenery and engaging myself in an imaginary conversation with Ama, I was thinking about what it is to live in relation. Closely attending to a relationship, I feel the presence of Ama even in my solitude and my senses were interwoven with my imagination of Ama’s experiences at the harbor, which constructs my lived and told stories. Although we could not physically walk to the harbor together, I believe our frames of view converged at times through our relationship. In order to visually interpret this convergence of our views in relationship, I made a couple photo collages combining Ama’s photos and my photos. While collages juxtapose the views of two different persons, it curiously integrates the sounds, images, lights to highlight the elusive but distinctive sense of living in relation. Also, at the harbor, we might have stood on the same places and watched the same sceneries, but once they came through a camera filter, seemingly similar sceneries begin to embody entirely different stories and assume a growing sensibility.



At the quay, where many families come for fishing now

(Inserting my photo in the middle of Ama's photo)



At a canal, connecting the ocean and a lumber pond

(Inserting my photo on the right edge of Ama's photo)



At a quiet lumber pond

(Inserting my photo in the middle of Ama's photo)



Combination of sceneries at the harbor

(Placing Ama's photos on the top left and the bottom right sides and my photos on the rest)

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[Booklet to Ama]⁸



Ama トと共に歩んだ人生

外国から絶え間なく
運ばれる巨大な木材で
いかだを組みながら40年
休みなく働き続けましたね。



小さい頃から、
お父さんが一生懸命に
働く姿を見て、
木材への特別な思いを
持つようになりました。

⁸ This is a part of the booklet that I shared with Ama.



Name of
the town

にはた<さんの思い出が
あります。

でも、お父さんが<たが、
歯車が<玉い始めました。



仕事を失ってから
地震に<い家を失いました。
その後<ぐに<母さんを失い
絶望の日々でした。
よく乗り越えました<わ。



だんだんと木材から離れ、
仕事を失い、お父さんの車を
耳打ちでしまい、
大切な思い出から切り離されて
辛い経験をしました。



必死に探しても仕事が
見つからず「バネ田か、たてあね。
ぞも Ama さんの強さで”
缶集めという新しい生活の道
を見つけました。



アパートを出てから、
 缶をぶつけられたり、盗られたり
 常に怖い思いをしながら
 過ごしてきましたね。
 寝る場所を確保するのが
 大変でした。



健康への不安があります。
 でも、今の生活を続けるために
 病院へは行きたくないと
 思っています。
 この先、病気になるかわ
 心配です。



洗れを受けて、
聖書の教えに興味を持ち、
人生について考えるようになりました。



教会の神父さんや
牧師さんと良い絆を築き、
新たな安らぎのできる場所を
見つけましたね。

Chapter 8: Exiting the Field

Closing the Notebook (Temporarily)

May 18th 2016

Waiting to go back to Canada, I am writing in my notebook at the airport.

I see my right hand swiftly moving, as my pen is chasing hard to capture the words. The notebook which I started last year on my trip to Japan has already come to be filled halfway. Tracing over the tainted edge of pages with my left hand, I think of my journey while recollecting my anxiety in entering the field, my struggles in finding participants, my uncertainties in building relationships, and my sense of fulfillments of coming so far. After I opened up my trip and entered the soup kitchen, the notebook holds countless fragmented and unfinished notes twisting over the pages: conflicts, struggles, wonders, relief, and appreciation, most of which I only whispered to this notebook. Turning over the pages, I was surprised to notice that I wrote in Japanese when I was in Japan and in English when I was in Canada as my brain searched for better expressions according to where I am. Glancing through the notes, the snapshots of my memories are flickering at the edge of the pages and calling each other to provoke new kind of interpretations. How I can take care of these memories in the field and with Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama? While the notes highlight the intersection of my internal and external world characterized by our relationships, they also allude to the marginalized state of my mind which was soaked in uncertainty. As I am ruminating over the memories enclosed by the notebook, I also curiously wonder how I will read and reflect on these notes in the future.

“Take me home...”, the music suddenly came into my ears from somewhere in the airport. Where am I going? Am I going home? When I arrived at Japan this time, the beautiful cherry blossoms were falling off on the ground like a carpet, which touched my heart and gently invited me to feel a nostalgia of home. Waiting at the airport, I am unsure where my heart would peacefully rest. Leaving Japan is always a difficult moment for me because I have to leave my family and my hometown, which causes the interruption in the sequence of my time in Japan. Also, this time, leaving Japan also means physically dislocating myself from my new cherished relationships with Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama. Am I going to see them again? How will their lives change when I meet them again in the future? Due to the mobile nature of their life of being homeless and the harsh environment of living outside, I assume their lives may possibly change dramatically. I may not be able to see them again: these kind of thoughts make it even harder for me to leave this place, especially when I realize the uniqueness of our relationships without having any means of long-distance connections. Living in these particular relationships has further rooted me geographically. I wish my body can travel as freely as my heart does.

As my heart is swiftly travelling through the notebook at the airport, I recall when I returned to the soup kitchen after coming back to Japan this year. Entering the soup kitchen again, I was surprised to realize that many people remembered me and welcomed me with friendly greetings. “*Long time no see!*” someone whom I do not remember even recognized me and talked to me. Most of the people coming to the soup kitchen were familiar faces. For me, they looked almost the same as last year, even though some people became skinnier due to an illness or walked with a stick due to an accident. Standing in this place, I felt a sense of homecoming. I joined the soup kitchen and the weekly roundtable meeting several times during my second visit. I was very happy that people treated me like a long-term friend, which made me

think about the significance of ‘coming back’ and a sense of connection in this particular place. The last time I volunteered at the soup kitchen before leaving Japan, I said good-bye to Ama sitting alone at the root of a tree. With excited gestures, Ama told me that he has recently started to work out at a park with playground equipment. Feeling his hope light up his face, again I asked him to visit a doctor. Yoshi, who came much later to the soup kitchen, quickly glanced at me when leaving the soup kitchen, but we did not exchange words. Looking at his worn-out backpack that Yoshi carried on one shoulder, I hoped that the world around us will continue to nurture the stories of our lives and mediate our relationships until we see each other again. Also, even if we might not see each other again, I am sure I will continue to live alongside Apapane’s life and to dwell in our relationship.

Situating my life in these relationships also gave me a meaningful opportunity to retell and relive my stories of coming to Canada. Weaving my stories alongside Yoshi, Ama, and Apapane’s stories in our relationships, I occasionally re-lived the silence of midnight that I experienced when I first came to Canada. As I listened to their stories of becoming homeless and their persistent efforts to enhance their lives, I now can see my experience of the silence as a significant step to elevate strength, hope, and thoughtfulness in my life. Their stories are still actively interacting with my stories and triggering new stories from my memories. Also, with the stories I lived through and embraced, I being to wonder how I can communicate these stories to the larger audience without losing their unique voices and the footprint of our relational journey.

Sitting at the airport bench, I almost finished my trip to Japan and am on my way back to Canada. I tried to quickly finish my note before boarding a flight to Canada, but my pen is still lingering for the remaining words which will never be depleted or able to say all the relationships I formed with Apapane, Ama, and Yoshi mean to me.

Chapter 9: Paper 1

Embracing Tensions: Thinking about Relational Ethics through Narrative Inquiry into Experiences of People who are Homeless in Japan

Abstract

In narrative inquiry, entering into and negotiating relational space with participants is always a tension-filled experience. Although living in tensions is not always a welcoming experience, it also encompasses an opening to be more thoughtful, creative, and patient toward the possibilities for retelling stories by inquiring into lived and told and also by awakening to the multiple narratives in which each participant and each researcher are embedded. In inquiring into my tensions through processes of imagination and improvisation, I am able to playfully see the relational landscapes in which I am embedded. Through telling and retelling my experiences of ethical tensions with two men who are/were homeless in Japan, I wonder how attending to tensions might encourage renewed understandings of the nature of relational spaces and ethical responsibilities within each relational space.

*Accepted as a chapter in a book on Relational Ethics in Narrative Inquiry to be published in fall 2017.

Moment of Tension at a Soup Kitchen

“Do you know how many aluminum cans are needed to make 400 yen (about four dollars)?”

“Umm...I totally have no idea.”

“About five kilograms! It’s really hard to make even 100 yen (about one dollar)!”

Saying so, an old man in a tired tweed jacket proudly and fondly placed his arm on the edge of his wooden two-wheeled cart, as if he had just patted his companion dog and welcomed a guest into his house. I was curiously watching his old hand-made cart made of a skillful patchwork of various recycled materials and numerous repairs until he signalled me by asking the question. Closely looking at each seam of the patchwork, I became more attracted to listening to the stories that each rugged seam might have nurtured and embraced. With his prompting gesture, however, I swiftly shifted my vision to the several huge bags of aluminum cans piled onto the cart. This event occurred at a soup kitchen in a small outdoor area next to a soccer ground. For more than twenty years, a non-profit support organization has offered meals in a temporary narrow soup kitchen three times a week in order to provide warm and nutritious food to people who needed it. I had just entered the field as a researcher through volunteering at the soup kitchen. Having studied in Canada for nine years, I was now back in my hometown in Japan to find participants for my doctoral research. I was searching for participants who were homeless and who would agree to have conversations with me over several months. Passing through the unfamiliar air and the busy traffic of people at the soup kitchen, I experienced complex tensions and uncertainties in returning to my hometown as a researcher, entering into a new environment, building relationships with new people, and shaping my new identity.

Just a few kilometers down to the harbour from a busy urban district, the soup kitchen was situated among cold-skin warehouses and under a busy overpass as if to take refuge from the eyes of people. With nothing to block it, the strong sunshine heated the people on summer days and the strong wind gusts fiercely blew on winter days. It was a cold winter day in January when I first visited there. A few people came around a fire pit to warm up and to engage in lively but fleeting conversations. Most of the others chose to sit down on the ground in solitude. The majority of people coming to the soup kitchen were older-aged males while the volunteers were mostly retired women. More than a hundred people came daily to the soup kitchen: one by one, they slowly made an unorganized crowd in the narrow area. Suddenly they formed a well-ordered line when the first person stood up. Conversations emerged, continued, and ceased everywhere at the soup kitchen. Some were muttering to themselves and some arguments broke out. At the corner, someone fell unconscious because of extreme hunger just before soup was served and was transported by an ambulance. Then, like a dream, all was quiet when the soup kitchen closed, leaving only naked ground with whirling icy winds. In this place, every combination of scenery, smell, temperature, and voice entering my perception were brand-new, urging me to remain aloof and stay close at the same time.

“Wow! It’s incredible. Did you collect these all by yourself?” I was responding to the question he had asked and in my response I heard my voice geared up to his expectation. Although I was amazed at huge bags of aluminum cans on his cart, I simultaneously recognized my emotions as strangely unreal. As I was trying to situate myself in this unfamiliar environment at the soup kitchen, I was more and more aware of myself as an outsider in this world as if my memories and my perceptions could not help me understand the people, but could only help me make assumptions about what was going on here. As I realized I was at a loss in imagining how

many aluminum cans are needed to earn 400 yen (about four dollars), I also realized how challenging it must be to collect five kilograms of aluminum cans in a day, and how difficult a life would be with such unstable and scarce money at hand. I understood then that I was being asked to travel to new worlds and to begin to see myself in them (Lugones, 1987). As the only young female among mostly middle-to-old-aged men and as a researcher who had a desire to attend closely to their lives, I found myself at odds with the purpose of this place and the people who desperately tried to survive each day. In my attempt of world travelling, I was also uncertain how the people at the soup kitchen would see me in their worlds.

Noticing their curious gazes directed toward me from a distance and quickly diverted once when I tried to respond to them, I felt a deep silence between me and them. I was nervous and awkward as I began to realize I was a stranger. While listening to their laughter at a fire pit and whisperings from a distance, I carefully soaked up my perceptions with a hope of growing familiarity and comfort in this place. I hoped to come to understand something of their experiences within their world(s). Yet, I felt my body's stiffness as I understood myself living in the tension at this threshold. I felt unsettled by an uncertainty of who I was going to be in their worlds and by a sense of uneasiness that I was not readily accepted by them in this place. I wondered how my beginning tension at the soup kitchen would situate and shape me in this place, in their world(s) and in the as-yet-unknown relational spaces with future participants.

The man in the tweed jacket looked very happy when I commented on his aluminum cans. I felt relieved and happy to know that we had made a connection. He excitedly continued talking by pointing to his t-shirt under his jacket, "Do you think I look good in a red t-shirt?" In this spontaneous conversation at the edge of the soup kitchen, I also realized that I was not the only one who might be living in tension. People coming to the soup kitchen were also living

amidst multiple tensions, tensions shaped by difficult life circumstances, emotional turmoil of being uprooting, and the dominant stories of homelessness in Japan characterized by shame and stigma. When I paid close attention to his cart, he might have felt tension, which prompted him to make a signal so that I could turn my attention away from his worn-out cart to his aluminum cans - from his life of struggle to his achievement. By doing so, he creatively shaped a space among us. Surrounded by unfamiliarity and uncertainty, this short conversation at the soup kitchen awakened my thoughts about tensions, as I was about to co-compose relational spaces with participants.

Mulling over the Tension

Now at my desk in Canada, I am writing this chapter while drifting back to the time I volunteered at the soup kitchen in Japan. In recollecting the images and re-experiencing the moments, what first comes and remains in my mind is a feeling of tension. This tension is now more clearly expressed on paper than it was in its physical expression about a year ago. In tracing the ambiguous fragmented memories of the past, I notice I do not simply reside in remembrance; I also travel back to those moments at the soup kitchen by using my imagining as a storied construction (Sarbin, 1998). In illuminating the multi-layered tensions at the soup kitchen, I may have minimized other details in my memory in order to emphasize the specific emotions, events, and moments. Crites (1971) articulated that recollection includes the art of storytelling with purpose and that stories are fictional constructions. I understand that my tension at the soup kitchen is now embodied as a story through my memories and imagining. Sarbin (1998) also revealed the link between imagining and believing, noting that “believings are highly valued imaginings” (p.23). While recollecting and writing my experience, I wonder what purposes and beliefs I explicitly and inexplicitly infused into my stories of tension.

Bateson's (1994) concept of improvisation also helps me to explore the creative possibilities of tensions when she wrote, "Adaptation comes out of encounters with novelty that may seem chaotic. In trying to adapt, we may need to deviate from cherished values, behaving in ways we have barely glimpsed, seizing on fragmentary clues" (p. 8). In reifying the moment of tension written on a paper, I also retrospectively improvise the situation where my imagining consults with my memory for alternatives. In these ways, I unknowingly try to change the meaning of my tension in the "peripheral vision" (Bateson, 1994, p. 6) of my memory in order to honour both the visible and the invisible in the landscape of my memory in different impressions.

Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, and Murray Orr (2010) also metaphorically portrayed tension using the image of cracks on a smooth surface to elucidate the importance of attending to tension. As Clandinin et al. (2010) elucidates, "Beginning to attend to the cracks creates the possible space for inquiry. It is in the cracks where inquiry spaces are made possible, that is, where there is possibility for retelling lives" (p. 84). Although living in tensions is not always a welcoming experience, it also encompasses an opening to be more thoughtful, creative, and patient toward the possibilities for retelling stories by inquiring into lived and told and also by awakening to the multiple narratives in which each participant and each researcher are embedded. In inquiring into my tensions through processes of imagination and improvisation, I am able to playfully see (Lugones, 1987)¹ the landscapes at the soup kitchen. Mulling over my tensions around entering into the soup kitchen while writing at my office desk in Canada, I wonder how retrospectively attending to the tension might encourage renewed understandings of the nature of relational spaces that were co-constructed between me and participants.

¹ Lugones (1987) mentioned playfulness "that gives meaning to our activity includes uncertainty, but in this case the uncertainty is an openness to surprise" (p. 16). I referenced her expression of playfulness to express openness amidst uncertainty.

My Research Puzzle

In my doctoral research, I narratively inquired into the experiences of people who are homeless in Japan. In Japan, the government counted 6,235 people who are homeless² in Japan in 2016 (Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare [MHLW], 2016a). This count has continuously been decreasing from 25,296 in 2003 (MHLW, 2003). However, this decline in number does not give me an impression that the issue of homelessness is being addressed; rather it complicates the issue, especially when I heard the growing concerns about net-café refugees³, socially-isolated youth⁴, or other forms of invisible homelessness in Japan (Allison, 2012). When I lived in Japan, I saw many people, with paper cups in front of them for begging, squatted in underground passages, scavenged garbage boxes, or sleeping under ragged blankets behind bushes in parks. Alongside the harbour, I saw a row of blue-sheet tents where people built a community for a long time. Homelessness used to be visible in Japan to everyone, even though their voices were silenced.

However, these days the scenery of homelessness in Japan has gradually shifted. When I went back to Japan, I saw fewer people sitting in train stations or sleeping in parks. Instead, I saw many odd bumps installed alongside the underground pathways or tall fences surrounding the edges of park to keep people from hiding in the bush or resting on the ground. For reasons of safety and security, the public sceneries are more strictly regulated and policed. I wonder where the people went who used to sit, sleep, or beg there. I wonder how these political measures affect their experiences and further marginalize their voices. Recently, homelessness has become more

² The definition of homeless is “those who live at park, riverbed, road, train stations, and other facilities without any reason” (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2012).

³ Net-café refugees are reported as people who stay at 24-hour internet cafes, fast-food restaurants or other commercial facilities from several days to several months consecutively (Oblinger, 2009).

⁴ One form of socially-isolated youth in Japan is called *Hiki-komori*. *Hiki-komori* is about people who are withdrawn from any social activities such as work or school and stay in their house for more than six months without communicating with anyone other than family (MHLW, 2010).

invisible and inaccessible to the eyes of people in Japan. The silence surrounding homelessness in Japan has become deeper and this silence has even been hidden from people's attention. I am curious about the experiences of living homeless in Japan and I want to understand more of the experiences of people's lives through narrative inquiry. Without a home and within an increasingly unwelcoming environment in society, I wonder how these people experience, and make sense of their lives of being homeless and of the coherence of their present lives extending from the past into the future (Kerby, 1991).

As I continued volunteering at the soup kitchen, I hoped people would be interested in being part of this study. I asked the support organization to advertise the study. However, recruitment was not a smooth process since many of them who came to the soup kitchen expressed that they were reluctant or hesitant to share their life experiences. I began to understand that it might not be comfortable to share life stories to a person who is a stranger, particularly when the stranger is of a different gender and age. I also began to understand that they might not be willing to commit to a series of conversations over a few months. The shame and stigma attached to homelessness in Japan might also affect their unwillingness to reveal their life experiences to me. Some people even said 'time is money', as they asked if I could pay them for conversations. Having conversations was not a straightforward procedure for them and for a potential relational space, which took me back into the tension.

After a month of waiting which seemed a very long time, the support organization found three men who agreed to have conversations with me. However, even after we started having conversations, it took a long time until we started to build relationships. We kept negotiating our relational spaces while there were many potential dangers of disconnections or disruptions. For example, one man suddenly ran away from a meeting room in our first meeting saying "I am not

homeless, I cannot tell you anything right now”. All three men looked sensitive and nervous about talking in our conversations and in taking steps to build a relational space with me.

Clandinin (2013) mentioned that narrative inquiry is a relational inquiry where both researcher and participant attend to multiple stories of ours and others and co-compose new or renewed stories. Clandinin (2013) added this relational aspect of narrative inquiry encourages us to consider various possible ethical matters along with uncertainties, complexities, and tensions. This process of being mindful of potential ethical matters often made me vulnerable and unsure as narrative inquirer. During my stay in Japan, when I was heading to the church for interviews or volunteering at a soup kitchen in the early morning, I often saw Yoshi sitting in front of MacDonald’s in a busy train station. The crowd of people are constantly coming in and out from station. He was sitting there with his head deeply down as if he was trying to hide from people’s curious, disrespectful, or tasteless gazes. At that moment, I took a pause and wondered if it was okay to talk to him. As we usually had conversations in a meeting room prepared by the support organization, I was not sure if he wanted to show himself in this situation to me and I wondered how this interaction situated in this particular place might possibly change our relationship. Also, I was told by the support organization that I should not meet participants outside a meeting room for a security reason. While I was overwhelmed by my thoughts in a few seconds, I was pushed by the wave of people and I passed him and could not talk to him. I turned around and saw him helplessly sitting by the pillar until his shape was disappearing into the busy crowd of people. I still wonder if I could talk to him sitting in a train station at that moment. Is this a matter of my braveness or a matter of ethics? During my stay in Japan, I saw him several times in different places, but I was not able to talk to him. I felt uncertainty and even guilty that I did not even say hello to him. Yet, questioning to myself if this is what he wanted to show me in our relationship

may be coming from my ethical imagination of potential consequences in our relationship. I was afraid to push him into the category of ‘a homeless person’ and make him feel powerless, which might have changed the fabric of our relational space.

Dwelling in a Relational Space while Dwelling in Multiple Other Relationships

Apapane was a 60-year-old man who used to be homeless for a week about ten years ago and who first of all asked me if we could have conversations over a phone because he said his current job was extremely busy and inflexible. After I told him that I preferred to have a face-to-face meeting, he agreed to meet on the condition that he would pick the date and time of meeting. On the day of our first conversation, I was anxiously waiting for him in a meeting room, located just beside the support organization, where we were supposed to meet. Apapane came late because he was chatting with friends in a courtyard close to the meeting room. From the meeting room, I could see and hear him cheerfully and loudly talking and laughing. It seemed like he even anticipated me watching him from the meeting room window. After entering the meeting room, he immediately told me that he had to leave early to drink with his ex-co-worker. He hastily sat on a chair and opened up a conversation with a stiff voice.

Apapane: *“What is your plan?”*

Me: *“Hmm... What do we talk today?”*

Apapane: *“No no. You should start talking, rather than I talk.”*

Me: *“Well. The last time when I explained my study to you, you shared a brief summary of your life experiences. So, today, I would like to hear more about your life.”*

Apapane: *“...**More about my life**... But I will just skip and ignore the matters*

which I don't want to talk."

Me: *"Of course. It's totally fine. You don't have to tell me everything."*

Tension seized my body; I was quickly and repeatedly inquiring into my role in our relationship and imagining his expectation in our relational space. Parallel to my tension, I was nervously insecure about how the relationship would unfold because I sensed an implied distance between us by which I was puzzled. At that moment, I began to understand that Apapane might have different expectations to our conversational space, while I hoped to build a relationship with him. Later, I wrote in my journal;

I wondered what 'the matters' he does not want to talk to me would be. Is he afraid of questions he was going to be asked? What are these specific questions that he does not want to be asked? How can I address his possible concerns in our conversations to create a safe and comfortable space for him and for both of us? Why did he feel the need to warn me first? Can I speak these questions to him? Is it safe for me to ask and is it safe for him to be asked? I clearly sensed his defense with which he tried to protect something hidden inside and I really do not want to harm him.

(Journal entry written on March 13th, 2015)

During our conversations, I spent much time listening to him, while keeping in mind not to accidentally impose questions about 'the matters' he wanted to avoid, without knowing which questions would be the ones. Apapane eagerly talked about his life experiences full of upheavals, even before I asked a question. He talked about his current job at a chocolate factory, where he works hard during day and night and plays a leadership role in one assembly line. Also, he talked about his busy life when he used to work at one of the biggest shipbuilding companies in Japan for thirty years. He fluidly continued talking. Apapane used to have many colleagues working under him and customers who made contracts with him, yet his workplace was so busy that he suffered from a depression and a disease which left him with physical disabilities. Then, Apapane told me

that, with continuous efforts, he had almost overcome his disabilities. While he swiftly moved from one topic to another, his topics were frequently centered on how significant his role was in the respective stages of his life and how strongly he had fought against the difficulties. In carefully listening to him, I hoped to show him that I am with him by inquiring into his stories, while bearing in mind Cole's statement (1989) that "[t]heir stories, yours, mine- it's what we all carry with us on this trip we take, and we owe it to each other to respect our stories and learn from them" (p.30).

Frequently, Apapane indicated the importance of his relationship with the support organization. More than ten years after he had overcome his homelessness, he still visits the support organization to meet one female staff member whom he calls 'my second mother' and who first found him sleeping under the eaves of a public library ten years ago. Whenever Apapane saw the woman from the window of our meeting room, he interrupted our conversation and said, "There she is! She is curious about what we are talking. She so cares for me. She knows everything we talk here because she has very good ears". Similarly, he often mentioned his long-term relationships with peers at the support organization by telling me that he has a good friendship with them and then adding that he knew many of them were gossiping about me with curiosity and suspicion. I kept negotiating who I was and how I could attend to Apapane and his stories in relational ways. However, whenever he talked about his relationships, I felt as if there was a thick glass between us; I could only see and talk to him through the glass, while he saw himself and his various other relationships in the reflection of the glass. I sometimes felt I was left alone in our relational space with a frustrating tension; we were facing each other through the same glass, but strangely, our focuses did not converge.

Apapane clearly emphasized to me the existence of his girlfriend, who was worried about him and even jealous that he was having a conversation with me, 'a young woman'. Several times, I suggested an opportunity to have a conversation together with his girlfriend to reduce her anxiety, but he quickly declined my offer. During our conversations, he often got a phone call from his girlfriend who, he said, was worried and doubtful about he and I having a conversation together. Whenever his cellphone rang, our conversation stopped and was driven to the edge. My tension increased, as I sensed the distance become deeper. I felt as if all of the relationships he exhibited in front of me had drawn a boundary, telling me that I was not a part of his life and relationships. I was not sure who he saw himself and me within our relationship.

Although he spoke very well about his life experiences and his relationships, he suddenly looked awkward when I started asking questions about his experience of becoming homeless. An uncomfortable tension became palpable between us, so I had to quickly move away from the topic, the topic about which I was willing to hear more. I wondered if it was 'the matter' that he did not want to share with me. For Apapane, the topic of becoming homeless might entail vulnerability and loneliness, which might go against his significant roles, strengths, and richness of his relationships. As he often criticized people who remain homeless for a long period, maybe he did not want to see himself in relation to people whom he called homeless, or he did not want to reside in the moments that might potentially undermine his identity constructed within our relationship. As I was confused and uncertain about how I would be able to write the interim research text about his experiences of homelessness, I wrote in my journal about the complexities in consolidating myself as a researcher and myself as a person in relation to Apapane.

He had so many layers in his life. These layers intricately overlap and interact with each other to shape his stories of life. Yet, what puzzled me was that it seems like these layers flickered and slipped away whenever I attempted to closely look at them. I could sense that he was afraid to be asked a question about being homeless and my attentions

were often diverted whenever I was about to touch on these elusive layers of his life. One after another, he raised unrelated topics, such as about filtered water or co-relation between personalities and blood types, and kept talking about them. Not knowing where his vulnerability and defense were embedded, I was uncertain if he allowed me to have a look at these layers in our relational space or if he wanted me to just peek from a distance. We spent so much time on trivial chats. My 'researcher' part sometimes worried if it would shape a 'narrative account', but I wanted to listen to him more in order to shape a safe space for him and to respect what he wished to keep invisible from me. I was reminded from my own learnings that relationships grow slowly and silently, like a poem is born in contemplation, like a music is found in humming, and like a seed grows in the ground. I chose not to interrupt his talk...Situating myself as both a researcher and a person in a relationship makes me feel vulnerable, but I guess this vulnerability might be where I will be awakening to my ethical responsibilities and commitments.

(Journal entry written on March 27th, 2015)

While I engaged in conversations with Apapane, I was always thinking about how I could honour what he chose to tell me and how we could create a space together where both of us could feel comfortable, safe, and open. Yet, my perceived tension and vulnerability frequently disrupted my thinking. As Connelly and Clandinin (1988) delineated the idea of friendship in relation to collaborative research in narrative inquiry, I expected closeness like a friendship in our relationship, but soon I recognized Apapane did not hold the same expectation. When I returned to Japan after a year to negotiate a narrative account with Apapane, I asked the support organization to make contact with him regarding our reunion. However, Apapane was reluctant to meet me again. I waited, in tension and uncertainty, for him to call back to the support organization. He did not call back for several weeks. When the staff member who was his 'second mother' called his cellphone and urged him to meet me, he finally agreed to make an appointment. When she handed the phone to me, she told me that I should tell him that it was going to be the very last conversation, otherwise he may not come. I felt sad that I had to put an end to our conversations in such a way.

We met again in the same meeting room beside the support organization. Apapane came on time and awkwardly started telling me that he could not come because of his girlfriend, saying she was jealous and worried that he was going to have a conversation with me, so she did not allow him to meet me again. At that moment, I was thinking about what stories his girlfriend had lived and told about me and what stories of our relationship Apapane had told to her. During our conversations, I sensed that our relationship often conflicted with his other relationships, especially with his girlfriend, which caused tension in our relational space. With a hope for our long-term relationship, I told Apapane at the end of the last conversation, “When I see you again, I will tell you the updates of my progress in my writing”. Yet, he quickly replied, “You don’t need to tell me about your updates. If you talk to the support center, then I would eventually know your progress from them”. Again I found myself still standing in front of the metaphoric thick glass between us. To me, this metaphoric glass seemed cloudy between us. Why did he choose to take a distance in our relational space? What could I have done to address this tension? Within swirling emotions, I enfolded inaudible questions of my tension-filled heart.

We live in the midst and negotiate our lived experiences in the complex web of relationships (Clandinin, 2013). While engaging in our relational space, Apapane had simultaneously been living and engaging in other relationships, all of which were significant in his life. As Caine and Estefan (2011) wrote about the relational responsibility of narrative inquirers, I have also awakened to knowing that my relational responsibility was not only to Apapane, but also to all the relationships he engaged in his life. Moving physically and temporally away from the last conversation with Apapane, I more frequently revisited and inquired into our relational space, my tensions, and the complex web of relationships surrounding my, and his, lives. Soaking myself in the tension again, I could eventually think about our relational space beyond my

tensions. It was then that I began to recognize that he might also have lived in multiple layers of tensions between our relationship and his other relationships. Some of these could be tensions with his girlfriend who was anxious about his conversations with me, tensions with his long-term peers who were gossiping about our conversations, tensions with me who tried to reveal his vulnerability and come too close to him, and perhaps tensions with dominant narratives of homelessness prevailing in Japanese society. Inquiring into my tensions gave me an opportunity to look into multiple relational dissonances, which encouraged me to more thoughtfully and respectfully travel to his world (Lugones, 1987), and in so doing surrender a control that I unintentionally held tight in our relationship, and return to who I was, who I am, and who I am becoming in/through a relationship with Apapane (Clandinin et al., 2010).

As I think more about our relationship through my tensions, I am more aware that I unconsciously held close my expectations of a relational space where both of us willingly came together and shared stories with openness. Building a thick and cloudy glass between us might have been his way of building a relational space with me in order to ensure his place in our relationship as well as in his other relationships, or perhaps in order to protect me from his other relationships. When the relationship that I chose to begin with Apapane was ended by Apapane, what once seemed to be an imbalance in our relational space finally found equilibrium and stability through which we equally became part of our relationship. Perhaps, from the beginning, Apapane expected our relational space to be a temporal place to improvise his best identity as he envisioned, through illuminating the multiple other relationships in which he engaged. Yet, in the midst of my pressing tension, I was not fully aware of his way of attending to our relational space and I felt what Lugones (1987) called a dis/ease. Living in the midst of our relational space, I sought to do something for Apapane in order to create a relational space informed by ethics, but

my ethical actions might have been more attentive to Apapane's experiences in which I was to remain at a distance as he wished and let him make decisions about our relational space. In recollecting my tensions, I perceived the striking tension in my body was slowly mitigated as I realized the possibilities for an ethical relationship with Apapane. Although our relationships will no longer be developed by seeing each other, I hope our relationship will continue to grow through reflections and recollections of our relationship in mind. We may not have a conversation again, but I continue to remain in the distance that Apapane inscribed into our relational space. I live alongside his life stories, while dwelling in fragments of our conversations as well as imagining and re-imagining possible future stories of his life, my life, and our lives intersecting.

Re-living and Walking Together in the Remembrance

I had a different experience of tension with Ama: a tension crawling deeper into my mind and taking me to contemplation about ethics. Ama is a 75-year-old man who has been homeless for more than ten years. When we first met briefly, he shared many stories about his life of being homeless; to me, many of them sounded like very disempowering stories for him. He told me many difficult experiences such as of being hit by empty cans or firecrackers while he was sleeping outside in a park and of people shouting at him, saying, "You're wasting our taxes!" or "You are spoiling our view!". His luggage was frequently stolen by others or taken away by the police on short notice, which consequently forced him to sleep outside without a blanket during the coldest times of winter. Apart from my wordless emotions while listening to his stories, the way he talked to me was always calm and friendly as if he attempted to soothe these stories with his voice. His shy smile gently warmed up the air between us and buffered the pain held in his stories. Listening to unimaginable hardships, I lived in the tension of receiving those stories and imagining his tensions of embodying these experiences to me. I wondered how his stories and

my response to them would interlace and shape our relational space. Lopez (1990) reminded me that “[T]he stories people tell have a way of taking care of them. If stories come to you, care for them” (p. 60). I was thinking about how I could care for his stories through listening to the subtle calls and cries within his stories.

In our following conversations, Ama talked a lot about his life at the harbour where he had worked for more than forty years. Listening to him say, “I used to unload the lumber from huge cargo ships coming from all over the world, even from Canada, bundled them with wire, and carried them into the lumber pond”, I saw Ama calling upon the sceneries of the harbour and starting to live again in these places while he was talking. As his gentle voice grew excited and his shy smile was dressed with confidence, he told me, “Without the lumber, nothing would be left in my life”. In his sparkling eyes, I perceived how proud he was of his work at the harbour. As his stories invited me into his sceneries, I often found myself walking beside him at the harbour in an imagined landscape, though we were only allowed to meet in the meeting room. At the harbour, I was imagining and he was remembering in his recollections; I heard the noisy whistle from huge cargo vessels and lively conversations of unknown languages on the decks, saw massive lumbers incessantly unloaded from vessels, smelled the ocean, and felt the burning sunshine and excitement. In addition, his work at the harbour entailed the memories of his beloved father who owned the lumber business and taught him the passion for lumber, and his dear mother who generously gave him love and care while he was working at the harbour almost 24/7. His love for his work at the harbour was also closely connected with his love and nostalgia for his parents. In his remembrance of the harbour, everything was animated and his parents were still alive. As I listened to his stories of the harbour and dwelled in my imagination at times,

I was simply happy that Ama let me accompany him into his memories and walk with him into his storied landscapes.

Now, Ama sleeps alone on a sheet of cardboard in front of an old shopping mall. Sometimes, his sleep was interrupted because strangers quarreled next to him and strangers tapped his shoulder to beg money. He occasionally had to take refuge in a fast-food restaurant when it got unbearably cold around midnight in winter, but he was not allowed to sleep there. He had to leave the shopping mall in the early mornings before a cleaning company arrived, otherwise a security guard unkindly kicked him out. He rides his bicycle every day for more than 80 kilometers during the daytime to collect aluminum cans and bring them to a recycling center. With less than 1000 yen (about ten dollars) a day, he carefully manages meals, buys an energy drink, goes to a public bath and coin laundry, and even saves some money in his pocket. When he cannot carry all of his bags of aluminum cans on his bicycle, he usually tucks them away behind a bush at a park for a while. Yet, sometimes those bags are stolen, which is the most distressing and upsetting thing to him. While Ama was talking, he occasionally identified himself as “me...as a homeless person”. I imagined his tension of telling these stories to me and labelling himself as ‘a homeless person’. Within his hesitant intervals, I felt countless untold and unsettled stories and sought the possibility to attend to his told and untold stories in ways that were more thoughtful and respectful.

As we slowly built a relationship, I always asked myself how I could attend to the stories of Ama and our relational space along with my relational responsibilities (Clandinin, 2013). When we finished our third conversation, Ama told me that he could not come to our conversations anymore because of other engagements and, above all, because he had told everything. In my sorrow to hear his decision, I told Ama that I hoped to continue our

conversations if possible. I had constantly been thinking about his tension of telling these stories to me and about my tension of responding to his stories with respect and care. As his eyes sparkled as he told stories of his experiences at the harbour, I hoped our relational space was a place where he shone as who he uniquely was/is in hopeful ways, in ways such as he remembered himself at the harbour. At such moments, I remembered my experiences of working at a hospital as a nurse in Japan and the feeling of happiness when patients talked to me about who they were, not as who they were labelled as patients. As Ama and I were only allowed to meet in a meeting room, I wondered about how we could both equally create a space and engage in conversations. When Ama kindly came back to our conversation again, I gave him an instant camera and asked him to take pictures of places that were meaningful for him. Ama willingly accepted my offer and took many photos at the harbour, a few photos of aluminum cans and photos of a shopping mall entrance where he sleeps.



In this photo, there were almost 20 kilograms of cans. I bundle all of them together with a string so that I can load them on my bicycle. With this amount, I could get 2000 yen (approximately twenty dollars). But it was a good day. It is always a big competition with dogyousha (those in the same business) and the garbage trucks. I regret so much if garbage bags were already taken away when I got there. So, whenever I see aluminum cans in a garbage bag, I immediately think 'Yay, I found money!'

After he lost his apartment, Ama decided to live homeless as he could not find any stable jobs after he reached the retirement age and without a fixed address. He briefly lived in an apartment with the welfare supports from the government. However, he did not like to shut himself up in an apartment and he felt more comfortable to sleep outside while being free from the surveillances of welfare officers. After long struggles to find a life to settle down, Ama made a firm decision to build his life by collecting aluminum cans and sleeping in front of the shopping mall. While he was showing me the photos of his bags of aluminum cans, I sensed his voice elevated again and his confidence interwoven with the same pride as when he told of working at the harbour. When I realized that Ama was proud of re-building his life through becoming homeless without depending on supports from others, I perceived my tension had been slightly reshaped in our relationship. The stories, which I had thought to be insecure and vulnerable, turned out to be stories of strength and independence. Using Kerby's (1991) work, I understand that Ama's present vantage point allows me to differently interpret the meaning of his experience of becoming homeless. As I spent more time with Ama, I noticed that his past stories of hardships had been transformed into honourable stories of his fighting for his significant achievements on which his present stories situate and flourish. Since I learned from Ama that he had chosen a life of being homeless even though he never expected, my ethical tension about

how to respond to his stories had been redirected to considerations of dominant narratives which diminish the complexity of life and describe lives, including Ama's, as being weak and helpless once people become homeless.

I feel much younger because I have never had this kind of opportunity to reflect on my life and talk with a young person. Three months passed so quickly. I'm sure I would never have this opportunity twice in my life. Please visit here whenever you have a chance.

When Ama said this to me at the end of our last conversation, I recognized how much he had appreciated our space of coming together. Toward the end of our conversations, I noticed he asked more questions of me, rather than I asked questions of him. What used to be hesitant intervals were now filled with stories that illuminated his life, many of which might have been liberated from silence for the first time. I hope our conversations will sustain our lives, as both of us continue to live in them while talking, responding, and visiting various sceneries together in remembrance and imagination. After our last conversation, Ama invited me to look at his bicycle; numerous plastic bags were attached to both handlebars and a rear rack, which instantly made me realize it was his 'home'. When I saw his bicycle, the only things that came into my mind was a deep respect for his life and gratitude for Ama for allowing me to travel to his world (Lugones, 1987). Also, in his gesture of showing his bicycle, I perceived that Ama also travelled to my world by creating a place for me in his worlds (Lugones, 1987). The bicycle represents his life and his journey guided by his determination, resilience, and quest for freedom and independence. I wondered how I would have seen his bicycle if I had not had conversations with Ama for over three months. Our relational space allowed me to see his bicycle as a part of a storied continuum and in the most dignified and dynamic way.

Our relational space was a place where Ama recalled and returned to who he was in the best moments of his life when his days were full of energy and enthusiasm. He told me that he had never been to the harbour after becoming homeless, but he finally decided to visit there when I gave him an instant camera. From the moment when Ama cheerfully told me the stories of his work at the harbour and he took initiative in our conversations, we unlocked a way to travel to each other's worlds and enter again into his brightest memories together. Again, I recalled my tension which I uneasily felt in my body, and imagined his tension of entering into a relationship. I wonder how these tensions were transformed into a momentum for both of us to creatively negotiate our relational space. Ama might have found our relational space as a place not only to re-tell and re-live his stories, but also to bring forward the good memories that lived in his body and that were woven together with his pride of being independent through homelessness. By re-telling his stories of being homeless, he also opened up the meanings of his life in the making and even resisted the influences of dominant narratives that tried to define his experiences of being homeless. In our relational space, while Ama traveled back to his past in remembrance, his life was seen, heard, and remembered and retold into stories of being and becoming, through which he strikes a root in the world (Arendt, 1958). His stories, his shy smile, and his gentle voice still echo and linger in my mind, anchoring me in warmth and remembrance that we built together.

Living with Tensions for Ethical Possibilities

“Ethics is about questioning, questioning ourselves, questioning our relationships with others and questioning our space as humans in the larger environment” (Bergum, 1999, p. 167). From the moment I entered into the soup kitchen, I was confronted with tensions about finding a space where I could ground myself and belong. I kept asking questions about who I am in this

space and who I am becoming in the relational spaces with participants. If I did not recollect those moments of various tensions with humility and sensitivity, I would not have understood what each of my tensions embraces and teaches me. Growing tensions while being situated in relationships told me in interactive ways that my understandings of what is right/good are different from those lived by Apapane and Ama. Through relational interactions, both of them invited me to be more wakeful to many other possibilities to live and tell, and to see myself and others differently and playfully (Lugones, 1987). Closely attending to the tensions in relationships invited me to patiently and carefully dwell in moments again and to pose questions for various other interpretations. This process helped me to think more deeply about the nature of relationship which was uniquely shaped through specific places, times, and other relationships (Clandinin & Caine, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Yet, questioning my tensions also made me feel vulnerable about revealing who I was in building relationships with Apapane and Ama and to regret what I did and what I did not do in shaping our relational space.

In recollecting and reflecting on my tensions, I negotiated through my imaginative ways of filling in and to attending to gaps and silences caused by tensions. Arendt, a German political theorist who critically considered the condition of human beings and human lives wrote:

Imagination alone enables us to see things in their proper perspective, to be strong enough to put that which is too close at a certain distance so that we can see and understand it without bias and prejudice, to be generous enough to bridge abysses of remoteness until we can see and understand everything that is too far away from us as though it were our own affair. (Arendt, 1994, p. 323)

Looking at my tensions in proper distances through both recollection and imagination, I sensed the emotional impacts of these tensions were mitigated; I could see who I am in relation

to Apapane and Ama has been shifting as I saw myself different while world-travelling across different worlds (Lugones, 1987). Likewise, I realized how both Apapane and Ama playfully constructed and lived in our relational space as they world-travelled into our relational space of coming together (Lugones, 1987). As I keep asking questions while recollecting, imagining, and writing my tensions, I finally started to take up what could be the ethical responses in our relationships and also where Apapane and Ama expected to travel forward/backward or inward/outward through our relational spaces.

Several months after we had left our last conversations, however, I am still not sure about my ethical responsibilities in relation to our relationships and the stories that Apapane and Ama shared with me, which seemed as difficult and indefinable as to capture the shape of the smoke drifting in the air. There are no answers given; what is true might only be understood between us in our relationships across time and places. I also wonder how I could ethically and respectfully deliver their stories to larger audiences with a hope that through these stories we might find ways to imagine otherwise (Greene, 1995) and in so doing, to transform the reality of homelessness from what is described by others to what is expressed by their voices. Within the ambiguity of ethics and alongside my shifting subjectivity, I live in uncertainty, but also in the possibilities that lie ahead. Now, the actions I take for my ethical responsibilities can be to live in relationships, truly and deeply live in them, whether we might or might not meet again. It may also mean to affectionately and persistently embrace tensions, wonders, and questions even though there are no clear answer or ending. Writing may also form a significant part of my ethical responsibility as a way of becoming while letting my life and other's lives be open and incomplete (Deleuze, 1997). As Arendt (1958) wrote, stories are one form of permanence with which our souls continue to live after our death, I will continue to live in our relationships by

remembering and writing the stories that Apapane and Ama shared with me and we co-composed together in our relational spaces.

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Chapter 10: Paper 2

“I Hope One More Flower will Bloom in My Life”: Retelling the Stories of Being Homeless in Japan through Narrative Inquiry

Abstract

In this paper, I discuss key narrative threads from a series of conversations which I engaged in with three older men who are/were homeless in Japan. Once becoming homeless, people are likely to be marginalized and made vulnerable within social and political spheres with stereotypes of stigma, shame, and/or dependency predominantly describing their bodies and lives. The voices of people who are homeless in Japan are often silenced and the multiplicity of their life experiences are undermined. In this study, I used the qualitative research methodology of narrative inquiry through which I inquired into their lived experiences of being homeless while building a relationship over several months. While I continuously reflected on their stories, I became aware of possible narrative threads that illuminate both the diversities characterizing their respective experiences in storied landscapes and the tie weaving their lives together in respectful ways. Attending closely to their lives and stories, four narrative threads of 1) living with memories of loss, 2) feeling of being without control, 3) feeling discouraged from weaving forward-looking stories, and 4) nourishing generosity amidst unexpected life circumstances are identified and considered across their stories of life together with the experiences of being homeless in Japan.

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Introduction

“I hope one more flower will bloom in my life.”

In a gentle smile, Ama breathed these words, and then took in peaceful air at the end of our last formal conversation. I replied, “I hope so. I hope more flowers are awaiting you in your life”. During the spring in Japan, cherry blossoms were blooming beautifully and soothing our eyes and minds. In his bright facial complexion, I could hardly see the hardships, which he had experienced in his life. Yet, in his eyes bearing a hint of uneasiness and endurance, I could see how many struggles and fights weighed down his body and the visions he had of himself, through being homeless. Carrying all of the stories that he had chosen to share with me, I am never able to see him and myself apart from his stories.

Homelessness has been a deep-rooted issue in Japan. Since the flourishing economy had collapsed in the early 1990s, Japan has been undergoing transformations due to the effects of an economic recessions. Accordingly, poverty has spread among people in Japan with a growing number of people enrolled in a public assistance program¹ (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare [MHLW], 2017). Along with growing poverty in Japan, more people live their lives with a sense of precarity while facing the risk of becoming homeless (Allison, 2012). Once homeless, people are likely to be marginalized within social and political spheres with stereotypes of stigma, shame, and/or dependency predominantly describing their bodies and lives. The voices of people who are homeless in Japan are often not listened to in society, while homelessness is sometimes dramatically portrayed in the media by shaping generalized images

¹ The public assistance program (called *seikatu-hogo* in Japanese) is the welfare support for low-income individuals/households, which is underpinned by the Constitution of Japan regarding the basic living rights of citizens, and administered by the municipal governments across Japan (MHLW, n.d.). Among several kinds of supports, livelihood and housing assistances are the main sources of support often offered as financial compensations to the most recipients (MHLW, 2017).

of homelessness, such as victims of random violence/harassments or furious protests against unjust sociopolitical arrangements. There are very limited studies that look closely into individual experiences of homelessness told in a form of life stories and characterized by unique voices of people who experience homelessness in Japan (Cassegard, 2013; Gill, 2015; Marr, 2015).

In this paper, I discuss key narrative threads² based on a series of conversations I engaged in with three older men who are/were homeless in Japan. In the study, I used the qualitative research methodology of narrative inquiry through which I inquired into their experiences, experiences that are recognized as a “storied phenomenon” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 33). As I have continuously been reflecting on their stories, I am more awake to their lives in the midst, stories of my life that intersect with theirs, and our relational space that we have co-constructed and lived out together. In the process of retelling and reliving (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), I have become aware of possible narrative threads that illuminate both the diversities characterizing their respective experiences in storied landscapes and the ties that weave their lives together in respectful ways. Before attending to each thread, I briefly illustrate the history, culture, and current situations of homelessness in Japan, as well as what narrative inquiry entails as a research methodology.

Homelessness in Japan

In the past, homelessness in Japan tended to be regarded as an experience among day-laborers (temporary workers), most of whom were single men living in yoseba districts³ (Hasegawa, 2005). Yoseba districts are located close to major cities in Japan and are often

² Narrative threads is understood as resonances that are echoed or reverberated across narrative accounts of participants’ stories of lives (Clandinin, 2013).

³ Yoseba means a segregated labor market for temporary/short-term works surrounded by cheap flophouses for workers (Aoki, 2003). Yoseba is often compared to the skid-row in the United States (Okamoto, 2007).

recognized as a reservoir of workforces for manufacturing and construction industries since the 1960s when Japan was aspiring toward prosperity in the post-war period of the World War II (Aoki, 2003; Kennett & Iwata, 2003). Yoseba was also an important base for day laborers to maintain both their daily lives and employment; day laborers obtain daily-based or short-term jobs at an employment center in yoseba and return to yoseba to sleep at hostels if they could afford (Hasegawa, 2005). Day laborers and yoseba districts could be earlier representations of unstable employment, precarious housing, and homelessness in Japan. Yet, as demands for these industries slowly declined in the late 1980s, growing numbers of day-laborers lost their jobs and accommodations within yoseba districts and started to move outside (Hasegawa, 2005). In the second half of the 1990s, as homelessness expanded beyond yoseba districts, homelessness began to receive more public attention in Japan (Hasegawa, 2005). At the same time, homelessness was no longer an exclusive experience among day laborers in Japan; alongside the arrival of the economic recession since the 1990s, homelessness has affected people who had no previous relations to yoseba, with a variety of backgrounds and reasons.

In Japan, except for day laborers in yoseba districts, homelessness was considered as being rather unusual or even preventable. During the flourishing economy after World War II, Japan achieved a level of socioeconomic equality among most citizens (Kennett & Iwata, 2003; Neuman, 2008). Both a close-knit family network and life-time employment used to function as significant safety nets to prevent a person from suffering from extreme poverty (Aoki, 2003; Ezawa, 2002). The three-generation family has been considered as a basic welfare unit to support each other, underpinned by the image of men as breadwinners and women staying at home to look after their children and elderly parents (Ezawa, 2002; Kennett & Iwata, 2003). Also, lifetime employment guaranteed male workers security in income by seniority and provides

various benefits for family members as well as pension plans (Ezawa, 2002; Hasegawa, 2005). However, with pervading influences of the economic recession and globalization, many companies reduced the number of employees and restructured from hiring lifetime employees to informal employees (i.e. part-time/short-term workers) to attract cheaper workforces (Ezawa, 2002; Obinger, 2009). Family structures also became more flexible with an increasing number of people choosing to live apart from their parents, get divorced, or remain single for a lifetime (MHLW, 2013). From cultural perspectives, living in poverty and dependency on welfare are attached with a sense of shame and stigma in Japan (Garon, 2002; Obinger, 2009). Due to the weakening safety nets in the current Japanese society, people who are detached from both stable income and family supports find themselves extremely vulnerable and face the heightened risk of slipping into homelessness.

Recently, in Japan, homelessness has become more invisible within public places. People begging in train stations, scavenging garbage boxes, or roaming on streets are much less noticeable compared to the past. Blue-tent villages built alongside riverbanks or in front of train stations have been mostly removed and reconstructed into paved trails or well-maintained gardens. Homelessness that used to be clearly visible in Japan has curiously been absent from the town views. The government considers homelessness in terms of extreme situations of losing fixed abodes, with the definition of homelessness as a state of living a daily life in parks, riverbeds, streets, train stations, or other facilities (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications [MIAC], 2012). According to the national survey conducted by the government (MHLW, 2016a), the number of people who are homeless has constantly decreased since the

survey started in 2003⁴. It gives an impression that homelessness has been given enough political attention and social support, therefore fewer people experience homelessness in the recent Japanese society. Yet, the data does not fully demonstrate the reality of homelessness in Japan. While effects of the downward Japanese economy has remained palpable and the feelings of insecurity even exacerbated among people across Japan (Hommerich, 2012), these transformations in landscapes only leave a strange feeling of incoherence and uncomfortable silence that are imposed upon the lives of people who are homeless in Japan.

With increased awareness toward homelessness in the early 2000s, the Japanese government enforced a law called “the special measures supporting the independence of people who are homeless” in 2002⁵ (MIAC, 2012). The special measures encourage the municipal governments to establish structured supports for employment, housing, and/or healthcare to people who experience unstable housing situations, while these supports are only implemented depending on needs assessment by each jurisdiction. With increasing policing forces governing the public spaces, people who are homeless often become a target of elimination from the public places (Okamoto, 2007). The special measures give permission to local authorities to evict people occupying public places by reason of ‘appropriate use of public places’ (MIAC, 2012). Earlier, I said that homelessness has become more invisible in the recent Japanese landscapes, but rather it involves more than invisibility, homelessness in Japan has become crucially marginalized from people’s attention and awareness.

Despite declining visibility of people who are homeless in public places in Japan, fewer people are still living on streets and showing their appearances. The national survey reported that

⁴ In 2003, the survey counted more than 25,000 people who sleep outside (MHLW, 2003). The number has decreased to 6,235 people counted in the survey in 2016 (MHLW, 2016a).

⁵ In 2002, this special measure was implemented with a fixed term of 10 years. In 2012, the deadline was extended for another five years. However, a renewed extension has not been announced at the point of February 2017.

more than 70% of people who sleep outside are male over 55 years old (MHLW, 2012). Having fewer resources to fall back on, middle-aged and older men who are unemployed and single constitute the largest segment of visible homelessness in Japan. While they fight with homelessness and transitions into aging, their individual voices are often silenced regardless of the visibilities of their bodies. Homelessness in Japan has often been perceived as a social problem that politics need to intervene to address, or a phenomenon that needs to be analyzed in terms of economics, health, or welfare/housing perspectives. However, more importantly, homelessness is a human experience and is often incorporated differently into individuals' understandings of life. In order to add different aspects to current understandings of homelessness in Japan, voices of people who are homeless need to be listened to carefully and taken care of in society.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is both a research methodology and an ontological and epistemological stance of thinking about human experiences. Narrative inquiry, described by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), is “a way of understanding experiences” (p. 20). Experience is a central focus in which experience is understood “as lived in the midst, as always unfolding over time, in diverse social contexts and in place, and as co-composed in relation” (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013, p. 575). Narrative inquiry holds close an understanding that human beings both live and tell stories about their experiences through creating meanings of their lives (Clandinin, 2006). Treating narratives as storied phenomena under study, narrative inquiry considers narratives as a way of studying human experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), or, in other words, “as a way of honoring lived experiences as a source of important knowledge and understanding” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 17). As two criteria of experience, interaction and

continuity, build an important grounding in understanding experience in narrative inquiry (Dewey, 1938), ontological and epistemological commitments are inspired by the acknowledgement of human experiences that are continuously unfolding over time and embodied through a recognized multiplicity of stories (Clandinin, 2013).

Relationship establishes an important emphasis and ethical commitment in narrative inquiry, underpinned by a view of “people in relation studying with people in relation” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189). Understood as a relational inquiry attending closely to human experiences, narrative inquiry draws attention to the significance of various relational interactions, including relationships between participants and researcher. Within a relational space marked by “ethics and attitudes of openness, mutual vulnerability, reciprocity, and care” (Clandinin & Caine, 2013, p. 169), stories are co-composed between researchers and participants while their lives intersect and interact in the midst of their storied lives (Caine et al., 2013). This relational space creates a time, place, and context in which both researchers and participants start to live, tell, retell and relive experiences⁶.

Furthermore, Clandinin and Caine (2013) mention that narrative inquiry is situated not only in research relationships, but also in communities by attending to the knowing of lives in the midst. Narrative inquiry also considers shared narratives that are infused into stories of experiences (Crites, 1971). As researchers remain awake to various relationalities embedded in stories, they also elucidate a range of social, cultural, institutional, linguistic, and familial narratives which shape stories and understandings of experiences. Acknowledging diverse

⁶ The terms of living, telling, retelling, and reliving have special meanings in narrative inquiry. First, researchers recognize that people continuously live and tell stories of their lives. The process in which researchers inquire into these lived and told experiences is called retelling stories. While retelling stories of lived and told stories, researchers and participants realize that their experiences are transforming by them since they are also reliving their stories (Clandinin, 2013).

relationalities in narrative inquiry respects the complexity of human lives through providing reflective, thoughtful, and responsive ways of understanding experiences.

In understanding stories as embedded in relationships (Caine et al., 2013), continuity also offers a significant viewpoint in narrative inquiry. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) elucidated, “Experience has a wholeness and an integrity about it that is neither left in the field nor on the pages of a field text but is alive at the end just as it is in the beginning” (p. 189). Narrative inquiry has an understanding of stories that are always partial and incomplete as they are ongoing and shifting along with time, contexts, and relationships (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009). Even after leaving formal research conversations, researchers and participants continue to live in relational ways as they continue to retell and relive stories. In narrative inquiry, field texts⁷ are retold through interim research texts in order to co-construct interpretations of stories and to more closely attend to multi-layered storied moments within a relational space (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Caine, 2013). After interim research texts are negotiated with participants, they are further developed into final research texts as representations of retold stories, so that larger public audiences may find themselves alongside those stories in collaborative ways (Clandinin & Caine, 2013).

As long-term relational responsibilities are paramount, narrative inquiry is deeply grounded in a commitment to relational ethics which recognizes the uncertainty, complexity and spontaneity of human experiences (Bateson, 1989; Clandinin, 2013), and which requires researchers to remain attentive to ethical challenges, questions, or tensions arising from each relationship (Bergum, 1999; Clandinin & Caine, 2013). As continuously engaging in retelling

⁷ Field texts are the records of the field such as conversation transcripts, journals, artifacts, and/or participant observations (Clandinin, 2013).

and reliving, researchers hold ethical responsibilities to participants by taking care of their stories and by translating them into knowledge and possibilities for changes. Nelson (1995) discusses the concept of counterstories, which provides an opportunity to resist or undermine dominant narratives in ways that remain truthful to one's expressions of identity. It is particularly significant to listen to stories of people who are often silenced and marginalized in society, because stories told by them may contain important messages of resistance and a momentum for starting new narratives and bringing transformations. Through showing four narrative threads in this paper, I hope to create an ethical moment and space where the voices of three men who are/were homeless in Japan are situated within broader contexts and attended to by larger audiences in relational ways.

Meeting Participants

Three older men who are/were homeless in Japan were participants in this narrative inquiry. I spent five months in 2015 in one city in Japan to recruit participants and have a series of weekly conversations⁸ with each of them. I returned to Japan for two months in 2016 to share and negotiate narrative accounts⁹ with them. Recruitment was done through one support organization, which provides a range of specialized supports for people who are homeless in the city. All conversations were conducted in Japanese, tape-recorded, and took place in a meeting room next to the support organization.

The names of the three participants are Ama, Yoshi, and Apapane. Ama and Yoshi have been homeless for more than ten years. Ama is a 75-year-old man who became homeless when he was 60 years old. Ama rides his bicycle more than 80 kilometers a day to collect aluminum

⁸ Weekly conversations with participants, researcher's journal, and field notes were the main sources of field texts in this study.

⁹ Researcher's writings of participants' stories are called interim texts or narrative accounts in narrative inquiry.

cans to make money. Yoshi is a 65-year-old man who lost his stable housing when he was in his early 40s. Yoshi stays inside a busy train station during daytime and sleeps at a quiet harbor during night. Apapane is a 60-year-old man who used to be homeless for one week about ten years ago. In addition to the diversities embedded in their respective life courses, Ama, Yoshi, and Apapane had different pathways into becoming homeless and live with different interpretations and perceptions attached to their experiences of being homeless. Although the recruitment was conducted with an interpretation of homelessness as a condition of losing stable housing, this assumption of homelessness was repeatedly challenged by the participants in the ways they brought their appearance into the relational spaces. The threads articulated in the paper do not intend to merge their diversities into one complete exemplification of homelessness in Japan; rather each thread delicately reveals a plurality of their voices and stories of their experiences (Greene, 1993).

When we started having conversations, all of us were uncertain and nervous about how our relationships would grow and where they would take us. Yoshi ran away from a meeting room in the middle of our first conversation. After a few meetings, Ama told me that he wanted to quit coming to the conversations because he had finished talking about his life stories. In every meeting, Apapane made explicit to me that he had a girlfriend who was suspicious of me having conversations with him. We continuously negotiated a space, distance, values, and roles in our relationships amidst uncertainty, while they were also negotiating their past by re-encountering through stories. Attending closely to the stories Ama, Yoshi, and Apapane chose to share with me, four narrative threads of 1) living with memories of loss, 2) feeling of being without control, 3) feeling discouraged from weaving forward-looking stories, and 4) nourishing

generosity amidst unexpected life circumstances are identified and considered across their life experiences of being homeless.

Narrative Threads

1. Living with memories of loss

After we divorced, my only wish was the happiness of my children...but I already gave it up, because, you know...it just made me feel miserable. I cannot believe I lived through that moment... There should have been a fortune or something because I am still alive now. (Yoshi)

Yoshi, Ama, and Apapane experienced various forms of losses in their lives before becoming homeless. Loss indicates life events that deprived them of significant connections and resources in life, and pressingly demanded them to rearrange their lives according to changes. Experiences of losses before becoming homeless were not disclosed by them in the initial period of our conversations. Yet, as we engaged in more conversations, I learned that their experiences of losses had left deep traumas in shaping their experiences of being homeless now. As Kerby (1991) wrote “the past is tributary to the very meaning of the present” (p. 19); prior experiences of losses have left them with a sense of vulnerability which has been carried through after being homeless. As I continue living alongside them, I realized how much their memories of loss created unresolved dissonances in their perceptions of life. As one loss was linked with another loss, continuous experiences of losses have gradually determined directions in their lives away from their own wills and discouraged them with a sense of vulnerability. When these losses accumulated and seriously started changing their lives, they found it almost impossible to handle their losses by themselves.

Yoshi's experience of loss in his early childhood created unsettling fragments he had to live with. Yoshi lost his parents when he was eight years old; one day, his parents disappeared all of sudden, leaving Yoshi and his younger sister alone at home. Without understanding the situation at all, he had to take sole responsibility for the survival of himself and his younger sister. In his confusions and struggles to survive, he built a road from his backyard to a river to catch fish every day. The road to the river made with old bricks, stones, and roof tiles discarded on the ground represented his quest for strength and his resistance against the abrupt impacts of loss. Also, living in extreme poverty, he could not play with a freedom experienced by other children. Despite overwhelming hardships, he devised a way to remain as a child as he creatively crafted a toy from bamboo. A year later, Yoshi and his sister were sent to different orphanages; since then, he lost contact with his sister who was his only family member. As Yoshi was slowly recollecting the pieces of his childhood stories, I sensed how much his memories were blurred and removed from himself, as if he was caught between forgetting and consolidating his emotional pains caused by the memories of loss from the most fundamental relationship with his parents and the subsequent separation from his sister.

In his later life, his experiences of loss not only distressed him, but also brought more direct impacts toward his transitioning into homelessness. Yoshi finally obtained a sense of family when he married at 18 years old and had three children. However, Yoshi was divorced when he was in his early 40s, and was told by his ex-wife that their children would be happier without him. He told his children, *"I am not going home for a long period of time, so you should help each other"*. His divorce painfully called forth his earlier experiences of losing his family. In dismay of losing contact with his children, Yoshi engaged in countless temporary jobs in one of the yoseba districts, but he eventually found it difficult to obtain even a temporary job because

of his age and the enduring economic recession in Japan. Yoshi also mentioned the dispensable nature of a day-labor market by saying, *“In our job, if we made any mistake, we were immediately fired. We were not allowed to learn from mistakes”*. Losing means to support his life, he chose to move to the current city far from where he used to live with his ex-wife and children. Yoshi became homeless, while holding close the reminiscence of family. I could see how he still pursues a sentiment of family in his imagination, as he frequently walks to an amusement park to watch a colorful merry-go-round, Ferris wheel, and families from a distance. Looking back to the days when he had spent time with family, Yoshi said:

The significant moment in my life was...when I had my three kids... I think I changed a lot when I had an enthusiasm to raise my three kids. The younger was Grade 9, the second one was in a high school, and the oldest one was already working when I divorced. I was so happy when I started to have my family...

In their recollections of becoming homeless, stories of their important relationships were recurrently brought up and closely woven into their stories of transitioning periods into homelessness. Before becoming homeless, all of them experienced a strong sense of isolation brought by the loss of their close relationships, especially separations from their families. While Yoshi was separated from his younger sister when he was young, Ama and Apapane also lost contact with their siblings after their parents passed away because both of them feel embarrassed to let their siblings know that they are/were homeless. Separations from kinship marked the beginning of their changing life circumstances and provoked various hidden issues.

“I will never be able to forget that moment. It was too painful for me. My life was completely changed. I was in despair and wished to die at that moment” (Ama)

Ama disclosed his pain when recalling the memories of losing his parents. As he has not married in his life, his parents were particularly important in shaping his sense of family. Ama lost his parents when he was sixty years old. When Ama lost his parents, he also lost his place in his family as he was excluded from his siblings and the family-owned lumber business that his father founded. Like Yoshi, after becoming homeless, Ama still lives in the memories of his lumber job at a harbor, which takes him back to the memories of his beloved father and mother. In his way of talking about his lumber job and parents, I could see that his storied landscapes are still fresh and animated, going parallel to his current life of being homeless.

Apapane also has not married in his life and lost the connection to his family when he lost his mother in his 50s. Soon after her death, he quit his job and spent most of his savings in a few months. When he depleted all of his money, he was evicted from his apartment and became homeless. Without fully dealing with damages from the losses, Yoshi, Ama, and Apapane had found themselves quickly slipping into a situation of homelessness, which was an unexpected and unprepared life event for them.

In their stories of painful losses, they simultaneously internalized a deep silence in their voices and in their memories to protect themselves from the disabling effects of loss. Apapane conveyed his impressions about retelling his experiences of losses by saying:

Looking back at my life, I have many unpleasant stories. I have many stories which I'm not willing to tell. To be honest, a part of myself is telling me that I do not want to talk everything about my difficulties in life because it means I have to re-experience all kinds of negative emotions. I feel these emotions are lingering at a corner of my mind, but I just let them sleep.

Their memories of loss created interruptions in their narratives of self-conceptions (Nelson, 2001). I perceived ambivalences and anxieties that characterized their recollections of loss. In their hesitant ways of talking about their losses, I sensed countless voids and silences buried within their stories of life. Moreover, when their distressing memories of losses are juxtaposed with the prevailing notions of shame and stigma toward homelessness in Japan, it further complicates their experiences of suffering (Nelson, 2001). On one hand, their retellings of loss could entail a possibility of calling forth the memories of home and belonging where their identities are rooted and embedded, such as Yoshi's three children and Ama's lumber work at a harbor. On the other hand, this retelling process can be excruciating. Experiences of continuous loss gradually took away their spirits to resist and their possible resources to stand up again, creating feelings of exclusion from various meaningful participation in life. All of them disclosed hopelessness in losing familial relationships that were used to maintain their sense of home and their identity. Subsequently, they lost their job, money, and a sense of relatedness to community, society, and others, which are all interrelated. Their experiences of relational loss might signify a state of homelessness even before they lost their places to live. Experiencing losses, that is, the memories of isolation and exclusion from their most intimate and essential relationships, could powerfully diminish and conflict with their fundamental values preserving their dignity and coherence in their stories of past, present, and future.

2. Feeling of being without control

The welfare offices refuse to see individual visitors at the door. They didn't even let me talk with a person in charge. So, until I finished up all of my small savings, I had to visit several municipal offices across the city to apply for the welfare program. But, after

asking a few quick questions about my job, family, and money, all of them just simply said no and declined my claim. (Apapane)

Amidst distressing repercussions of multiple losses, Yoshi, Ama, and Apapane found themselves facing a critical time of becoming homeless. Without stable income, secured housing, and available supports, the public assistance program was their last hope to prevent them from becoming homeless or to help get them out of homelessness. Yet, when they were alone in the most vulnerable situations, the necessary supports were not easily accessible to them. Before becoming homeless, all of them attempted to manage situations by themselves by visiting welfare offices to ask for supports, but their requests were rejected. While they were poised at the edge of becoming homeless, this experience of rejection decisively disconnected them from the last remaining resources and left them with helpless feelings of being without control over their changing life circumstances. This feeling of being without control just before becoming homeless was particularly painful as they had to face up to unforeseeable difficulties and dynamic changes encroaching on their lives.

The feeling of being without control also forced them to encounter many injustices in society. Before becoming homeless, Apapane went to the welfare office to apply for the public assistance program, but his request was declined; welfare officers assumed that he should have some remaining financial savings because he quit his job only a few months earlier. Ama also attempted to obtain welfare supports, but he was told that he should ask for support from his siblings first. Regardless of their unique life situations and special needs, only people who meet the criteria of the welfare program are eligible for supports. Also, the voices of individuals who are in desperate need of help are tenuous; unless their needs are defined by the welfare offices as urgent life-threatening needs, which require immediate actions, their crises are not fully

understood or recognized. Through the criteria for receiving welfare support, it may also demonstrate a hidden selection process in the society in regards to whose voice are heard, and who will be supported among people living in various precarious situations.

Rejection of welfare supports often directly caused them to sleep outside. In their respective process of slipping into homelessness, they were faced with the fragility of individual agency in relation to structural forces. After losing a place to sleep, Apapane went to a park and slept on a bench. Although Apapane chose to stay in his hometown after becoming homeless, he chose to sleep away from his neighbors because of embarrassment. In his first night at a park, he met one man who was also living homeless. Apapane was invited by him to sleep together under the eaves of a cafeteria at a public library. There, he met three other men sleeping together whom he soon found out were drug addicts. Apapane told me that he was scared to be involved with them and to become a target. At such moment, he was approached by one female staff member from the support organization, who was doing a night patrol. She encouraged him to visit the support organization. With their assistance he was finally successfully connected to the welfare supports and given an apartment within a week.

Being told by the welfare office to ask for support from his siblings, Ama thought that he would have to give up asking for support from the welfare services and at that time he was forced to become homeless. Although he knew his sister's phone number, he never called her number. Ama said, "*I didn't want to bother my sister anyways.*" For the participants, there was a sense of shame and embarrassment in disclosing their difficulties to others. This also contributed to their experiences of a lack of control, as it hindered them from reaching out for support and resources to address their situations.

After becoming homeless, Ama learned from his peers on the streets that he could get assistance from a support organization in applying to welfare services. After a few years of being homeless, Ama was exhausted from his harsh life on streets, and finally asked for help. With assistance from a support organization, Ama obtained an apartment and financial support from the welfare services. Ama similarly expressed the fragility of individual agency by saying, *“People at the welfare office didn’t help me when I was alone, but they helped me when an organization was behind me. The power of organizations is way stronger than I thought”*. If Ama had not asked for help from a support organization, perhaps he would have never been able to access the public assistance program.

However, after a few years, Ama left the apartment. In an annoyed tone, he said:

A welfare officer randomly visited my apartment and checked my room. I was annoyed by their visits. As my apartment was regularly inspected by an officer, I felt obliged to clean up my apartment, do laundry, and hang my futon outside for sterilizing under sunshine. All of these housekeeping chores were troublesome to me. And I felt bored to stay in the apartment alone. I had been getting tired of that life and thought it was much better to live without an apartment. I noticed that I don’t like to be restricted by others.

Surveillance of a welfare officer took away a sense of freedom and independence from Ama. Because of the burden that his life was under regular inspection and that he had to maintain his apartment well, he made a decision to leave the apartment. For Ama, that apartment was not a ‘home’, as his life was restricted by the surveillance of others. Closed off from others and the surrounding world, he experienced a sense of homelessness within an apartment. When his identity was described through a recipient of welfare supports, the complexity of his life was

reduced into pieces imposed and prescribed by others, which took away Ama's sense of control and autonomy over designing and planning his life.

Struggling hard and on the verge of becoming homeless, all three participants lived in uncertainty and isolation without a sense of control, though they knew that their lives were swiftly drifting in unanticipated directions. Yoshi worked as a day laborer after his divorce, but it had become more difficult to find a job at yoseba district. In his desperation, he knocked on every factory's door to find a job, but he was rarely successful. A feeling of being without control disrupted him from cultivating outlooks for the future and securing a vital way to manage his life. Yoshi expressed his feelings of hopelessness of losing possibilities to earn money:

I am willing to work even now...but I got tired of this society. Once getting old, nobody is interested in hiring me because many employers have strict age-limit...nobody will be interested in me.

Feeling without control amidst dramatic changes in life, Yoshi, Ama, and Apapane lived with a sense of abandonment from people, society, the welfare agencies, and their "identity-constituting" (Nelson, 2001, p. 74) narratives. Repeatedly, they had to negotiate and balance between their pride and distressing events in their shifting life situations. In every transition, they had to make sense of realities, which were neither desirable nor favorable to them. Apapane recollected the moment when he received public assistance and said;

I was not willing to receive the public assistance program to be honest, but I had no other choices left. Yet, actually, I was more unwilling to rely on people such as my friends or my ex-colleagues. I know this unwillingness was coming from my pride. So, I thought it was better to rely on the welfare, yet consequently I was rejected many times. Then,

without any other resources, I said to myself 'Okay. Let's become homeless for a while', even though I was not sure how long it would take...one week or one month. I was carelessly thinking 'while living on the streets as a homeless for a while, I would probably figure out how to address this situation'. But, I did not have any knowledge and information, so I could not think anything about my future after becoming homeless.

3. Feeling discouraged from weaving forward-looking stories

I try not to think about it...I mean anything. If I think about my life, I feel miserable and cannot hope for the future. So, I always try to sleep before I start thinking. I would say this life is not a good life. (Yoshi)

After becoming homeless and experiencing multiple losses and a lack of control, Yoshi, Ama, and Apapane experiences a sense of hopelessness to envision their future. Whenever I asked Yoshi if he wishes anything for the future, Yoshi looked puzzled and hesitant. After an extended moment of thinking, Yoshi always replied that he only lives day by day without thinking about the future. By his way of saying, "*I would say this life is not a good life*", his distress was clear and striking. I anxiously felt his denial toward his life. Eventually, I found myself avoiding asking questions about his future as I was afraid of unintentionally imposing distress onto Yoshi. In my hesitation, I had been seeking for ways in which we could co-compose stories and meanings of life to honor his life (Bruner, 2004; Kerby, 1991). With continuous experiences of feeling deserted from relationships and marginalized in society, Yoshi might have suffered from a damaged sense of identity which took away the possibility of building positive, concrete views for his future life (Nelson, 2001).

In our conversations, all of the participants expressed, in various ways, a feeling of helplessness in their lives and a deprivation of autonomy to make their decisions meaningful in their lives. Experiencing a lack of power and autonomy significantly discouraged them from weaving forward-looking stories¹⁰ that linked them with the coherence of their past and present stories of being homeless and with their stories to live by¹¹ (Clandinin, 2013). As Yoshi barely embraced strength to remain himself and hope to envision the future, he expressed:

Now, I'm in the lowest bottom of my life. Actually, I still cannot believe that I am living a life like this. Poverty has beaten me so hard, which made my heart weak and exhausted. Because I have been in poverty for a long time, I guess my personality has turned selfish and nasty... I know a life is not about money...I know I'm the owner of my life and I should remain strong in my mind. But I think this poverty has finally screwed up my life.

Moreover, societal stigma further distresses each of them and exhausts their bodies so they are unable to envision their futures and compose forward-looking stories. Similar to Yoshi, Ama has gone through countless difficulties of being homeless. Ama told that the most painful thing in his life is to be hit by an empty can and firecracker, or shouted at by strangers with insulting words while he is sleeping outside. At a fast-food restaurant where he usually takes his breakfast, he is often targeted by young gangsters and once almost had his wallet stolen. Stigma also increases their consciousness of isolation and separation from people and worlds. The despair and fatigue inflicted by the stigma that Ama experienced deeply in his body, impinged on

¹⁰ Three dimensional narrative inquiry space of temporality, sociality, and place help to understand stories from inward and outward and backward and forward across places (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Forward-looking stories signify a space and an opportunity where people can project the meaning of life and imagine their possible future stories and who they are becoming, with more prospect and coherence to their past and present stories of who they were/are (Bruner, 2004; Carr, 1986; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

¹¹ Stories to live by is a narrative term that speaks of “the stories that each of us lives out and tells of who we are, and are becoming” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 53). Stories to live by manifest the multiplicity of self-sustaining stories underpinned by the interconnectedness of shifting relationships, temporality, contexts, and places (Clandinin, 2013).

him and disempowered him to imagine things being otherwise (Greene, 1995). Telling stories of his experiences, Ama sounded embarrassed. However, Ama made it clear that he wishes to continue his life of being homeless in the future. Through his determination to stay homeless, I could also see his resistance against the troubling forces. When I asked him how he handles discriminative gazes and actions, Ama replied, *“I always feel I’m despised by others simply because I am homeless, but I have already given up fighting with the stigma because these people would never understand how I live.”* His voice entailed frustration to intolerance and impositions in society, by which his daily life and his stories of life have been repeatedly compromised and misrepresented. Yet, he also holds close the strength with which he strives to nurture his forward-looking stories.

In addition to the stigma, living on the streets often forces them to pay most of their attention to the daily maintenance of their lives. Struggling to find a place for sleeping, Ama had been fighting with others in public places that were unwelcoming. One night when Ama tried to take a momentary sleep in front of a train station, a security guard came and told him to move immediately. As he was exhausted from his long day of collecting cans, he desperately shouted *“Let me sleep here! It’s a matter of life and death!”* Ama’s body desperately strives for a place to rest, even momentarily. Ama finally found a secure sleeping place in front of a shopping mall, but he has to leave very early in the morning before a cleaning company arrives in order to avoid being yelled at and being kicked out. Saying that he lives day by day, Yoshi told me that he is not even sure if he will be able to obtain a meal tomorrow or where he will end up spending his day. Without feeling a sense of security, both Yoshi and Ama are challenged to think beyond their daily struggles in their current lives. Also, unpredictability in life considerably reduces guaranteed choices and resources in planning their days. Whether it is a good working

opportunity or a distressing stigma, they often have to receive whatever comes to their lives without preparation and buffers. In later conversations, Ama shared with me that he wishes to watch the Olympic Games in Tokyo in 2020 on TV and he hopes to lie down on tatami¹² again when he is dying. I wonder what different forward-looking stories Ama might tell if he could choose and have access to more options and resources with certainty. All of the difficulties and uncertainties in maintaining their day-to-day living demand a lot of energy and interfere with their freedom of choosing, imagining, and taking action on their forward-looking stories.

The harsh living environments on the street also seriously influence their health conditions, which affect their views toward forward-looking stories. As Ama had to spend cold nights in the winter outside without a blanket, he suffered from chronic fatigue due to the deprivation of sleep. After being homeless for more than ten years, he has recently felt a strong sickness in his body and he was diagnosed with a severe heart disease. Despite recommendations from social and healthcare workers to return to an apartment, Ama insisted on staying homeless to preserve his independence. After being discharged from a hospital, Ama returned to the streets and immediately started collecting cans to make money. As he does not have health insurance, he has to pay the full amount of fees for his visits to a clinic and for his medications. Even though he is supposed to take medication every day, he secretly skips taking medications so that he can save some tablets to postpone his visit to a clinic. In ambiguity and in extreme fatigue and anxiety, Ama wishes to sustain his weakening body day by day and his life of being homeless, without knowing what will happen tomorrow and where his health issues would direct him in his future life. Ama articulated how carefully he plans his everyday life with a handful of money and how, paradoxically, he has to sacrifice his health after having a diagnosis. Ama said:

¹² *Tatami* is a traditional flooring material for Japanese housing, which is made of tightly woven straws.

I used up all of my little savings for my hospital visits and medications. Now, I need to work even harder and save at least 600 yen (about 6 dollars) a day to prepare for my next visit to the hospital. Since I got my diagnosis, I have to skip either my meals, laundry, or taking shower.

Ama and Yoshi live their lives with a sense of ‘being challenged to imagine the future’, where their perceived continuities of past, present, and future are hindered and their wishes to envision the future are repressed. Looking back on his life of being homeless, Apapane reflected that he is still unwilling to recall stories of being homeless even after ten years. For Apapane, the period of being homeless created a temporal void, which he tries to forget and to isolate from his understanding of life. Similarly, from the silence and hesitant ways Yoshi and Ama expressed their futures, I felt that it seemed they composed their present stories while disregarding their future stories, just like they experienced a sense of disconnection from the continuum of their past stories due to the multiple losses. It seems that the present of being homeless is cut off from the flow of the past to the future in their subjectivity (Kerby, 1991). This feeling of detachment from forward-looking stories must be distressing and taxing to them. Yet, I also wonder if, in their avoidance, their survival skills to live in the present may be contained. Continuous hardships in daily life, painful experiences of stigma in society, and their harsh living environments on the streets eventually have taken away spaces, means, alternatives, and certainty to envision their futures. Regardless, they dare to find ways to sustain their bodies and stories.

4. Nourishing generosity amidst unexpected life circumstances

In our last conversation in 2015, Yoshi said, “I still cannot believe that I am living this life of being homeless“. He continued:

But, you know...I have to keep moving forward, otherwise I don't know why I was born in this world and given this life. Well...even though I grew up in poverty, this is my life. There should be some Enn (an invisible power of connecting people by fate in Japanese) in my life. I assume that a life should be full of events...such as new connections with people. I think I am getting distressed in my life...but I think this is Enn that I could talk with you like this. If you have any good news, please share with me. This will also be my happiness and encouragement in my life.

Relational knowing, as we co-compose and attend closer to each other's stories, opposes the tendency of knowing homelessness with abstraction (Greene, 1995). A dialogue which started between a researcher and a participant has evolved into a relational journey characterized by openness and mutuality. Slowly and gradually our evolving relationships have allowed a space for expressing care and hope to each other. Travelling to their worlds, I engaged myself to see, feel, and imagine their worlds from their perspectives while making them visible in my world (Lugones, 1987).

To our conversations, I brought some snacks and something to drink for them. Before starting a conversation, Yoshi always divided the snacks into half and shared them with me. Sometimes, he clumsily took a bottle of green tea from his pocket and thrust it toward me on a table. On the dusty surface of a bottle of tea, I imagined his life and perceived his thoughtfulness to our relationship. One day, Yoshi even shared his last piece of sliced bread with me, which must have been vital food for him, but he insisted on giving it to me. I deeply appreciated his

gesture of care. In our first conversation, he barely glanced at me and suddenly ran away. After listening to his stories of abrupt separation from his parents and painful divorce, I became more aware of his fear and confusion of engaging in a relationship. Despite his noticeable anxiety of building a relationship with me, Yoshi always came on time to our appointments, engaged in weekly conversations with me, and even prepared in his pocket something to offer to me. Yoshi courageously took a step forward into our relational space and actively participated by showing his care to me and situating our relationship as a part of his life.

In recurring attempts to maintain independence in his life, Ama has found motivations and encouragements for his life in Christianity. After becoming homeless, he decided to be baptized at the age of sixty-five. Ama likes to read the Bible and goes to a mass every Sunday. In our conversations, he frequently invited me to join the mass at his church. He expressed how his faith supported and transformed his life:

I pray whenever I want, because I feel like somebody is listening to me through a prayer. Even if it is an illusion, this feeling of being listened to pretty much eases my mind. I also pray for my health...When I pray, I slightly feel better and relieved.

Ama looked bright and happy when I visited him at Sunday mass one day. As he excitedly introduced a pastor to me, I realized that the church and his faith now offer a place for him to belong and to feel at home. After becoming homeless, Ama has never lost his compassion and consideration toward others. In his gentle smile and friendly voice stretched throughout our conversations, I perceived that he deeply embraces his trust in people and his willingness to live in a relationship. When I shared my story of coming to Canada by myself, he deeply sympathized with my experiences of feeling lonely in an unfamiliar world. When we met, he

always poured half of his coffee in my cup. He shaped a peaceful atmosphere between us by carefully listening to my stories and taking care of our growing relationship and our shared stories. I wondered, while he diligently collects cans to support his life, if his memories of his beloved parents and of his passion for his lumber job may still continue to nourish his genuine sympathy towards others and his positive attitude toward his life. Yet, in his hesitant intervals of sharing his experiences and in his nervous eyes, I recognized his countless difficulties and struggles. When Ama revealed that he was recently diagnosed with a heart disease, he regretfully told me, *“Next time, I hope to share good news with you, though this time was bad news.”* I sensed hope and strength, that he has protected and tolerantly cultivated throughout his life, have continuously been sustaining his stories to live by and now are planted in our relational space. Reflecting on his life, Ama conveyed his perception and interpretation of being homeless in his life:

This life...I think this life as a homeless is one of the trials given by God. Now getting older, I guess this is the worst part of my life. I never thought about my life as a homeless. When I overcome these difficulties accompanying with being homeless, I believe something better will happen in my life.

Although it is challenging, Ama strives to make sense of his experience and continue to build a coherence in life. At the end of our last conversation, Ama said, *“I hope one more flower will bloom in my life”*. After our many encounters, I am never able to see Ama through his homelessness, rather I see and remember him through his deep generosity unveiled in our relationship, which has been unceasingly nurtured by his stories of life and by his unbroken strength.

Yoshi and Ama continue to embrace and nourish generosity amidst their lives of being homeless. However, being homeless is nevertheless a distressing and unexpected life experience for them. Looking back his life, Apapane told:

Well...I would say rather than a hardship...I had no such experiences of being homeless in my life, so I was puzzled over how to address the situation. Like, I was walking in the darkness...I mean I had no information and knowledge at all to hang onto. Well...now I guess I went through a valuable experience people rarely experience.

By saying so, his roving eyes and voice carried forward unresolved sufferings. From his current viewpoint after ten years of getting out of homelessness, Apapane is still unable to incorporate his past experience of being homeless into his stories of life. Apapane manages to weigh between his sympathy for people who are homeless and his dislike of lending a hand to them. He continues:

If I happen to see people who are homeless on streets, I feel like talking to them. But, I found another part of me wanting to avoid them. So, I have two different sides of me. In one side, I really want to offer my hands to help them or even give something. But I also have another side...the opposite side of me.

For Apapane, people who are homeless are ‘peers’ with whom he deeply sympathizes, but they also are ‘others’ from whom he wants to take a distance. Apapane still visits the support organization to participate in a weekly roundtable meeting where anybody who experience(d) unstable housing can come and share stories. In his regular visits to the support organization, he demonstrates his deep appreciation to the support organization for assisting him to re-establish

his life in an apartment. Apapane named the support organization as his second hometown after losing his parents and home. He always brought chocolate to the roundtable meetings and tried to support peers by encouraging them to exit from a life on the streets. Holding ambivalence and alienation toward homelessness, Apapane attempts to associate with them through giving support, and by doing so, he may also try to explore possibilities of telling his stories of being homeless in different ways.

All of the participants embraced and expressed generosity in our relational space. As we continued to have more conversations, stories of their lives, my life, and our co-composed life, Yoshi, Ama, and Apapane invited me to transcend one-dimensional knowing of homelessness in Japan. Viewing their personal experiences of being homeless in relation to the public views of homelessness in Japan, I realize a huge gap in knowledge and, from a relational point of view, I painfully perceive the devastating influences of stereotypes and discrimination. Attending closer to their voices and lives in relational ways, I learned to recognize to carefully situate perspectives and consciousness in understanding homelessness in Japan (Greene, 1995). Their expressions of generosity were affectionate and heartwarming, showing, through their presence, actions, and words, that they fully lived in the moment and our relationship. Their gestures of generosity embody the resistance against demands of dominant narratives of homelessness and summon up an attention for multiplicity of knowing from within the midst of their lives.

Conclusion

Through our conversations over five months in two years, the bodies and stories of Ama, Yoshi, and Apapane's lives clearly appeared to my perceptions and shaped my way of knowing within our relational space. The more deeply I travelled into their worlds (Lugones, 1987), the more clearly I saw how differently they are storied in different worlds. Also, I often posed

questions to myself and engaged in contemplation. What are my/our assumptions of homelessness? How do I/we know people who are homeless in Japan? Is it an authentic way of knowing or construed in abstraction? Conversations as relational collaboration broke the silence of ignorance and allowed the traces of their lives to be illuminated and expressed in respectful and creative ways through their words and thoughts (Neumann, 1997). As stories were co-composed at the intersection of my life and their lives (Clandinin, 2013), I also became aware of how I used to view homelessness from outside with having unexamined assumptions. I believe once I received the stories told by Yoshi, Ama, and Apapane, their stories begin to be interwoven into my stories and to change how I live my life. As Basso wrote, becoming awakened to stories allows the possibility that “The story is working on you now” (Basso, 1996, p. 59) changing how I see the others and their worlds. Now, I find myself being wakeful of my relational responsibilities toward their stories as I live with them throughout my life (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Living or having lived without homes, Yoshi’s, Ama’s and Apapane’s bodies carry numerous untold and unarticulated stories waiting to be given voices, meanings, and care. Indeed, some of the stories they shared in our conversations were told for the first time. At the end of our conversations, Ama showed his appreciation for our meetings by saying, *“I’m sure I will never have this opportunity twice in my life”*, which could imply the significance of a relational space where his untold stories are given a chance to be liberated from the silence.

Often times when stories are told about people who are homelessness, the complex untold stories by people who are homeless collide and are dislocated. Most often Ama, Yoshi and Apapane’s bodies are unreasonably defined through “a single story” (Adichie, 2009) characterized by shame and stigma (Obinger, 2009). Adichie (2009) elaborated that, “The single

story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story". When the complexity of their lives is told through stories, it entails the power to challenge the stereotypical single story and the possibility to expand/rewrite new understandings of homelessness in Japan. Homelessness as a single category, could dangerously reduce the distinctiveness of individual lives living in the midst of homelessness. More attention needs to be directed toward personal experiences to understand the intersection and multiplicity of lives of people who live(d) homelessness in Japan. As Lugones (1987) affirmed, "We are fully dependent on each other for the possibility of being understood and without this understanding we are not intelligible, we do not make sense, we are not solid, visible, integrated, we are lacking" (p. 8). Understanding people who are homeless by living alongside them in ways that open up relational spaces, could be a way of building connections, increase awareness, and constitute a part of caring and loving perceptions and worlds (Lugones, 1987).

"I want to see people around me...I mean, I don't want to shut myself up", said Ama when asked why he wishes to remain homeless. However challenging and tormenting he finds his life of being homeless, he embraces a hope to situate his life among people and relate to others. In various transitions in their lives, Yoshi, Ama, and Apapane have experienced major interruptions and struggles, which seriously disempowered them. Facing unexpected life events of being homeless, all of them felt rejected and abandoned from others, society, and a place where they locate their bodies. Although homelessness is frequently represented by vulnerability or sufferings, their stories are imbued with determination and aspiration. Unpacking their stories through weaving intertwining narrative threads, I heard the silence embedded in their lives

growing into the roar (Eliot, 1994) that intrigued me to stay perceptive to every sign, call, and void engraved in their stories and into our relational journeys.

Furthermore, diversities within the experiences of being homeless, elucidated through the narrative threads, offer opportunities for policy makers and social/healthcare workers to re-examine their knowledge of homelessness and provide more individualized care and supports. For example, job opportunities for middle-aged to older people who experience precarious housing need to be improved in Japan. Yoshi, Ama, and Apapane had trouble finding jobs and having a secure income after they had lost their family supports and as they got older. For them, having a secure income was crucial. Yet, even though they were willing and desperate to work, the competitive labor market and the age limit often deprived them of an opportunity to find a job. Losing stable income directly threatened their housing status as they lost the last safety net. More arrangements that would increase employment opportunities for middle-aged to older people could help people who experience precarious housing and a lack of family supports, to maintain their lives without asking for welfare supports and becoming homeless.

Both Ama and Apapane experienced rejections in applying for the public assistance program, though they had no other choice but to depend on welfare supports. These experiences of being unable to find jobs and to obtain welfare supports drove their lives into fragility without a source of income and supports, and place them at a greater risk of becoming homeless. Finally, they were able to receive welfare supports with assistance from a support organization after becoming homeless. Yet, I wonder if they could have obtained supports in earlier moments, would their experiences have been different. To ensure welfare supports are available to people who need them in timely manner, a space and supporting professionals that they can visit and consult for assistance, need to be organized with free/low cost and accessibility. Comprehensive

supports for people experiencing a transitional period into homelessness, such as with finding employments and/or applying for the welfare program, could meaningfully reduce their perceived challenges through mitigating their experiences of transitions. Apapane did not know about the welfare program and support organizations until he became homeless. Supporting resources and information should be made accessible and spread within reach of people.

After becoming homeless, Yoshi and Ama encountered countless difficulties of being homeless. Their subjective health status and well-being have been crucially compromised due to the harsh living environments and the stigma directed at them. The health and well-being of people experiencing homelessness need careful attention and comprehensive support. For example, a safe place for sleeping would provide a place for Ama to take a good quality sleep and to escape from rough weather and the fear of sudden offences from others. There is a temporary shelter in the city where Ama lives, but he has to wait in a line-up to enter. The rooms when he was granted entrance were not clean. More accessible and welcoming shelters for people who are homeless are significant and for Ama would guarantee a sense of security, privacy, and rest. Ama also experienced a barrier to access to health care because he did not have a health insurance card and his worries for being referred to an apartment again. More considerations need to be given to ensure full access to health care supports for people who are homeless in Japan, this includes the integration of outreach supports given by health care providers to reduce potential access barriers.

Along with aging and homelessness, Yoshi and Ama embodied, through their stories, uncertainties for the future and a feeling of isolation as a result of stigma, which distressed and discouraged them emotionally. In our conversations, Yoshi, Ama, and Apapane revealed various interpretations and meanings attached to their experiences of being homeless in Japan; while

Apapane hoped to return an apartment, Yoshi and Ama wanted to stay homeless. To provide supports that are attentive to individual's view of life, interdisciplinary supports are necessary to create a caring community where people who are homeless feel a sense of belonging and are listened to in relational ways. By attending closely to the stories of people who are often marginalized and silenced in society, I believe each of us could slowly but possibly bring about important transformations for achieving a more equitable and just society.

In the end, again, I recall Ama's words, "*I hope one more flower will bloom in my life*". His voice opened up the space between us, around us, and into the future. His gentle smile calls forth the warmth of relationship and embodies the brightness of his life that would flourish through an acknowledgment of his stories, his life experiences.

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Chapter 11: Paper 3

Recognizing the Body as being Political: Considering Arendt's Concepts in the Context of Homelessness in Japan

Abstract

People who are homeless inhabit public spaces; their bodies appear. Yet, their body is frequently not seen as a political stance to be addressed. In modern times, human rights have been transformed from the entitlement of all human beings into the exclusive privilege of citizenship that determines inclusion/exclusion of community membership and political assembly. In this paper, I consider human rights and citizenship concepts in Japan by referring to the distinction between public and private realms articulated by Arendt, and by drawing on the experiences of people who are homeless in Japan. In such a way, I try to convey that the body of people who are homeless showing in public places can be understood as a form of a political action against what is uncritically incorporated into unjust sociopolitical arrangements marginalizing bodies, voices, and experiences of people who are homeless.

Keywords: Homelessness, Japan, Hannah Arendt, citizenship, human rights, recognition,

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Introduction: Meeting Yoshi and Ama

To be honest...to tell the truth...I have an apartment. I am not homeless! But I cannot go back to that apartment for some reason which I cannot tell you right now. If I tell you everything, I will be in the trouble. I need to inquire into these issues first by myself. Also, I have three kids...the oldest is 46 years old. I need to ask them. If the issue is solved, I will come here again to ask for your consultation...

In a trembling voice, Yoshi¹ abruptly broke the awkward silence and stood up to leave the room without waiting for my response. It happened ten minutes into our first conversation in a small meeting room of a support organization that assists people who are homeless. In confusion, I watched his back staggering toward a door and walking into the rain without an umbrella while holding huge plastic bags in both hands. Seeing his back which merged into the gray foggy rain, I wondered where he was heading, where he would rest, and where he situates his life, while carrying his fragile body and the huge luggage that pulled his body in both directions like a storm tossed ship.

After losing a job and becoming homeless at the age of 60, Ama visited a welfare office to apply for the public assistance program² for low-income households, but his request was rejected after a quick investigation into his family history. He was advised that he should ask his

¹ This paper is based on a study in which I have inquired into the experiences of people who are homeless in Japan using narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is understood as a qualitative research methodology and as a storied phenomenon to understand experiences through the three dimensional narrative inquiry space of place, temporality, and sociality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Clandinin (2013) elucidates a relational emphasis of narrative inquiry as “people in relation studying people in relation” (p. 141). Ontological and epistemological commitments in narrative inquiry are grounded in interaction and continuity of experiences (Dewey, 1938). I met Yoshi and Ama through a non-profit support organization in 2015 and both of them agreed to have a series of conversation with me over three months in 2015. Both Yoshi and Ama are men over the age of 65 who are currently homeless in one urban city in Japan and who have been sleeping outside for over ten years.

² The public assistance program (*seikatu hogo*) is a welfare program offered by the Japanese government to low-income individuals and households. The public assistance program consists of eight kinds of supports including livelihood, housing, education, medical services, long-term care, maternity, vocational training, and funeral arrangements (Hommerich, 2012). Among them, livelihood and housing assistances are the major source of support given to most recipients as financial compensations.

siblings first for support³. Since he has never married and has not been in touch with his siblings for a long time, Ama decided he had to give up asking support from the welfare service, which was his very last resort. Being left alone with no means, Ama tried hard to find a job in an increasingly competitive labor market in Japan, but he was not successful due to a lack of a fixed address and his older age. In seeking possibilities to ensure his survival and regain independence, Ama decided to become homeless. Riding his bicycle, he makes scarce money through collecting aluminum cans every day.

Homelessness in Japan

Before the 1980s, homelessness had been rather invisible in Japan since people without fixed addresses had most likely stayed within segregated *yoseba* districts⁴ while working as day laborers for manufacturing and construction industries (Aoki, 2003; Hasegawa, 2005; Kennett & Iwata, 2003). However, along with declining needs for these industries, growing numbers of day laborers in *yoseba* districts lost their jobs for a prolonged period of time, shaping the phenomena of homelessness (Aoki, 2003). In addition, as the booming economy burst at the end of the 1980s and economic recessions started from the early 1990s, homelessness eventually began to spread outside the *yoseba* districts due to increasing unemployment across Japan. In the past, most people in Japan used to enjoy income security because most companies offered life-time employments and promotions by seniority, which significantly functioned as a safety net to guarantee a stable income, a wide range of welfare benefits for families, a medical insurance, and

³ Assessment processes for the public assistance program is strict; people are not eligible to receive the supports if they have any remaining assets, family supports within the third degree of kinship, and/or are capable to work (Ezawa, 2002; Garon, 2002). The number of households receiving livelihood assistance has been steadily increasing to 1.6 million in 2016 (Ministry of Health Labor, and Wealth [MHLW], 2016b).

⁴ These segregated districts are called *yoseba* in Japanese which signifies a segregated day-labor market (Aoki, 2003). Employers come to *yoseba* to hire people as day laborers or as short-contract workers (Okamoto, 2007). *Yoseba* is also accompanied by cheap flophouses where day laborers sleep over night if they can afford to but due to the unstable nature of their employments, people in *yoseba* often experience a loss of places for sleep, a state of temporal homelessness, and are forced to sleep outside or within the *yoseba* districts (Ezawa, 2002).

a future pension plan (Aoki, 2003; Ezawa, 2002; Hommerich, 2012; Kennett & Iwata, 2003). However, as the economy became deregulated and restructured along with the economic recessions and the influences of economic globalization, life-time employment has been increasingly replaced by informal employments, such as part-time and fixed-term work, which shifts the employment status to more unstable and insecure ones (Aoki, 2003; Ezawa, 2002; Okamoto, 2007; Sekine, 2008). Competitions in labor markets have been reinforced since more companies favor a younger and cheaper workforce (De Venanzi, 2008; Hasegawa, 2005; Okamoto, 2007). Subsequently, people who are homeless became more visible outside the *yoseba* districts in the broader public places (Aoki, 2003). In the beginning of the 2000s, it was common to see people alongside underground passages of subway stations or in a corner of a busy downtown street, begging for money, scavenging garbage boxes, or sleeping under a blanket. It had also become part of an urban view to see a line of blue-sheet tents along the side of a river or cardboard enclosures in train stations to secure a place for sleeping.

Culturally in Japan, poverty has been regarded as a private matter, which is supposed to be hidden and addressed within the realm of family (Aoki, 2003; De Venanzi, 2008; Garon, 2002; Okamoto, 2007). Men, as breadwinners, were supposed to provide financial supports for their family, while their wives were expected to stay at home to take care of their elderly parents and children (Allison, 2012; Imai, 2011; Kennett & Iwata, 2003). Three-generation households, which had nurtured an extended network of family supports and a shared geographical bond among neighbors, have largely been replaced by nuclear families who migrate to new places for better opportunities. Family used to serve as a basic welfare unit and a safety net to prevent people from becoming homeless (Tipton, 2008). However, as family dynamics have shifted to accommodate more flexibility, many people choose to stay single or get divorced (MHLW,

2013). Becoming homeless is frequently attached to a sense of stigma and shame that can convey stereotypical images of homelessness in Japan and disempower people once they become homeless. Dramatic socioeconomic and cultural transformations within the last few decades have resulted in multi-layered inequities in Japan and spread a strong sense of insecurity among increasing numbers of people in Japan (Hommerich, 2012). Yet, despite these shared feelings of precariousness across Japan, homelessness tends to be seen as outcomes of individuals' behavior, which is considered impermissible or discreditable to be brought into the public.

Since 2003, the Japanese government has conducted an annual survey on homelessness, based on the law called “special temporary measures concerning supports for the independence of people who are homeless”⁵ which was implemented in 2002 (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications [MIAC], 2012). In the survey, the government defines people who are homeless as people who live at a park, river, road, train station or other facilities (MHLW, 2016a). According to the survey, the number of people who are homeless has dramatically declined since the national survey started (MHLW, 2003; MHLW, 2016a).⁶ Although this decrease may mark a success in terms of political perspectives of dealing with homelessness, this does not simply demonstrate a fact that homelessness has been given necessary attentions and care. Characterized by the increasing diversities and inequities brought by various transformations, homelessness has become a deep-seated phenomenon that comes with a set of complexities. While there has been a growing number of youth and women experiencing

⁵ This special temporary measure is called “*Ho-muresu no jiritu no sien tou ni kansuru tokubetusoti hou*” in Japanese. This special temporary measure was extended until 2017. However, further extension has not been announced at this point (March, 2017).

⁶ The national survey reported 6,235 people who are homeless in 2016, while the survey counted about 25,230 people sleeping outside in 2003 (MHLW, 2003; MHLW, 2016a).

invisible forms of poverty and homelessness⁷ (Allison, 2012; Ezawa, 2002; Kennett & Iwata, 2003; Okamoto, 2007), the average age of people who live outside was reported to be 59 years of age and more than 95% of people were male, with long-term experiences of homelessness (MHLW, 2012).

Consistently, in Japanese society, homelessness has been made invisible in public places. This entails multiple levels of invisibility: geographical segregation of people who are homeless, accusation of their bodies through political ideology of independence and productivity, cultural beliefs of shame toward disclosing poverty to the public, and social stigma towards people who are homeless as being dependent on social welfare (De Venanzi, 2008; Iwata, 2003; Obinger, 2009). On one hand, in several major *yoseba* districts in Japan, people got together in order to protest against inequitable socioeconomic and/or political structures by using their bodies and actions as political tools (Cassegard, 2013; Hayashi, 2015; Inaba, 2013). Yet, on the other hand, blue-sheet tents or cardboard shacks were forcefully removed by the police from major train stations or parks for reasons of city developments or protecting the safety in public places (Aoki, 2003; Inaba, 2013; Okamoto, 2007). Although these encounters between their bodies and the sociopolitical forces were dramatically portrayed in the media, their distinct visibilities were construed through an established image – an image of social annoyance. Through the deliberate use of prescribed images of homelessness, people who are homeless are seen as a singular simplistic subject, who helplessly slipped from the mesh of safety nets due to misfortunes and their personal failures to take responsibility.

⁷ People who are staying at temporary shelters, 24-hour internet cafes/comic book cafes, hostels, and other insecure transitory housings are not counted as people who are homeless in Japan according to the definition of homelessness by the government (De Venanzi, 2008). Yet, youth and women are more likely to take up these temporary residences when experiencing precarity in their housing, employment, and/or family situations (Allison, 2012).

While both Yoshi and Ama live quietly on streets, their bodies consistently appear in public places. They both know very well the implications of their bodily appearances, with an awareness that torments them. Yoshi's trembling voice in our first meeting still lingers in my head. By telling me that he is not homeless, he attempts to resist; he pushed against the power which repeatedly forces him into categorization and marginalization. Seeing his back staggering in the rain without an umbrella, I could see how much his body has been fighting and struggling, while being exposed to insensitive eyes. The bodies of people who are homeless and especially those who are occupying public places clearly come to people's perceptions; yet, their bodies are made invisible in recognition, so that people do not have to see them. I also imagined the loneliness and fear Ama might have experienced when he was rejected by the welfare program on the verge of becoming homeless - when he could ask no one for help and had to rely only on himself for his survival. This invisibility of homelessness entails a serious ignorance of the body and suppression of voices that would otherwise be crying for help.

In order to understand homelessness from a critical perspective, it is important to philosophically rethink the act of recognition of the human body and the existence of bodies who are homeless on streets. In this article, in which I draw on the experiences of people who are homeless in Japan, I attempt to understand the meanings of the bodies of people who are homeless, who are vulnerably exposed in public places. While their bodies occupy public places, they are not often seen as lived experiences of individuals with remarkable sufferings caused by invisibilities in society. Their bodies appear, but their bodily appearance is frequently not seen as a political stance. I think about these aspects alongside the ideas elaborated by the German political theorist and philosopher Hannah Arendt, who critically contemplated human conditions by exploring human plurality, multi-layered human activities, and the distinctions of private and

public realms (Arendt, 1958). In the following section, through a focus on human rights and citizenship, I consider how Ama's and Yoshi's bodies are politically situated in Japan. Then, through the discourses of the distinction between private and public spaces, I engage in further contemplations about situatedness of their bodies and how this can affect sociopolitical understandings of homelessness in Japan. Lastly, I think about the recognition of the body as political action and the possibilities of the body as a political stance.

The Body Shaped by Human Rights and Citizenship

After our interrupted first conversation, I saw Yoshi sitting in front of the McDonald's in a busy train station. Covered by a worn-out winter jacket, he crouched at a pillar, holding his head down as if he tried to let his body be absorbed into the landscapes. Catching him in my sight, his presence and stillness, for me, was outstanding amidst the busy traffic of people during rush hour. I was quickly negotiating in my thoughts about what would happen if I tapped his shoulder and started talking to him amidst the web of gazes: the gazes that were seemingly averted, but were constantly scrutinizing his body with judgments. While engaging in my thoughts, I repeatedly thrust questions to myself: am I doing this for him or for myself? Why am I doing this? Who am I in this situation? Knowing his fear of being labelled as homeless, I was trying to figure out what action would be the best for us. Swirled in my wavering thoughts, I ended up finding myself absorbed into the crowd and passed by him without talking to him.

The body is where we attribute our humanness to be seen and heard. Arendt (1958) reveals the individuality of the human body and human life, which offers the basis for the actualization of the human condition of plurality. However, in modern times, society has emerged as having a greater influence on human life, along with the prevailing eminence of economics. With the rise of society, human beings are reduced into an element governed by

normalizing forces (Arendt, 1958). This instilled and manipulated sense of equality has replaced understandings of the human body with “social beings” (Arendt, 1958, p. 42). In addition, as bodies are extracted to laboring forces built for economic productivity, it results in less significance and attention drawn to the distinctiveness of each body. Recalling Yoshi’s body in the busy train station, I wonder how his body is interpreted in society beyond and within his corporeal visibility. Given the conformity and equality expected by society, is his body instantly and justifiably excluded from society? How, then, do people recognize others, especially those who do not have power, ways, and/or resources to conform to the majority? Given the social replacement of human beings, does his body no longer exist in the world? How or in what ways does his inescapable bodily appearance and existence inform our perception and recognition? Distinctiveness of the human body has been minimized, as visible bodies are given less consideration; instead, a growing portion of knowing seems to be performed through unawareness of the visibility.

In the train station, I could clearly see the gazes imposed on Yoshi’s body, gazes that were filled with disrespect and hostility. The gazes unjustly agonized his physical and ontological body, which deprived him of a sense of acceptance and belonging in society. In relation to human rights, Arendt (1968) talks about the abstraction of human rights before the idea of citizenship. She points out the conundrum of human rights by saying that human rights were defined as inalienable from human beings, but when a person becomes a human being in its very essence without any entitlements, one simultaneously loses their human rights (Arendt, 1968). According to Arendt (1968), in consideration of the modern development of humanity, human beings have been separated from their bodily existence and instead external attributes gain more powers to define their bodies. Standing between Yoshi and a busy crowd in the train

station, I witnessed the power of those gazes as they unjustly excruciated his body and imposed a discriminative boundary.

Arendt (1968) engaged in the political contemplation of human rights through focusing on stateless people migrating through the First World War. The increased number of refugees who simultaneously lost the basic protection of their human rights, alongside their citizenship, showed that politics had begun to subsume human rights. In the modern era, human rights have been transformed from universal rights of human beings into an exclusive privilege accompanying the right of citizen (Arendt, 1968). Furthermore, this transformation of human rights has even arrived at a point that concepts of human rights have been reduced to a human creation and, as Arendt (1968) depicted, “The world found nothing sacred in the abstract nakedness of being human” (p. 179). For example, people who are homeless in Japan are often primarily supported by the charity of non-profit organizations, such as by meal services and consultations. Although the government establishes the measures to provide supports to encourage people off of streets, these measures are implemented as supports under multiple conditions and supports are not easily accessible to everyone. The abstract and ambiguous entity of human rights loses its embodiment once it is adopted by the political sphere and juxtaposed against the schema of citizenship. Since human rights have been politically restructured to lose their substance by being taken away from the body, they are significantly overshadowed by citizenship, which relies on imaginary flesh and blood in the modern construction of society.

For Arendt (1968), the loss of citizenship deprives stateless people of their distinctive identities, and they are forced into a “huge and nameless crowd” (p. 167) without being given protections. Driven into an anonymous mass, people who become refugees or people who become homeless experience the displacement of their citizenship through losing both their

identity and place to belong in a political sense. Ultimately, these crucial losses cause them to expose their bodies to destructive attacks from others, or various policing forces and violence, without being identified as who they are. Thus, in addition to describing a formalized sense of belonging to the state, citizenship not only has detached human rights from human bodies at a sociopolitical level, but also has acquired a dominance to control the life of non-citizens, by stripping them of their identities and making their physical bodies anonymous.

Furthermore, modern socioeconomic and political arrangements have shaped a new dimension of citizenship, one that establishes a powerful structure of marginalization in society. More recently, the understandings of citizenship have been discussed and expanded to represent norms for a more localized sense of social inclusion in Japan (Neuman, 2008; Ottmann, 2010; Walsh & Klease, 2004). With intensified economic competitions where people are likely to be categorized as either winners or losers, Japan has been described as “a land of refugees” (Allison, 2012, p. 362) where anyone who falls away from ‘an ordinary life’ becomes homeless. As Chapple (2011) wrote, “Japan has a system of ‘exclusive inclusion’ that fully includes all deemed in possession of the requirements for membership, which are, however, exclusive” (p. 87). In Japan, where homogeneity is presumed with less ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity, people are expected to have an exclusive identity of ‘a Japanese person’ in order to be included, such as being financially independent and having group memberships to a family, a school, and/or a company (Chapple, 2011; Obinger, 2009). As Arendt (1968) articulated, the loss of people’s rights is the loss of their homes and the loss of residing within an entire social fabric. People who are homeless in Japan lose their homes and opportunities to meaningfully participate in society as an individual, which renders them unable to belong to society and results in a degraded form of citizenship. Unable to secure a place of belonging and social inclusion, bodies

of people who are homeless in Japan are abandoned, and their human rights are undermined. This contemporary predominance of social citizenship and consequent infringement of human rights may shift the Japanese society into a more restraining space for people who step outside of 'an ordinary life' or the expectations of 'a Japanese person'.

Being compromised at the hiatus of invisibility, the bodies of people who are homeless in Japan are dislocated, disrupted, and harmed. "*I want to see people around me. If I stay in an apartment, I would have to shut myself from the world*" said Ama as he explained why he left an apartment twice that was finally given to him by the welfare services. Firmly determined to stay homeless, Ama spent cold nights in the winter in front of a shopping mall without a blanket, as his blanket was frequently stolen. In the summer, he was hit by cans or firecrackers while sleeping, and sometimes he was shouted at by strangers that he was wasting the tax money of working people. Recently, he has suffered from severe heart disease because of the harshness of living outside in the winter, yet he still insisted on continuing his life on the streets. Without health insurance, he has to pay the full amount of fees for his medical expenses. Secretly, Ama saves tablets of his prescribed medicines to postpone his visits to a clinic for his medications. While fighting with the enormous fears of his declining health and uncertain future, he attempts to confront the challenges, by buying vegetables at a grocery store or by doing exercises with playground equipment. Although he wishes to relate to the world by being homeless and locating his body in public places, Ama has to encounter cruel ways of marginalization from others and society. While Ama is struggling hard to maintain his weakening body for tomorrow, Ama's pains, fears, and anxieties are regarded as something unrelated to the experiences of others. Ama desperately tries to survive, yet in the face of countless challenges, his sole survival makes him deeply isolated, vulnerable, and helpless.

After starting conversations with Ama, I frequently tried to imagine his pains and struggles. Whenever I turn on a heater or cover myself with a blanket, I conceive of his body shivering in the extreme coldness outside in the winter. Bodies of people who are homeless go through not only material hardships, but also existential challenges of situating their bodily expressions in indeterminate spaces. After being in relationship alongside Yoshi and Ama, I am no longer able to ignore the visibility of their bodies and found that in fact their bodies are pressingly visible. As Arendt (1971) argued, “Being and Appearing coincide” (p. 19); the body is not only situated in the world, but also shapes the world with its living, transient, multifaceted, and contingent corporeal presence.

This ambiguous entity of human rights and the contemporary construction of citizenship have driven the body of people who are homeless in Japan to political invisibility. Situated outside the framework of citizenship that is, in other words, outside of sociopolitical cohesion, visible bodies of people who are homeless are made small, unnamed, unresponsive, devalued, and unrelated from a society/community and others. Despite the political invisibility of the body, I believe Yoshi’s and Ama’s bodies that appear in public places clearly manifest themselves in people’s perceptions and contribute to transforming the world. By seeing the body of people who are homeless, whose visibility is contradicted by the invisibility, we need to return to an awareness of who we are as human beings, not as an entity, whose plurality is incompatible with one another (Arendt, 1958). Underpinned by inherent human rights, we all live in the distinctness of our own bodies that necessitate places and relationships to dwell in and articulate, before being granted the benefits of citizenship.

The Body Situated Between the Public and the Private Realms

Arendt (1958) pays close attention to the significance of the human body in her work, yet the body is frequently described in relation to private matters, distinct from the political. Yet, as politics is concerned with “what lies between men and is established as relationships” (Arendt, 2005, p. 95), Arendt’s argumentations of politics importantly presuppose human bodies expressed through action and speech. Speaking of human’s political faculties of action and speech, Arendt interprets two different but interrelated orders of public and private realms: the public realm where individuals are equal and free through speech and action, and the private realm where people are governed by necessities of their physical maintenance, reproduction, and survival (Arendt, 1958). Yet, with the emergence of the social realm, the distinction between the public, as the political realms, and the private, as the household, has become blurred. What used to be the private interests such as economic activities and property has assumed a public significance in society (Arendt, 1958).

Nevertheless, in this modern amalgam of the private and the public realms in the emerging sphere of the social, Arendt (1958) points out the sacredness of the private realm through which human beings are born into the world or cease to be in the world. According to Arendt (1958), the private realm is a significant hidden side or antecedent of the public realm, in which people hide in the darkness of the private from the brightness of being seen and heard in public places. Human beings, as part of the animal species, cannot alienate themselves from the toil of a life process, even though, with creation of a transcendent world, the biological life of a human being has shifted to be a burden or less important than leaving an immortal trace in the public realm (Arendt, 1958). Yet, as Arendt (1958) contends life is the very essence of being, without a private place, people have few possibilities to secure the satisfaction of their physical

and material needs. Arendt (1958) says, “Public life, obviously, was possible only after the much more urgent needs of life itself had been taken care of” (p. 65). Yoshi’s and Ama’s lives are mostly taken up by life-sustaining activities amidst daily challenges and struggles. Even with the modern development of a laboring society which binds human beings around private activities of sustaining life, the private realm, as a private property for bodies to be hidden inside, is indispensable as long as we necessitate the body to fulfill our humanness.

However, Arendt (1958) also interprets that the pursuit of a private life is not truly a human life without a reality, relationships, and permanence. I keep attempting to reply to Ama’s words when he told me that he hopes to continue to be homeless because he wants to see people around him. Instead of living in an apartment given by the welfare supports, Ama declined a secured living place because he did not want to shut himself off from the outside world. Confining himself in a small apartment room was unbearable and was not a life for Ama in the absence of others. He revealed he was frustrated by the regular visits of a welfare officer to his apartment. In such a sense, his apartment was not fully a private place for him; rather it was a place where he was constantly observed and judged, which marked him as a ‘welfare recipient’. For Ama, being situated in an apartment is to lose the possibilities of being seen and heard by others, to be isolated in an imprisonment of private life, and to be profoundly disconnected from the public realm. Furthermore, to live in an apartment given by the welfare supports meant to surrender his privacy and autonomy of life under the surveillance of others. Despite countless challenges and uncertainties on streets, Ama has chosen to protect his independence and freedom by becoming homeless, which for him was more important considering the restrictions that living under a roof brought. Consequently, he was left without a private place to hide and maintain his body. To resist the powers reducing his existential body, he had to sacrifice his private place and

his corporeal body. I still painfully remember when he said he sleeps on a sheet of cardboard, he hesitantly breathed a word, "...you know, I sleep like an...animal". I tried hard to imagine his distress when he expressed himself as 'an animal', and his sufferings, as his body has lost a place to lodge safely and comfortably.

While dislocated outside the private realm, Ama's and Yoshi's bodies are exposed to the public realm. Arendt (1958) revealed that the public realm is where human beings constitute the reality by being seen and heard. According to Arendt (1958), public places give human bodies the ability to act and speak, to reveal their unique identities and appearances to the shared world. Yet, the bodies of people who are homeless in Japan are recurrently made invisible in the public realm. As opposed to human distinctiveness in the public realm, the bodies of people who are homeless in Japan are frequently driven to the sheer "otherness" (Arendt, 1958, p. 176) with which their bodies are dissolved into one and disconnected from the interrelatedness with others.

In addition to being driven to the "otherness" in the public realm, the physical bodies of people who are homeless in Japan are crucially swept away from the view of public places. The special temporary measures for people who are homeless in Japan has granted the permission to the municipal governments and the police forces to remove the belongings of people who are homeless, in order to maintain the appropriate use of public places (MIAC, 2012). These political measures also function as a powerful policing force in designing public places and implicitly link homelessness with issues of safety. After several years of immigration in Canada, when I returned to Japan, I saw many weird bumps built alongside passages in subway stations so that people cannot sit or lie down on the floor. I also noticed that a park where I used to see many people living in blue-sheet tents was strangely quiet and open with no tents and noise of the people living there. Public spaces have been changing in Japan, to rule out the particular and

the undesirable from the view. Despite the tide of people hastily walking in public places, the views in Japan were perceived to be strikingly human-less, with a prominence of deliberate arrangements to normalize people and dictate normal behaviors in society.

I wonder where these people went to set up their lives after being swept away from train stations and parks. Yoshi's and Ama's lives are also challenged by different laws and regulations that threaten their lives on the streets. While Arendt (1958) maintains that a man who only lives a private life, such as a slave or a barbarian, was not fully human, she also wrote that "a life spent entirely in public, in the presence of others, becomes, as we would say, shallow" (p. 71). Being pushed out into public scenes where things are utterly seen and heard by others and where their bodies become a target of elimination, people who are homeless are driven into darkness: not the darkness of the private space, but the darkness caught between private and public spaces that make their bodies helplessly exposed, isolated, and exhausted. Without the private realm, their physical bodies suffer. In the public realm, their existential bodies, voices, and sufferings are sealed by invisibility trapped in ignorance of recognition

Standing in such a position, their bodies could embody a unique political stance. Ama and Yoshi are quietly living in a train station and in front of a shopping mall, while being situated between the private and the public realms. Although they are often kicked out from their sleeping places or their belongings are suddenly taken away due to their illegal occupancy, they keep searching for places to locate and reconcile their bodies with surroundings that provide intimacy even if only momentarily. When I asked Yoshi to take pictures of places that are significant to him, he took many photos of an amusement park, a harbor, and a flower garden. These photos are unexpectedly colorful, static, and peaceful. What he had chosen to capture in his eyes are beautiful sceneries that would enfold him from sceneries that he might experience in

a busy train station. Yoshi's and Ama's bodies are unquestionably occupying certain geographical and temporal spaces, and they perceive themselves and others by deeply dwelling in shared worlds. Yet, their bodies are seen through images reflected in the eyes of viewers. The hostile or indifferent gazes pouring onto Yoshi and Ama have gradually been consuming and destroying the integrity of their bodies that are seeking for the private realm and longing to appear in the public realm. Whenever I recall Yoshi helplessly sitting in front of the McDonald's in a train station or when I imagine Ama sleeping uneasily in front of a shopping mall, I wonder how human bodies are disconnected from the recognition of human beings.

Recognition of the Body as a Political Stance

Bodily existence and appearance.

Arendt (1958) explains the polis as “the space of appearance in the widest sense of the world, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly” (p. 198). Butler (2011) similarly remarked, “For politics to take place, the body must appear” (p. 2). Yet, in contrast with the bodily existence, Arendt (1971) interpreted the ambiguity of ‘appearance’ of human beings due to its nature of being reciprocal, contingent, and diverse, thus fundamentally abstract. Although all human beings require their radical recognition of their existence, which is a corporeal being in order to appear to others, this obscure complexity of human appearance might result in a lack of political element inherent within human relatedness in the politics. As nothing exists in the singular, everything that exists on the earth is meant to be appearing to and to be perceived by other human beings, who, in turn, become a subject of perceptions by other human beings. However, this bodily appearance can be deceptive due to its dependence on the inconsistency of human perceptions (Arendt, 1971).

Arendt (1971) elucidated this ambiguous appearance as authentic or inauthentic semblance; the former means an inevitable way of paradoxical appearances of earth-bound creatures and the latter indicates that appearances only appear as “it-seems-to-me” (p. 38) which can be informed by arbitrary assumptions or undermined upon closer inspections. Yoshi told me that he has deliberately chosen to sit in front of McDonald’s because he could avoid cold winter winds by being caught between huge pillars. Being diagnosed with heart disease, Ama works even harder to collect aluminum cans; he rides his bicycle more than 80 kilometers every day to save money for his medication. Behind the inauthentic semblances of their bodies on streets, Yoshi and Ama embrace countless untold stories and courageously and creatively construct their bodies in the public realm. Yet, their bodily existences in public places are not perceived through contexts; rather their bodily appearances are seen through vulnerability or stereotypical images. Thus, a corporeal body and its bodily existence in the world could be thwarted by semblances in a way that all bodily appearances are ultimately integral to the subjectivity of human perceptions.

Being left in a sociopolitical, temporal, and geographical remoteness, Yoshi’s and Ama’s bodies are seen by others who stand too far away to perceive their bodies beyond inauthentic semblances. The gazes, gestures, or words expressed by others as a product of perceptions throw direct impacts on their bodies. Within the dominance of those inauthentic appearances describing the bodies, Yoshi’s and Ama’s bodies are made silent and formless in the public realm. As these arbitrary appearances informed by the stereotypical knowledge of homelessness have been taking over their existential bodies, their bodily existences are isolated from human interactions in the public realm where all individuals appear to be equal and free on the premise of human plurality (Arendt, 1958). Without a sense of connectedness, their bodies have less chance to be seen and sympathetically treated by others.

“I only sleep here and never block your way. I will leave here before the first train. You should just let me sleep here! Please don’t be so unkind! It’s a matter of life or death! Let me sleep here!” shouted Ama to the night when he was told by a security guard to leave immediately from an entrance to a train station. His life is inseparable from his living body that has been continuously challenged but preserved by his bravery to act. Having no place to sleep, he fought back with desperation for his exhausted body so that his body could rest. Regardless of the authenticity or inauthenticity of appearances, he is a human body shaping an existence and living in the midst of his life. Even in darkness, his shadow outlines the contour of his body and his breath is fused into the air. At the age of 75, Ama’s body is weakening and longing to find a place to rest. Why was he not able to lay down even temporarily? At that moment, his bodily existence was no longer recognized, but entrapped by the vagueness of human perceptions, which regarded his bodily appearance irrelevant to others. His shout, *“It’s a matter of life or death!”*, is the most distressed cry for a recognition of his very existence – a recognition of tangibility of his living body, a recognition of his throbbing heart and sweating fists, and a recognition of his whole life trajectory that used to be sustained by love and relationships. Ama was once visible, but made invisible in society. Yet, how can we talk about the invisible if it is absolutely invisible to our eyes? His body is visible. Within this gap between the utter visibility and the imposed invisibility of his body, is a firmly concealed ambiguity of human recognition and a possibility for the bodies of people who are homeless in Japan to bring a new perspective to challenge prevailing ways of inauthentic recognition.

Recognition of body.

Recognition importantly constructs the background of morality, which is fundamentally interpersonal and interdependent and also guides our moral actions based on the idea of mutual

responsibility (Butler, 2015; Walker, 2007). Contrary to the archetype of recognition which presupposes the equality of all human beings, human recognition often constitutes the norms of recognition in regard to who is recognized and who is not (Butler, 2015). These norms create “the highly regulated field of appearance” (Butler, 2015, p. 35) where people are to be judged with criteria for socially-recognizable forms of human beings, which further reinforces the demarcations of the field of appearances. Within the constraint sphere of appearance built by these norms, the body no longer presents itself precisely before perceptions, particularly once people are deemed unrecognizable. Consequently, the body is no longer a common place for human beings in the modern constructions of recognition, but instead, these restricted spheres of appearance have been shifted to a higher hierarchy in order not to unite people, but to distinguish certain groups of people. People who are homeless in Japan have been placed in the oblivion alongside the modern transformations of the shrinking public realm with the restrictive notion of citizenship. The labeling of being unrecognizable in the public realm conditions their bodies and mistreats their bodies. Despite his serious shouts for life, Ama was forced out from the property of a train station with a final warning of calling the police. Ama had been desperately seeking a place to sleep where he could at least escape from brutal winter gusts, but his survival seemed not a matter to a security guard.

Once people are driven to the edge of viewers’ sights, their bodies are no longer authentically perceived and then are marginalized from a sphere of recognition. In ways that the processes of political, social, or cultural recognitions are given a shortcut by data, knowledge, norms, or daily practices, people may unknowingly avoid recognizing the uniqueness of individual bodies. Under such marginalizing practices, the suffering bodies of people who are homeless in Japan could not only be made invisible, but are also taken for granted in people’s

recognitions. This taken-for-grantedness could further complicate and desensitize a course of recognitions. Due to the exclusion from recognition, action and speech of people who are homeless in Japan are not often made meaningful or intelligible to others in political and social spheres. However, even in its stillness without actions and speech, distinctiveness of each human body cannot be erased through bodily existence. As Bateson (1994) said, “Sometimes change is directly visible, but sometimes it is apparent only to peripheral vision, altering the meaning of the foreground” (p. 6). Although the suffering bodies of people who are homeless in Japan are perceived only in the peripheral visions of viewers, it can significantly influence viewers’ recognition.

Yoshi and Ama helplessly expose their bodies to the multiplicity of gazes while letting themselves be taken in the uncertainty and the ambiguity of human recognitions. When Yoshi and Ama sit and sleep outside, their tired bodies are seen mostly in people’s peripheral vision, which creates vulnerability. However, through their bodies, they also disclose their resiliency, strength, and determination, which I strongly recognized in building relationships with Yoshi and Ama. Attending closely to their lives, I came to know that “the life of our soul in its very intensity is much more adequately expressed in a glance, a sound, a gesture, than in speech” (Arendt, 1971, p. 31). Through their silenced struggles caught within multiple quandaries of life, their bodies clearly embody a political stance for recognizability (Butler, 2015). Their bodily appearances on the streets do not simply represent vulnerability, but also express a power of human existence which is only made possible by a life given equally but experienced differently by all human beings. The attentiveness to human plurality, which calls up the sensitivity in perceptions and human relatedness, needs to guide human recognition.

The bodies of people who are homeless can be a momentum to challenge the norms of recognition that determine who counts and who does not. These challenges can also shed light on the fundamental contradictions of human rights; the way in which the bodies of people who are homeless appear to the eyes of many, yet marginalized, could point to the cruel separation between the existence of human bodies and the recognition of human beings. People who are homeless in Japan demonstrate a tangible form of hardships caught in a gulf between their tired bodies and a pain of being unrecognized. Recognizing the body requires infinite thinking, questioning, and imagining (Leotard, 1991). When underpinned by authentic and relational perceptions of bodies, recognition can be indeterminate, tolerant, and open, not seeking judgments within a captured moment of the visual. Concerning the distinctness of each human being to the world, Arendt (1958) frequently evoked an idea of natality by saying, "...[M]en, though they must die, are not born in order to die but in order to begin" (p. 246). Recognition of the plurality conveyed by the bodies of people who are homeless can be a beginning place for political action where people return to a deep consideration of the weight of human life, ethical contemplations of human beings, and a momentum where changes are brought about toward a more inclusive world, endorsed by justice and equity; a world in which we see Ama and Yoshi.

The body as a political stance.

The bodies of people who are homeless in Japan can be understood as a political stance that calls attention to human equality and plurality, and defies uncontested values and practices in society. Thinking about the silent but dynamic extensions of their bodies, I recall the moment when Ama told me, "*I want to see people around me. If I stay in an apartment, I would have to shut myself from the world*". I too call up the image of Yoshi sitting in a busy train station. After becoming homeless, both of them have chosen to appear in public places even though they knew

that they are likely to be made invisible by others or endanger themselves by becoming targets of discrimination. Their bodily existence is a political action, which can be interpreted as a creative expression of resistance, by choosing to appear to others and letting others appear to them.

Through showing their vulnerable bodies situated in marginal spaces, they disclose the fundamental notion of human existence embodied by particularity and complexity of human bodies. Through their visible sufferings, they also reveal power of calling forth human interactions in equal and respectful manners and aspiration of endorsing plurality as an agent to bring about changes. Through their actions that give appearances to their bodies, they have chosen to 'live' in a political sense, that is, to be among men and live in "the reality of the world" (Arendt, 1958, p. 199) by being guaranteed the presence of other human beings (Arendt, 1958). Butler (2015) elaborates, "...only through an insistent form of appearing precisely when and where we are effaced does the sphere of appearance break and open in new ways" (p. 37). Through subtle sounds and shadows, Yoshi and Ama insistently express and insert their bodies into the world, which entails the power to transform recognitions from normalization into more ethical and individualized attendance. When the body of people who are homeless is addressed as a political stance, the ontological and epistemological understandings of human beings can be given new insights and have a possibility to turn the world into an organization of people informed by respectful recognition of human beings.

The body is also a place to enfold narratives, which will remain and even thrive after the body deceases and which entail possibilities for change (Arendt, 1958). As I continue to live alongside Yoshi and Ama by reflecting on our conversations, I understand how much their bodies were described by others' words, but not by their own words and speech. As Arendt (1958) said, once people are driven outside the polis, they are deprived not of a faculty of speech,

but of a space and a way of life where their speech makes sense to others (Arendt, 1958). Contemplating the life of human beings explicated by Arendt, Kristeva (2001) further developed a consideration that a life can be specifically human when being represented by narratives shared with others. Considering that “finding the right words at the right moment...is action” (Arendt, 1958, p. 16), narrating a life can also be a political action and a way to inquire into the meanings of life; through unfolding life stories, human beings are more empathetically and intimately related to one another, and their bodily existences are attentively illuminated and conditioned in multiple ways (Dewey, 1938).

Through a series of our conversations, the lives and the bodies of Yoshi and Ama are shaped and unveiled uniquely through stories shared and co-composed within our relational spaces (Clandinin, 2013). Both of their lives are now deeply shaping my body and my life while my body also becomes uniquely visible in relation to them in the public realm. When voices of people who are homeless in Japan are liberated through a form of narrative, a lesion caused by a discordance between their bodies and the stigma or between their stories of their lives and the dominant stories of homelessness become more apparent to the eyes of people. When written down, these stories further obtain a tangible fabrication inscribed onto materials and uniquely affect people who come into contact with these stories (Richardson, 2005). In such a way, stories are lived within a web of relationships, as an incarnation of the body, and continue to be lived among men. A finite life of human beings is to gain durability and immortality through stories (Arendt, 1958). Furthermore, as Kristeva (2001) explicated, the destinies of life, narrative, and politics are mutually dependent. The living body, which continues to compose life stories, is closely linked with shaping politics. In their stories, Yoshi’s and Ama’s bodies and stories are emancipated and engage in political action of shaping others and the world across time and

places. I believe my actions of co-composing relational spaces with Yoshi and Ama and writing down their stories and my stories in relation also demonstrate part of political action by transforming their bodies regulated by the outside forces into a body subject, situated in a relationship, that reveals 'who' through their life stories told in their words.

Conclusion

Ama's and Yoshi's bodies have a density which encloses countless memories, life stories and a willingness to live, relate to people, and act to express. The density of their bodies occupies both visible and invisible spaces, refracts the light, and changes the flow of the air, through which they give appearance to their souls. Their bodies transitionally but significantly constitute a location in the perpetuating world in which we are born and die. Amidst the noisy crowd at a train station, Yoshi curls his body firmly in front of the McDonald's. In the midnight, Ama quietly sets up a place for sleep in front of a shopping mall by borrowing a feeble light from a vending machine. The density of bodies embraces silhouettes, yet their silhouettes are often distorted by sufferings or diminished within the dilemma of recognition.

Thinking about the body calls forth an act of recognition in which we relate our body with others through perceptive responses and imaginations. Again, I remember the discriminating gazes sliding down onto Yoshi's body at a train station, which strikingly shaped his body. When viewers' perceptions meet with the bodily existence of people who are homeless in Japan, acute friction could occur at the encounter of differences and sufferings beyond simple descriptions from viewers' experiences. Although this friction could reduce the bodies into bodily appearance named by the stereotypes, it also encompasses the possibility to transform the bodies into lively beings pervading through viewer's recognitions and reestablishing the space of appearance where bodies appear to others in distinctiveness. Through recognizing the bodies of

people who are homeless, the multiplicity of viewers' lives and identities may also be brought forth and become recognizable, by reinforcing the political space of appearance.

Human plurality can be clearly perceptible within and on the surface of bodies of Yoshi and Ama. I recall the moment Yoshi ran away from the first meeting. Walking in the foggy rain, Yoshi carried the weight of his body, which constitutes the weight of his life and the world we all inhabit. His flesh made it possible for his body to appear and for others to regard his body as being concrete, immediate, and pressing to their perceptions. Desperately finding a place to sleep, Ama shouted to the darkness in order to take care of his life and body. Suffering in their bodies puts forward radical political questions toward the significance of human beings. Yoshi's and Ama's bodies as a political stance call for a moral recognition. By showing their bodies in public places, they become political actors to reveal injustice hidden within society and to bring awareness to the uniqueness and diversity of human lives. The marginalized body of people who are homeless in Japan shows us the precarity of the contemporary transformations of society and politics as well as people's recognition. The bodies of people who are homeless in Japan demand the ethical recognitions of human plurality, the complexity of life, the distinct contour of human body, and the finite life of human beings, all of which have been intimately shaping the body of oneself and others.

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Chapter 12: Conclusion

Emerging Stories and Landscapes: Reflections of a Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of People who are Homeless in Japan

Standing in Front of the Crosswalk Again

Stiff air coming onto a platform
A big crosswalk in front of me
An unknown feeling of being uninvited
Old men sleeping on the side of roads
Piles of ragged cardboards and blankets
Unfamiliar smells
Fearful eyes
A rusty metal bunk bed crammed in a cement-walled room
My swiftly walking feet
Gazes coming toward me
A cheerful wrinkled smile of Sumi
A park packed with people and blue-sheet tents
Dark cold alleys extending from a park
All encompassed by the silence

Recalling the moment when I first visited *Kamagasaki* four years ago in 2013, I was again drawn by the recurring sensations of the deep silence and awkward stiffness I felt in my body standing in front of the big crosswalk. Walking through the town soaked in tension-filled silence, I was afraid and nervous, feeling insecure about myself as a beginning narrative inquiry researcher who was determined to inquire into the experiences of people who are homeless in Japan. Feeling curious gazes placed upon my skin, I realized I have so many things I do not know. I was not sure how I could soothe this perceived dissonance colliding between my body

and the silence in the slum town. Yet, now in reflections, I begin to grasp, within the silence, so many new experiences that invited me to imagine and understand the lives of people I was yet to meet. Feeling the silence vigorously working on me, I also see the silence called forth sensitivities to see beyond the visible. Like the silence in which I was longing to relate to the world and people when I first came to Canada, the silence in the slum town appeared to be infused by a desire to relate, calling me to create a space of opening in my life, in my heart, and in my perceptions for multiple unknown possibilities. This reinterpretation of the silence also reshaped my recollections of the silence I experienced in the midnight of my first days of coming to Canada; it was a space of departure to walk in an unforeseen direction in my life which kept asking me to make sense of who I am and my stories to live by. Puzzled by my confusion in the silence, I unlocked ways to compose my life, to explore a multiplicity of meanings, through creative improvisations and relational negotiations (Bateson, 1989).

In my first visit to the slum town, the sensation of the deep silence powerfully reinforced my perceptions of homelessness in Japan, in addition to the striking images of vulnerability and marginalization of people who are homeless which I saw in Japan during my childhood and young adulthood. Looking at an older man sleeping helplessly on the street or on a rusty metal bunk bed that is tightly crammed into a cement-walled room, I remember feeling sympathetic, though I did not pay enough attention to my ignorance of not knowing their experiences. After living alongside Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama, my understanding of homelessness has profoundly shifted; yet I also recognize that people embrace different stories and experiences of being homeless. Looking back at my first visit to the slum town, I wonder how Sumi is doing. I hope he is as cheerful and ambitious as when he took me through the town four years ago. I continue

imagining what stories Sumi cherished behind his friendly attitude and what stories he would have shared with me if we had conversations.

In the summer of 2013, standing at the threshold into a new world, the crosswalk provoked a feeling of uneasiness and bewilderment, making the slum town seem extremely distant from me. Perceptions of not fitting in a place further added to my sense of unsettlement toward my role as a researcher and blurred my vision. A few years later when I visited the slum town again after I started having conversations with Yoshi, Apapane and Ama, the crosswalk looked small and normal, no longer enchanted. For me, initially, the crosswalk had represented a distance that challenged me to take a step into what I could never anticipate, a bridge connecting me and people I did not know. Looking back at this metaphorical crosswalk again as I complete my dissertation, I sense something in myself has changed; stories of Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama and our relationships are deeply interwoven into my worlds and my understanding of life. I realize that I now carry the weight of their stories along with my relational responsibilities for Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama as I live with their stories (Clandinin, 2013). Also, my responsibilities for them extends to larger contexts as I convey their voices and stories to wider audiences and translate them into shaping knowledge of homelessness in Japan (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). From this study, I gained insights into the diversity within individual experiences of being homeless in Japan and, in other ways, the conundrum that a label of being homelessness undermines the complexities of their lives. Although I clearly perceived the dehumanizing effects of homelessness within the silence implied by their untold stories (Neumann, 1997), all of them tried to defy these influences that reduce their autonomy and make them feel small and categorized, by constantly reframing their stories to live by.

After coming back to Canada, I have been thinking a lot about Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama. Listening to the recordings of our conversations, reading the transcripts, and writing interim and final research texts, I continued to travel to their worlds (Lugones, 1987) and to understand the multiplicity of their lives alongside my shifting interpretations. Several times, I wrote cards to them and sent them to the support organization with a hope to tell them that I embrace their stories and deeply care for our relationships. I hope they still come to the support organization and I have a chance to see them again. Although we may not see each other again, I believe there is no farewell in our relationship.

Mulling over my field notes at the end of my dissertation, I came to understand the intensity of our relational journey. I nostalgically recollect the meeting room where we hesitantly started a conversation; Yoshi's back staggering in the rain; Ama's gentle but nervous smile; and Apapane's eyes looking beyond the window. We were all puzzled. In the beginning of my notes, I jotted down countless wonders, questions, uncertainties, and struggles of building relationships. Toward the end of my notes, I found more notes of thankfulness, care, and hope for Yoshi, Apapane, Ama, and for our relationships. My objectives in our conversations had shifted from interpretation of experiences as a researcher to deep appreciation and respect of their lives as a person living in relation with them. The distance that puzzled us was shifted and is held by stories, tensions, fear, laughter, and care we have daringly shown and exchanged. Now, my heart pleasantly remains in storied moments, travelling to a train station, amusement park, harbour, and a meeting room where we co-composed our stories and relationships (Lugones, 1987).

Reflecting on the lives of Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama alongside my life and vice versa, I conceived of how this relational journey continues to weave new stories and allows me to dwell in new storied landscapes. These emerging and shifting stories and landscapes construct multiple

meanings of the lived experiences of people who are homeless in Japan, and make sense of what our relationships have nurtured and brought forth into my personal experiences and the practical and social implications for nursing and understanding homelessness in Japan.

Personal Significance: Learning to Live in Relation

This narrative inquiry into the experiences of Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama has profoundly shaped my personal experiences and left me with renewed aspects to tell and retell my stories of the past, present, and future. My experiences of living alongside their lives in relational ways has brought me important opportunities of reflecting on my experiences as a nurse and transforming me in two important aspects: my understanding of living in relation with others and my view of performing care.

This experience of living alongside the lives of Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama has enhanced my awareness and realization about what it means to live in relation with others. Before I engaged in this narrative inquiry, my understandings of living in relation with others was nurtured through my experiential knowing and practices. Recalling the moments when I worked as a nurse at a hospital in Japan, I found myself frequently engaged in unrecorded care after my working hours, such as visiting patients' bedsides to have casual conversations and taking time to talk about things unrelated to their illness or treatments. I remember well that as soon as I finished my duties, I rushed to visit patients who were nervously spending an evening before a surgery or who had been moved to a different unit. My hope was to show them that they are cared for. I had not particularly regarded my actions as a practice of 'living in relation', but in my attempts to mitigate their tensions and anxieties in unfamiliar hospital environments, I might have unknowingly acquired a sensibility toward the importance of shaping a relational space. I felt a sense of delight when patients seemed happy and relieved, and shared their stories about

who they were, with a sense of freedom, not as who they were supposed to be as a patient. At such moments, I felt like our bodies and imaginations playfully¹ went beyond the constraints of the defined spaces and roles within a hospital and healthcare setting.

After starting weekly conversations with Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama, this feeling of delight was brought back to me and reminded me of myself when I used to work as a nurse in Japan. When Yoshi shared his last slice of bread with me, when Ama willingly took me to his brightest days of working at a harbour, and when Apapane extended his hope for the future, I was reminded about how much my heart has been pursuing the sentiment of living in relation with others; a sentiment that is sustained and opened up by the reciprocity of care.

Nervously facing each other in a small meeting room, I tried hard to understand their complex emotions and expectations they brought into our relationships to create a space of comfort, safety, respect, and care. At the same time, I was also inquiring into my experiences in order to explore my emotions and re-examine my own expectations. Holding close myself as a nurse in the midst of building a new researcher identity, I sought to perceive them deeply in my eyes to commit myself to receptivity (Noddings, 1984). As Noddings (1984) said, “I set aside my temptation to analyze and to plan. I do not project; I receive the other into myself, and I see and feel with the other” (p. 30). Yet, my perceived ambiguity and a lack of freedom in my role as a researcher sometimes made me feel the difficulty of coming closer to them; I felt powerless as a researcher who was visiting for a short time, and not able to provide practical supports they might need. I wonder how I would care for Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama if I met them as a nurse. However, I also realized the advantage of myself as a stranger to them; without having previous

¹ Lugones (1987) expressed playfulness as “an openness to being a fool, which is a combination of not worrying about competence, not being self-important, not taking norms as sacred and finding ambiguity and double edges a source of wisdom and freedom” (p. 17).

information about each other, I sensed that more creative imagining and freedom allowed us to come into a place and to shape our identities and relational spaces.

As we shared more and more stories, I felt more willing and obliged to care for them and their stories, accompanied by my ethical responsibilities as a researcher and as a person. I was reminded of Basso's (1996) work, who beautifully elucidated, "That story is working on you now. You keep thinking about it. That story is changing you now, making you want to live right. That story is making you want to replace yourself." (p. 59). Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama's stories powerfully changed my views towards the lives of people who are homeless in Japan and encouraged me to live better while ruminating over ethical, respectful, and relational ways of living.

As I heard their stories dynamically moving over time at the intersection of their lives and my life, I sensed that their vulnerability of being homeless and our dilemma of building a relationship were slowly transcending through co-composing stories and meanings of our relationships. When I noticed that I was avoiding asking questions about their experiences of being homeless, I was reliving the moments when I was searching for ways to care for my patients, not by identifying them as 'patients', but by responding to them as persons nurtured by multiple stories shaped by places, relationships, and familial, cultural, and social contexts. Through this study, I was awakened anew to the significance of living in relation with others; that is underpinned by resonant knowing of others through co-composing stories through relationships, emotion-rich attitudes of care toward sufferings of others, and sensitive responsiveness to other's stories as ones bearing important connections to my own stories of who I am.

Further linking the understanding of living in relation to others with moral perspectives, Nelson and Carse (1996) affirmed that a, “Moral focus is placed on individuals’ idiosyncracies and vulnerabilities and on the quality and particularity of specific interpersonal relationships; the fact of human interdependency is recognized as morally fundamental” (p. 23). Through this study, my awareness toward living in relation with others continuously encourages me to world-travel to Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama’s worlds with moral perspectives and loving perceptions (Lugones, 1987). Through illuminating interdependency and interconnectedness of individuals through world-traveling, Lugones (1987) particularly pointed to the importance of travelling to the worlds of people who are often marginalized in society. She wrote:

Through travelling to other people’s “worlds”, we discover that there are “worlds” in which those who are the victims of arrogant perception are really subjects, lively beings, resisters, constructors of visions even though in the mainstream construction they are animated only by the arrogant perceiver and are pliable, foldable, file-awayable, classifiable. (p. 18)

Despite countless hardships, their spirits and souls, sustained by their enthusiasm, courage, and generosity, were delightfully expressed in our relational space. Through this study, I hope to show how Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama are animated and centered as subjects, “lively beings, resisters, constructors of visions” (Lugones, 1987, p. 18) who eagerly build their lives, tell their stories, and relate to other’s lives. I continue to do so as part of my ethical responsibilities of living with their stories.

Practical Significance: Transforming Caring Practices

The study alongside my renewed understandings of living in relation with others have intrigued me to think deeply about performance and understanding of care in broader aspects.

From a nursing point of view, this study holds the possibilities for advancing nursing knowledge and practices to people who are often marginalized in society and who recognize or express increased needs for healthcare. In this section, I link this study of inquiring into experiences of being homeless in Japan more closely with the practical significance of informing the field of nursing in two ways: reinforcing the relational scope of nursing care and the need to transform nursing care, so that it is more accessible to people who are homeless.

Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama painfully disclosed the daily hardships of securing their basic needs, such as food, shelter, health care, and safety. Not being able to satisfy their basic needs, they further encountered complex dilemmas while their bodies suffered and their lives were compromised. For example, after becoming homeless, they frequently found their belongings stolen by others. Ama told me that one of the most distressing things in his life is when he found the bags of aluminum cans he had collected over a day were stolen by others. Ama and Yoshi often slept without a blanket even on cold winter nights, which caused them serious health issues. Yoshi clearly remembered and described to me the moment when his purse with his residence certification² was stolen by a young man in a train station. Amidst physical and mental challenges of being homeless, losing their fixed addresses, their official identifications, and their personal belongings further imposed on them social and existential sufferings, accompanied by embarrassment, frustration, anger, and humiliation. These difficulties were often only inarticulately expressed by them, like Yoshi and Apapane partially or vaguely revealed their experiences of becoming/being homeless in our conversations. I learned about a multi-layered harshness of their lives through many untold stories that reflected their “continuing struggle to

² In Japan, people need to register their current residential address to the local government where their address is located. Residence certification is issued by the municipal governments to prove their address. When signing important documents, residence certification is often required to prove one's identity and address.

live” (Neumann, 1997, p. 108). People who are homeless in Japan need to be listened to. I believe that nurses stand in an important place and hold possibilities to take care of their sufferings, to develop supports by attending to the unique needs of people who are homeless in Japan, and to transform the contexts of homelessness in Japan.

With increasing emphasis on developing nursing as a discipline and profession, nursing knowledge has been promoted through theoretical, scientific, and objective constructions of knowledge (Björnsdottir, 2001). Although nursing science has provided a bridge between nursing practice and research (Björnsdottir, 2001), this pattern of knowing may create the normalizing languages, which undermine the complexity and the ambiguity of human lives and create distance between nursing and people.

Nursing used to be vested in the private paradigm supported by a caring relationship between care-receiver and care-giver, in which “care implies reaching out to something other than the self: it is neither self-referring nor self-absorbing” (Tronto, 1994, p. 102). Similarly, as Noddings (1984) maintains, “Caring involves stepping out of one’s own personal frame of reference into other’s” (p. 24). Care, that shapes the fundamentals of nursing, belongs to intimate personal relationships underpinned by morality and relational justice (Dillon, 1992). In a caring relationship, both care-receiver and care-giver are active agents shaping each other (Noddings, 2002). The wide diversity, complexity, and distinctiveness embodied through experiences of being homeless by Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama, refused to yield to the objective knowing of homelessness and the normalizing languages such as vulnerability and sufferings. As my relationships with Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama called forth mutuality and reciprocity, nursing knowledge toward homelessness needs to direct more attention to a relational aspect of knowing;

that is the deliberations of voices and stories expressed within a relational encounter between nurses and people experiencing homelessness.

Experiences unfold across time, places, and relationships, while each of us is living in the midst and embedded in familial, cultural, institutional, and social contexts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Stories of being homeless conveyed by Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama revealed multiple inequities and injustices and many issues and dissonances affecting their bodies and lives. Their stories also challenged the dominant narratives about homelessness in Japan predominantly characterized by stigma and shame. Reinforcing a relational scope in nursing holds the possibilities to facilitate more conversations and diverse ways of taking care of stories as part of nurses' ethical commitments. As Neumann (1997) mentions, "People live in their stories as much as they tell them in words. They live them in what they do not say" (p. 107). Although stories might be an incomplete snapshot of experiences as they are ongoing and shifting across time, contexts, and relationships (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009), stories, both told and untold, offer a space to take their lives of being homeless seriously, and regard them as having important connections with the development of nursing knowledge and practices.

However, nurses are often absent from the supports for people who are homeless in Japan. While I visited the support organization for having conversations in 2015, I did not see nurses working as staff members there. A physician visited the support organization weekly to offer a medical consultation for a few hours, but I did not find nurses. As many people were waiting to see a physician at the support organization, I saw a physician could only take a few minutes with each person. Observing these situations, I was reminded of my experiences as a nurse at a hospital; as a physician hastily came to patients' bedsides, asked a few questions, and left, I saw patients' faces filled with tensions and anxiety, withholding many untold emotions and questions.

When Ama shared his health concerns, I suggested that he seek a medical consultation at the support organization. Declining my suggestion, he said:

I know everywhere in my body is getting worse, so I don't want to hear that my body is becoming weak and ill. Above all, I am quite sure a doctor will tell me that I have to be hospitalized because of my poor health conditions. I am afraid that if I am hospitalized at this age, it will be the end of my life.

Ama also revealed that he did not have time to visit the support organization during the daytime, because his work of collecting aluminum cans and bringing them to a recycling centre occupied most of his daytime and was more important for him than to visit a physician for a medical consultation. His reluctance toward approaching health care was also informed by his previous health care encounters that were marked by a sense of unwelcomeness (Wen, Hudak, & Hwang, 2007). In the past, he called the ambulance several times because of severe coughing and difficulty breathing. He told me that after a few times of calling the ambulance, he perceived the attitudes of healthcare workers had shifted to be more unkind and discriminatory. He assumed this was because he persistently declined to be hospitalized and to undergo medical tests, which were strongly recommend by the attending physicians. Negative experiences and impressions toward health care services have significantly built his anxiety, distrust, and unwillingness to access healthcare.

I wondered about, what sort of arrangements might be helpful to address the potential anxieties of accessing the healthcare system such as Ama's? Harsh living environments on streets significantly affect the physical and mental health of people who are homeless (Hwang, McNeil, & Guirguis-Younger, 2014; Takano, Nakamura, Takeuchi, & Watanabe, 1999). Like Ama, people who are homeless in Japan might also experience barriers to accessing health care

due to their anxiety, previous experiences of health care, conflicting schedules, and/or distrust in health care. Nurses' unique positions, as situated in the healthcare and with close attention to individuals and community (Carper, 1978; Holmes & Gastaldo, 2002), allow nurses to act as mediators between individuals and the health care system. Nursing supports vested in the professional knowledge and practices of caring, as well as understandings of human beings with relational, emotional, and ethical sensitivities of caring (Cameron, 2004; Tronto, 1994) might be particularly helpful in supporting people who bear special and urgent needs. The absence of nurses in the front-line care for people experiencing homelessness in Japan may result in losing an opportunity to meet available health care needs in a timely manner. The presence of nurses in community settings might reduce barriers to accessing health care and provide early interventions, including health promotion. Bridging between people who are homeless with appropriate information and health care supports, nurses can offer meaningful assistances by relationally attending to their transitions in life and allowing health care to be more accessible and less threatening. Nurses can also become advocates. In future studies, I hope to explore a unique role and value of nurses in supporting the health/well-being of people who are homeless in Japan.

Social Significance: Building New Knowledge of Home/Homelessness

As Noddings wrote (2002), "A real home is an extension of ourselves" (p. 453). Stories told by Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama posed critical questions and challenges toward our assumptions of home/homelessness and the current support structures that sustain homelessness in Japan. Their stories of being homeless demonstrate a form of resistance against the dominant narrative of homelessness in Japan. Ama obtained an apartment given by the welfare program

after a few years of being homeless on street, but he decided to leave an apartment three years later and to live on streets again. He said:

Welfare officers visited my apartment once in a few weeks. I was annoyed by their visits. As my apartment was regularly checked by them, I felt obliged to clean up my apartment, do laundry, and hang out my futon to sterilize under the sunshine. All of these housekeeping chores were troublesome to me. And I felt bored to stay in an apartment alone. So, I had been getting tired of that life and thought it was much better to live without an apartment. I don't like to be restricted by others.

For Ama, an apartment given by welfare supports was not a home where he was able to secure his privacy and feel safe and independent. Ama did not find a sense of home while being in an apartment, when his life was under surveillance and he has to live apart from others. When I asked Ama about his understanding of home, he replied:

Home can take any shapes. For many people, house is a home. But for me, a home is a place where there are people around me. If I stay in a room, I will be alone and isolated. After all, I rather prefer a home where I can live among many people.

Ama recognizes home as a place where he feels a connection with people by letting them be visible in his eyes and letting himself be visible to other's eyes. Although a place to keep his belongings, a place to clean his body, and a place to cook his meals were equally expressed as vital needs by Ama, he felt that he could compromise these needs to be present to others around him. Similarly, Apapane also revealed his understanding of home as a place that offers him a necessary private space for physical maintenance, preparing him to go outside. For both Ama and Apapane, home importantly symbolizes a connection to the world. For them, being homeless

may signify an isolation from the world, which conflicts with their wishes to live in relationships. Ama's words "*Home can take any shapes*" resists the assumptions of what home is. While others might see Ama in their categorical knowing of being homeless, his experience of home might be consistent with his decisions of living on the street. Living in a city where he grew up and has lived for more than seventy years, he expresses the value of home that he has chosen, a sense of familiarity and connection with others. From Ama's stories, home can be understood as a space of sustaining one's integrity, yet, for people who are homeless in Japan, their integrities seem to be often challenged because dominant narratives press them into a categorization of who they were/are going to be and most often see them as less than.

Again, as Noddings affirmed (2002), "A home provides not only shelter and food but also a place from which, in which, one claims an identity" (p. 444). An understanding of home involves stories to live by which point to who each of us is and is going to be. Linking with moral perspectives, Walker (2007) mentions moral responsibility as being attached to people through their histories, actions, and responses as well as in relationships. This moral perspective is also important in understanding what home means to people. Assumptions of home and homelessness can seriously undermine identities of people who are homeless in Japan. Care and support structures informed, not by their voices, but by ideologies about what is considered to be desirable for people experiencing homelessness might create huge gaps between support systems and people who need supports, and put constraints on lives of people who are homeless in Japan, rather than alleviating their sufferings.

Ama wishes to receive welfare supports for his medical expenses, but he is afraid if he visits a welfare office, as he will be advised to live in an apartment first. Housing as a private place is an essential part of our lives. The government also promotes employment supports

through its measures concerning the independence of people who are homeless in Japan (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2012). It is important to support people who need assistance in finding a job. However, when they express objections toward the ideologies of housing-first or employment-first approaches, their claims need to be listened to and taken into consideration. With acknowledging the increased diversity, complexity, and distinctiveness among experiences of being homeless in Japan, social support structures for people who are homeless should become more flexible, accommodating, and respectful of needs and choices expressed by each person experiencing homelessness. This also informs a broad spectrum of policy development for marginalized populations in Japan. From this study, I realized that understandings of home and homeless could not be assumed. By attending closely to stories, social support systems would importantly establish a moral space which promotes health/well-being of people who are homeless in Japan, and facilitate a sustainable community where they feel at home and live in relation to others.

Relational aspects in recognizing home and homeless pose questions to the dominant narratives about home in Japan and call forth an ethical attitude of care. Stories of Yoshi, Apapane, and Ama may invite people to reconsider the value that people learn and perform in matters of importance. Questioning the dominant narratives about home in Japan suggests a significant step towards caring for people experiencing homelessness. Nelson and Carse (1996) bring to mind an extended awareness of an ethics of care and inform the social significance of the study:

The ethic of care challenges us to resist the human tendency to remain blind and unconcerned about what is unfamiliar or more relationally and personally distant and to develop a sensitivity to differences in perspective and need as a demand of justice.

Crucial to this end is a normative conception of care that does not ground it solely in love and affection for those whose connections to us are visible, but that urges respectful, compassionate concern for the welfare of others even in the absence of bonds of affection, or of relational, geographic, or cultural familiarity. (p. 29-30)

Acknowledging the unique situatedness of each individual's lives signifies reciprocity of care among people beyond shared time, contexts, and places. This study offers a space and an opportunity to start thinking about the diverse meanings and interpretations of home and inspire people to act in relational and ethical ways underpinned by an awareness and appreciation of human relatedness and diversity.

Future Studies

This narrative inquiry allowed me to attend closely to the lives of three men who are homeless in Japan and to recognize multilayered complexities embedded in their stories, which cannot be easily described or defined. As stories are ongoing and shifting over time, place, and contexts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), there is no finite end of knowing about homelessness in Japan. In future studies, more stories of people who are homeless in Japan (including stories of women and youth for example) need to be heard in order to show further diversity among the experiences of being homeless; to understand their special needs for supports expressed by their voices; to reveal a gap within the current support structures; and to transform support systems and arrange resources to accommodate various needs.

In their stories, Yoshi and Ama implicitly or explicitly expressed serious concerns and anxieties about their declining health status, due to their harsh lives on streets and a lack of access to health care. Possibilities for future study include a closer look into the subjective health status among people who are homeless in Japan and their perceptions or experiences in their

health care encounters, for disclosing and addressing potential barriers to access health care. Nurses are in an important position in offering supports to maintain/enhance their health conditions and to reduce their potential anxieties for health through relational, ongoing interactions – there is a strong need for intervention studies. Nurses could ideally connect people experiencing homelessness with optimal health care supports, to address both visible and invisible barriers to health care, and to advocate on their behalf to transform health care to be more accessible and welcoming. In future studies, more considerations about the role of nurses will help to establish the significance of nurses and nurses' viewpoints in supporting people who are homeless in Japan.

As I engaged deeply in their lives and my life through narrative inquiry, I found that their stories invite broader and deeper contemplations and sensitivities of understanding the weight of human life, the structures of marginalization silencing the voices of people who are homeless in Japan, and the inequities and injustices in society which affect their health, well-beings, and dignity. Moreover, international comparison between storied experiences of being homeless may also reveal influences of social, cultural, political, linguistic, religious, and/or geographical contexts on shaping experiences of being homeless across the world. I hope more studies which recognize homelessness as unique personal experiences will build a way forward to shape respectful and ethical worlds informed by equity, justice, and sympathetic resonances among people.

Emerging Stories and Landscapes Continued

As I come to the end of this dissertation, I take one last reflective turn.

Yoshi's trembling voice

Apapane's implied distance

Ama's gentle smile

Without an umbrella

Walking in the rain

No place to go

Sleeping outside

Without a blanket

Fighting for life

"It's a matter of life or death!"

Distress at the edge

"My life was completely changed. I was in despair and wished to die at that moment"

Sharing care

The smell of Yoshi's last piece of bread

Building a link

"If you have any good news, please share with me. This will be my happiness and encouragement in my life"

Life, all encompassed by stories

Will ever be alive and cherished in my heart

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Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of Ethics Approval

Notification of Approval

Date: January 07, 2015
 Study ID: Pro00053089
 Principal Investigator: [Hiroko Kubota](#)
 Study Supervisor: [Vera Caine](#)
 Study Title: A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of People in Japan who are Homeless or Precariously Housed
 Approval Expiry Date: January-06-16

Approved Consent Form:	Approval Date	Approved Document
	01/07/2015	H. Kubota- Information Letter.docx
	01/07/2015	H. Kubota- Information Letter in Japanese.docx

Thank you for submitting the above study to the Research Ethics Board 1. Your application has been reviewed and approved on behalf of the committee.

A renewal report must be submitted next year prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the Research Ethics Board does not encompass authorization to access the staff, students, facilities or resources of local institutions for the purposes of the research.

Sincerely,

William Dunn, PhD
 Chair, Research Ethics Board 1

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system).

Appendix B: Information Letter



Information Letter and Consent Form

Study Title: A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of People in Japan who are Homeless or Precariously Housed.

Research Investigator:

Hiroko Kubota

[Redacted contact information for Hiroko Kubota]

Supervisor:

Dr. Vera Caine

[Redacted contact information for Dr. Vera Caine]

Background

You are being asked to participate in a research study entitled ‘A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of People who are Homeless or Precariously Housed’. This study is conducted by Hiroko Kubota and supervised by Dr. Vera Caine from the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta. I contact you for participation because the supporting organization has chosen you as a potential candidate. I am interested in hearing your life experience including that of becoming homeless or unstably housed. The results of this study will be used in support my doctoral research. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

Purpose

In this study, we are exploring the experiences of living without a home or living in unstable housing in Japan. We are also interested in how stories can influence nursing practices, social attitudes, and policies in order to enhance the supports for people who experience homeless or housing insecurity in Japan.

Study Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, I would ask you to have audio-recorded conversations with me over a 4 to 5-month time period. Each conversation will approximately take between one to two hours. I will meet you in a public place, such as café or in a meeting room next to the support center, or in places that is convenient for you. I hope to meet you once in a week or every two weeks for a total of 10 conversations. All these conditions for a meeting will be negotiable between us.

You are welcome to talk freely about your past and current life experiences. You will also be invited, if you want, to take photos of the important places or people in your life, or to bring an item which has a special meaning for you to our conversations. These photos and items will help me better understand your experiences. All the photos and items shared will be returned to you.

I will also take field notes about our interactions. After series of our conversations, I will write about the experiences that you have shared with me. I will share these writings with you for further negotiations, as a part of the study.

You are eligible to participate in the study if you agree to be represented as ‘people who are homeless or precariously housed’; are over 18 years old; speak Japanese; and live in Kobe for at least 4 months.

Benefits

You will be given an opportunity to tell and share your life stories within a safe, long-term relationship with a researcher. By telling your stories, therapeutic effects might be expected in that you may become more aware of your life history, identity, belief/value, and strength. You may also reflect on and obtain clearer understanding of how your life experiences are shaped by various familial, cultural, social, and political backgrounds. Also, I hope that your life stories will help us better understand the experience of being homeless or precariously housed as well as to challenge the current practices in healthcare, society, and politics. In each conversation, I will pay for or bring you a small meal and a drink for each time we meet, as a form of compensation (up to \$10 value). If you take bus or train to get to a meeting place, I will give you a voucher for transportations.

Risk

As you tell your life experiences, you may encounter memories and feelings which could be distressing or discouraging to you. Also, you may perceive frustrations and limitations in your current life situation, which could be stressful to you. It is acceptable to express negative emotions during the conversations, but if it is difficult for you, you are not obliged to tell everything to us. If unidentified problems surfaced during the conversations, I could connect you to appropriate supports or resources offered by the support center, though I will not disclose any information to the center without your permission.

Voluntary Participation

You may choose to participate in this study. You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Even if you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time up to the point before you give consent to the final research text without consequences of any kind. You can decide to change or end a research relationship with me by telling me or writing a note to me.

Your requests will be taken in account immediately. You may also refuse to answer any questions or talk about particular experiences. You can request to stop the audio-recording anytime if you desire.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

I will use the information obtained in this study for writing a dissertation. I will also build presentations or research papers based on this study. Any information that is obtained in this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. If you desire, pseudonyms will be assigned to you. Any particular names or places will be altered to avoid any personal identification.

All the data, such as audio-recordings and emerging texts will be stored securely in a locked cabinet or in electronic devices in my supervisor's research office at the University of Alberta. The data will be password protected for a minimum of 5 years after the completion of the study. Only I and my supervisor will have access to the original data.

Please feel free to ask for a copy of reports or publications on research findings. You can indicate your request at any time. We may use the data we get from this study in subsequent studies, but if we do this it will have to be approved by a Research Ethics Board.

Further Information

If you have any further questions regarding this study or would like additional information before, during, or after your participation, please do not hesitate to contact Hiroko Kubota at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Vera Caine by phone at [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have any concerns or questions regarding your right as a research subject or ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Research Ethics Office, at +1-780-492-2615 or I will contact them on behalf of you since communications will be done in English.

Thank you for considering being part of this research. Your help is greatly appreciated.

This study was explained to me by Hiroko Kubota.

By signing below you agree that:

- 1) I have read and understood this information letter.
- 2) I have been given the opportunity to discuss the information in this information letter and all my questions are addressed to my satisfaction at this moment.
- 3) I agree to take part in this study and I know I remain free to withdraw at any time.

Signature of Research Participant

Name (Printed)

Date

I, Hiroko Kubota, believe that the person signing this form understands the information letter and voluntarily agrees to participate.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix C: Information Letter Translated in Japanese



研究説明書および同意書

研究題目：日本におけるホームレス状態の方の人生経験に関する叙史的調査

研究担当者	研究責任者
久保田 弘子	ベラ・ケイン 教授

研究の背景

この度は「日本におけるホームレス状態の方の人生経験に関する叙史的調査」に興味を持っていただき誠にありがとうございます。この研究調査は、研究担当者のアルバータ大学・看護学部博士課程在籍の久保田弘子、研究責任者のアルバータ大学・看護学部のベラ・ケイン教授の下、実施されています。今回、本研究の参加に興味を示していただきましたので、参加を決定する前に研究の概要について説明させていただきます。なお、本研究では現在のホームレス、もしくは住居が定まらない状況に関する経験に留まらず、あなたの人生全体の経験について聞かせて頂きたいです。本研究で得られた結果は、研究者（久保田弘子）の博士研究に使用させていただきます。研究への参加は完全に自由意志です。

目的

本研究では、住まいを失った状況、もしくは固定の住居を失った状況で、皆さまがどのような人生経験を語り、研究者と共有していただくのかを知り、耳を傾けること目的としています。また、私たちはお話していただく人生経験がどのように看護ケアや社会構造および政治に影響を与え、個々に語られた人生経験がどのように固定の住まいを失った

方々に対する全体的な支援向上に役立てることができるのかを思索することも目的としています。

実験方法

本研究の参加に同意して頂けたら、4-5か月の間、研究者と会話をさせていただきます（テープレコーダーで会話は録音されます）。それぞれの会話はおよそ1時間から2時間を予定しております。会話は公共の場所（たとえばカフェや神戸カトリック教会の敷地内）、もしくは都合の良い場所を相談して決定させていただきます。会話の頻度は1週間か2週間に1回を予定しており、全体を通して10回程度お話を聞かせていただきたいと思います。上記の項目は、参加者と研究者の間の相談の上、調整可能です。

研究者との会話では、自身の過去や現在の人生経験について自由にお話いただいて結構です。もし差し支えなければ、研究者がお渡しするカメラで日常の風景などを写真に撮っていただいたり、思い出の品や大切にしている品などを会話の場にお持ちいただけると幸いです。共有していただく写真や品などはより一層、皆さまの人生経験の理解を助けてくれると思います。撮っていただいた写真は現像してお渡しし、共有していただいた品々は返却いたします。

また、研究者は会話でのやり取りに関する記録を取らせていただきます。全ての会話が終了した後、研究者が共有していただいた皆さまの人生経験に関する文書を作成します。研究プロセスの一部として、数か月後それらの作成した文書をさらに参加者と研究者の間で共有し、話し合うことを予定しています。

本研究は「ホームレス状態もしくは住まいが不安定な方」と文書で表現されることに同意する方、18歳以上の方、日本語で会話できる方、神戸もしくは神戸近辺に少なくとも4か月以上滞在される方を対象としております。

研究参加により生じる利益

研究に参加することにより、研究者とプライバシーが守られた長期的な関係の中で、自身の人生経験を語る機会を得ることができます。本研究にて人生を振りかえることにより、自身の人生の歴史、人間性、信条・価値観、そして強さ・長所を知り、今後の生活において前向きな効果が期待できる可能性があります。また同時に、自身の人生経験がどのように様々な家族、文化、社会、政治的背景により広く形づくられているか振り返り、自身の人生に対してより深い理解が得られることができます。また、お話いただいた人生経験はホームレス状態や住まいが不安定な状況で生活される方全体の理解を深め、現在の医療・社会・政治の通念や慣行に疑問を投げかけることができます。それぞれの会話では、研究者が軽食と飲み物を、参加に対する謝礼として提供させていただきます（1回の会話につき最大1000円まで）。もし、待ち合わせ場所までバスや電車を使用される場合、使用交通会社の回数券をそれぞれの会話終了後に提供いたします。

研究参加により生じるリスク

人生経験をお話いただく中で、過去の辛い思い出や苦しい感情に直面する可能性があります。また、現在の生活に対する葛藤や限界を感じ、ストレスを抱える可能性もあります。このようなネガティブな感情を会話の中で表現することは構いません。しかし、もしこのような感情を感じ、表出することが苦痛であれば、すべての経験を研究者にお話しいただく必要はありません。会話の中で今まで認識されていなかった新たな問題が表出した場合、参加者を支援団体が提供する必要な支援・資源に紹介するお手伝いをすることができます。しかし、その際も参加者の許可なく、研

研究者が個人情報を支援団体に伝えることはありません。

自由意志による参加

本研究へ参加するか否かは自由意志によって決定してください。この説明を聞くことによって本研究の参加に同意しなければならない義務は生じておりません。一度同意した後も、最終文書に合意していただくまではいつでも参加を取り消すことができます。参加を取り消すことにより生じる不利益はありません。研究参加に関する変更および参加の取り消しは、直接口頭もしくは文面にて研究者に伝えていただくことができます。これらの希望は受けとり次第、すぐに考慮させていただきます。また、参加者は研究者が尋ねる特定の質問への回答を拒否し、特定の経験を話すことを拒否することができます。希望があれば、いつでも一時的にテーブルコーダーによる録音を止めることができます。

個人情報保護について

本研究において取得した個人情報は研究者の博士論文執筆、また本研究に関する研究発表、学術論文を執筆する際にのみ使用されます。本研究でお話いただいた人生経験およびそれに関連した個人情報は厳重に保護され、参加者の合意の下でのみ使用させていただきます。希望により、得られた個人の経験・情報は偽名で表現します。また本研究において全ての固有名詞、地名等の個人の特定につながる情報はすべて偽名で表現されます。

全ての得られた情報（記録された音声情報および会話の記録）は研究責任者であるアルバータ大学の指導教官のオフィスで厳重に管理されます。音声情報そして会話の記録は、本研究が終了してから最低 5 年間、鍵のかかる保管場所もしくはパスワードで保護された PC 上にて保管されます。その間も研究者、および研究責任者のみが本研究で得られた情報にアクセス致します。

参加者は本研究でお話いただいた全ての情報、そして本研究を基にした出版物にアクセスする権利があります。ご希望があれば本研究に関する報告書、出版物をお渡し致しますので、いつでも研究者にお伝えください。また、本研究で得られた情報を今後のさらなる研究のために用いる場合があります。その際はアルバータ大学倫理委員会での審査・承認を経て使用させていただきます。

問い合わせ、苦情等の連絡先

本研究への参加前・参加途中・参加終了後に、研究に関する質問および詳細についてのお問い合わせがございましたら久保田弘子（携帯：[REDACTED]、メールアドレス：[REDACTED]）にご連絡ください。もしくは研究責任者のベラ・ケイン教授（電話：[REDACTED]、メールアドレス：[REDACTED]）までお問い合わせしていただくことも可能です。

本研究の個人情報の取り扱いおよび倫理的手続きに関しては、アルバータ大学倫理委員会のガイドラインに基づき審査・承認されています。なお、本研究の参加者の権利が守られていないと思われた場合や、担当者以外の意見や情報が欲しい場合はアルバータ大学倫理委員会（電話：+1-780-492-2615）へご連絡ください。やり取りは全て英語で行われるため、研究者が代理で当該委員会に問い合わせることも可能です。

以上、何かご不明な点がありましたら遠慮なくお尋ねください。
本研究へのご理解とご協力を深く感謝いたします。

本研究は研究者である久保田弘子より内容の説明が行われました。
署名をすることにより、以下の3項目に同意することになります。

- 1) 私は本説明書・同意書の内容に目を通し、理解しました。
- 2) 私は本研究の内容について研究者へ質問・話し合いをする機会が十分に与えられ、現時点における全ての疑問・不明点は解決しました。
- 3) 私は本研究に参加することに同意し、常に本研究から脱退をする権利を有していることを理解しています。

参加者の署名

参加者の名前

日付（西暦・月・日）

私、久保田弘子は本同意書に署名をする人物が本説明書の内容を理解し、自発的に参加に同意したと理解します。

研究者の署名

日付（西暦・月・日）

Appendix D: Recruitment Poster



I would like to hear your life stories...

- Are you currently living without home or stable housing?
- Are you living in Kobe or the cities close to Kobe?
- Are you interested in sharing your life stories?
- Are you willing to participate in 6 to 10 meetings with a researcher over a 4-5 month period?

You are invited to the study of "A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of People in Japan who are Homeless or Precariously Housed".

Meals/drinks and compensations for travel are provided for each meeting.

If you are interested in participating or would like to hear more about the study, please contact me at:

Hiroko Kubota, RN, BScN, MN, PhD candidate
Faculty of Nursing
University of Alberta
Email:
Phone:



Appendix E: Recruitment Poster Translated in Japanese

あなたのお話を聞かせてください...

- 現在、住まいのない方もしくは不定の方
(ネットカフェ・知人宅に居候など含む)
- 現在、神戸市内もしくは神戸市近辺に拠点を置いている方
- プライバシーが守られた空間で、人生経験をお話して下さる方
- 4~5か月の間、6~10回ほど会ってお話をするのが可能な方

これに該当・同意する方は「日本におけるホームレス状態の方の人生経験に関する調査」に、ぜひご参加ください。

お話は1回につき1時間程度で、飲み物を用意しております。

参加にご興味がある方、あるいはもっと詳しく知りたい方はぜひご連絡ください。



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF NURSING

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