Stranger in a Familiar Land : Identities Encountered in an Overseas Sabbatical

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Introduction

This paper is an attempt to understand why certain encounters during a recent 1-year stay in the United States（U.S.）provoked in me strong negative emotions. I arrived as a visiting research scholar from Otsuma Women's University to a private university located in my hometown area of southern California, after residing and working for 30 years in Japan as a researcher-practitioner of teaching English. In this paper, I explore connections with my identities formed in the U.S. where I was born and raised, and in Japan where I have sojourned, and try to come to grips with puzzles that have consumed my thinking throughout my life.

Amid a friendly local environment where I was able to form many warm relationships and renew others, I also experienced recurring encounters that resulted in less than desirable outcomes. Though these never resulted in physical harm, I reacted like a trauma victim who cannot relinquish the memories and the hurt. In this paper, I try to assess why such situations have remained poignant in my consciousness.

Striving for transparency, I probe how certain interactions and experiences raised consciousness regarding blatant salient identities. A closer examination of their social aspects revealed latent identities that may be more influential. My narrative is interwoven with experiences that reveal competing tensions in me and reaction to others regarding my: (a) ethnic images, as an American-born Japanese, vs. the misleading image of being a highly fluent Asian-born speaker of English); (b) academic roles (a visiting scholar vs. being an auditing student in undergraduate and Masters-degree courses; c) abodes (residing in California, vs. prospects of living in the U.S. permanently or returning to Japan). I wish to illustrate how some of these interactions were aggravated by English as a language and cultural medium.

I analyze these experiences through three filters: (1) Sussman's (2000) cultural identity model, (2) Simmel's essay titled "The Stranger" (1908), and (3) Block's (2013) reassessment of identity with critical regard for the self and social class. I end this paper seeking further avenues of inquiry.

The Return of the Native

I came back to my hometown after spending nearly thirty continuous years teaching English in Japan. I viewed my sojourn purely in professional terms as a researcher-practitioner. How I would be regarded at the university where I would reside for one year in its Masters of Arts degree program of Teaching English as a Second Language (MA in TESL)? During my stay, I wished to audit courses for personal and professional enrichment, the latter to help with my own research approaches as well as better equip me for teaching my students. I registered with the university's graduate school soon after my arrival and was able to audit a number of classes: in Organizational Psychology as well as TESL, and undergraduate ones in Nihongo, Asian-American history, and Christian music performance.

I was able to renew and strengthen ties with family and friends as well as make many new ones. As for life events, I attended my niece's university graduation ceremony and was present when my nephew received news of his acceptance into university. During the first few months of my stay, I was able to regain my California state driver's license, the main item on my bucket list.

However, I had two types of encounters that left me puzzled as to why I was asked such questions, especially wondering at myself as to why I should care about peoples' reactions. The first was one which I came to dread this sort of conversation with any local who met me for the first time:

"Your English is really good. Where are you from?"
"I was born and raised here, in southern California."
"That's great! So when did you come here?"

I found that these well-meaning inquirers had not bothered to listen to my answer but had already assumed by looking at me that I was born outside of the United States. Even when these would be corrected, it irked me that many of them would treat the misunderstanding offhandedly; at other times, I would receive an apology accompanied with the slight bow reserved for the foreign-born Asian.

The other encounter that left me puzzled was with those who learned I was an American citizen but had been living outside of the U.S. They would ask why didn't I quit my job and find another here. I would explain that I had secure employment in Japan. "But America is a great country! This is where you were born! Why won't you stay here?"

This latter type of exchange often occurred in two settings: with occupants in a senior village located within fifteen minutes' walk of the university. The other was at my family church which was ethnically Japanese. My interlocutors were more often non-white locals, many of them from Europe or Latin America who had become naturalized U.S. citizens or Japanese who held permanent residency. What bothered me was how they were unable to accept my situation.

I proceed to provide definitions and understandings of identity and its saliences with the sojourner experience that may better inform the context and dynamics of these two encounters.

Identity and Identity Salience

The definition of identity to which I have long subscribed has been part of the poststructuralist paradigm. The common refrain of this notion is that identity is multiple, which Kanno succinctly explains, "Many aspects of our "selves" contribute to our understanding of who we are: race, gender, class, occupation, sexual orientation, age, among others (2003, p. 3)". Block (2013) regards components of this poststructuralist identity as "inscriptions", making clear that these inscriptions "are not bordered entities which can be studied in isolation; rather, they are inextricably linked in our day-to-day practices" (p. 18–19). Riley (2007) states how social identity is the sum of various social sub-groups and shows how these are related to language in terms of labels, speech styles, and speech communities (pp. 88–89).

The salience of identity occupies great interest in social psychology. Sussman (2000) regards identity salience in terms of one's changed cultural self when entering a new cultural environment (p. 365). Morris (2013) states, it "refers to the likelihood that a given identity will be active across situations" (p. 24). Douglass, Wang, Yip (2016) are concerned with identity salience as "the relevance and significance of ethnicity-race" and state that "salience is expected to vary from moment to moment for the same person as a function of the interaction between the person and his/her immediate context" (p. 1397). In second language education, Kanno states, "Which part becomes a salient feature of our identity depends on the context" (2003, p. 3).

I struggled to find an appropriate label for long-term residents living in a country not of their native origin. At first, I thought "repatriate" seemed to describe a returned native to my home country. However, "repatriate" (Synonym.com) is defined as someone whose citizenship has been restored, implying it was lost or forfeited, regarded negatively. Likewise, I was discomfited with the word "sojourners", which seems commonly defined as "a temporary st ay" (Dictionary.com). But I found the particular casting I wanted in Brown, Driver, Briggs (1979) who describe "sojourner" as "of foreigners in Israel, though conceded rights". Sojourning implies not only an extended stay, but also bestows legal rights to those who qualify. Permanent residents fall in this category.

Sussman's Cultural Identity Model

Sussman (2000) finds prior repatriation models fail to account for why coming home is so difficult for the sojourner. The model she proposes is to help "predict consequences" for the transitions experienced during repatriation, and accounts for the initial strengthening of identification with the home culture. She incorporates identity salience into her model to

help explain one's changed cultural self when entering a new cultural environment.

Sussman (2000) identifies four types of cultural "identity shifts" (pp. 365–367) which remain fairly latent until sojourners return to their home culture or country. The first two are "subtractive" and "additive", in which sojourners are not conscious of their own culture until they encounter the new one. A negative reaction results in a subtractive identity shift, while the embracing of the new culture results in an additive identity shift. Sussman states those who have subtractive or additive identity shifts will experience great cultural dislocation upon their return. She claims additive identity holders will seek to interact with former host culture members, attend host cultural events, and continue studying the host culture language. After her own sojourn in Japan for one year, she writes of having asked visitors to take off their shoes entering her New York City apartment and eating primarily in Japanese restaurants (p. 366).

The third identity shift is "affirmative", in which the bearer of the home culture identity is maintained through the experience and largely ignores the cultural discrepancies. The fourth type is "intercultural" in which the bearer is able to hold on to "multiple cultural scripts simultaneously" and use each when the situation requires. Sojourners who return "evaluate their personal values, cognitive maps, and behavioral repertoires against prevailing cultural norms at home, which include recognitions of "misattributions" contributing to the cause of one's negative affective state" (Sussman, p. 365).

The one time I took deliberate action to initiate an intercultural identity shift happened early during my sabbatical stay when I was required by the university to pass a series of online modules on sexual harassment to comply with Title IX regulations as mandated by the U.S. government's Office of Civil Rights (online). At the time I was feeling decidedly lonely as my wife had returned to Japan. I found the content of the sexual harassment modules very explicit, which made for uncomfortable reading. In time I requested a face-to-face meeting with the module coordinator who was a woman of African descent to request an opt-out with conscientious objections. I explained that I taught at a women's college in Japan and had attended its sexual harassment workshops, so I was already quite sensitized to the purpose of the modules. I asked if students and faculty were required to enroll in online modules on racial diversity. When she replied no, I pointed out the incongruity of not having this course in the current climate of the U.S. in which Blacks are harassed or killed by police for the merest infractions. The next day, I was informed by email that I was exempted from the modules.

My Encounters Revisited: Cultural Blindness and Identity

Sussman offers a model to describe the cultural identity shifts a sojourner experiences after returning to her or his home country. As I have pointed out above, her model regards sojourns as brief stays and does not consider how one's identity is changed by long sojourns. The four identity shifts she delineates are predicated on the assumption that cultural identities are latent at the onset, which indicates a mindset that is comfortable in its presumed

identity.

I am further disturbed as to how she views the terms "culture" and "country" as interchangeable (p. 355). She recognizes that there are heterogeneous countries such as the U.S. and the People's Republic of China, but argues that the majority culture determines a country's "public behavior, discourse, and language choice". This nonchalance is evidenced in a 2002 study she conducted to test her cultural identity model with 113 American Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) participants. Her study showed those who felt estranged from their American cultural identity roots suffered greater distress upon repatriation. For this study, she undertook no measures of ethnicity or race, only stating that the majority was "White" (p. 396, author's capitalization). Such a decision in her data collection does not consider the views of people of color that could complicate but also better inform her findings. Sussman's conflation of culture with country indicates a lack of consciousness, even a conscience regarding the ethnic makeup and the dynamics of people of color in the U.S.

I became aware how remote my actual sojourner experience was from the four cultural identity shifts that Sussman details, which seem more appropriate for sojourners who spend a brief time outside of their home country and lack an alerted sense of their cultural identity. I argue that people of color are more conscious of their own minority status. When I look back at my arrival in Japan thirty years ago, I recall months prior to my departure how acutely conscious I was of my ethnic background as my salient identity. I obtained a copy of my application into the JET program from the first school office where I was stationed in Japan. In response to the prompt that asked for my nationality, I found that I had written "Japanese". But this identification should be regarded as incongruous since my parents had decided before I and my siblings were born that we would only hold U.S. citizenship. My error shows the extent of my confused state of identity. From the beginning of my sojourn in Japan, I was very sensitive to my lack of Nihongo ability. I was upbraided by a train conductor when I asked him twice if the train was going to Utsunomiya because I could not read the kanji (in those days *romaji* transliteration of destinations was not provided). I remember how I tried to 'go native' in acts of cultural behavior although this did not carry over to improve my Nihongo because I felt I lacked the ability.

Sussman's latent regard of the American cultural identity echoes the attitudes of those I interacted in the first type of encounter, who wondered aloud why I was able to speak so well. I think it is now appropriate to state that the locals referred here are whites. Ethnic people of color are forced to justify themselves, even if they should be descendants of multiple generations in the U.S. The carte blanche to question people of their native speakerhood of the prestige language has been viciously portrayed in a YouTube video titled, "What kind of Asian are you?" (2013). In this video, a white jogger's polite inquiries followed by smug remarks are shown to be laced with racial ethnic assumptions. Ken Fujioka, an American of Japanese descent born in Nigeria due to his father being in the U.S. diplomatic services, writes about strangers who comment on his "verbal dexterity" in English, as if they expect Asians to struggle with the language (2006, p. 934).

I regarded these encounters as micro-aggressions, much like the tribulations of face and

name endured by the Asian students in Yang's graphic novel *American Born Chinese* (2006). The title character Jin Wang is traumatized by white schoolyard taunts and yearns to be seen as white. Quach, Jo and Urrieta (2009) found similar illusionary longing for whiteness echoed by Asian students in American South schools competing with their Black and white classmates. These students changed their hair color and stayed out of the daylight in attempt to develop lighter skin (p. 128).

I feel constrained by this salient identity ascribed to native English speakers as the conventional preserve of whites. I could not understand why such a pronouncement on my English language fluency, let alone not detecting my accent could be so easily stated in southern California, a multi-ethnic, suburban, overwhelmingly Democrat region. I have also noticed in Japan the ones who ask me this are other whites, many themselves long-time sojourners with Japanese spouses. I cannot recollect an encounter in which a person of color ever asked me if I was a native English speaker. I wonder if there is a sort of blind consciousness among whites that regards Asians as alike, evidenced in the slip uttered by the British foreign minister Jeremy Hunt when he introduced his native Chinese wife as "Japanese" in his greeting to the foreign minister of the People's Republic of China (The Spectator, 2018).

My sensitivity to the English language stemmed from my memories with English and "Nihongo" (the name I prefer for the language than "Japanese", which I associate more with ethnicity and culture). Growing up in Los Angeles in the late 1960s, I spoke English and Nihongo freely at home. But mixing both languages in elementary school proved to be too much for my second-grade teacher. She held a conference with my parents and forbade them to use Nihongo in the home. In a short time, I quickly mastered speaking in English but just as quickly forgot my Nihongo. This change in language skills prompted my mother to enroll me the next year in a *hoshuko* (a Japanese immersion school that holds its hours outside of regular schooling).

My teacher's intervention in my family's language had disastrous results. For my mother, English was her favorite school subject and her overriding life motivation was to sound like a native speaker. On the other hand, my father ceased speaking to me. He was unable to study English during World War II and when he entered the United States the language was beyond his ability. Only after my mother had passed away, forty years later, did my father and I resume speaking (in Nihongo, thanks to my wife's persuasion).

The second type of encounter which questioned my resolve to remain in Japan shows how strongly inhabitants of a country perceive themselves as beholders of an imagined community. Anderson (2006) has pointed out that this spellbinding belief in such a community lies in polite fictions accepted by all those who believe: "imagined" in that they share a communion though they will never meet each other, "limited" due to supposed geographic borders, and "sovereign" in the sense that they are a free community with a deep horizontal relationship (pp. 6–7). Riley (2007) describes members of a nation-state believing they are united by commonalities of history, language, and culture (p. 182).

I found Japanese residents and American citizens to be both entrenched in their beliefs about America as a land overflowing with good things and freedoms. As I have pointed out

before, those who asked me about my continued stay in the U.S. tended to be either naturalized U.S. citizens or had permanent residency. They were nonplussed when I explained I would receive retirement benefits from my current job. But didn't I miss the food and the sights here? How about the freedom of doing things as I liked? What I felt from these inquiries was the strong positivist regard immigrants had for America based on their memories of the past. Despite frequent reports of violence and the rising cost of living in the States, it was clear to me that these Japanese still believed America had so much to offer in social freedom and opportunity. They dismissed difficulties I pointed out I would have in obtaining adequate insurance, a secure job, and my physical safety.

I could not heartily agree with my inquirers because of the tribulations my wife has suffered after being bestowed with a B1/B2 visa that allows holders to enter and reside in the U.S. for 10 years. The first time she entered the U.S., a Customs and Border officer stamped it void after six months. The stamp has been an unnecessarily added headache for my wife, as she has been subjected to extended questioning by immigration officials ever since.

Simmel's Positive Objectivist Views of the Stranger

When I tried to make sense of my understandings of myself as a stranger in my own native land, and found Sussman's cultural identity model wanting, I found insights in Simmel's essay "The Stranger" (1908) resonated with my identity understandings.

Simmel writes of the stranger as one who comes "today and stays tomorrow" (p. 402). The stranger, who likely could be a sojourner, is both near and far to the in-group he associates with. Simmel describes that "to be a stranger is naturally a very positive relation … (his) position as a full-fledged member involves both being outside it and confronting" (p. 402).

Simmel states the stranger has "objectivity" not in the sense of "passivity and detachment", rather it is "composed of distance and nearness, indifference and involvement" (pp. 403). "Objectivity" is "freedom" in the sense the "objective individual is bound by no commitments which could prejudice his perception, understanding, and evaluation of the given" (p. 403), and likewise free him from habit, piety, and precedent. This sort of liberation from attributes imposed by the in-group allows the stranger to regard matters "from a bird's-eye view" (p. 403).

Simmel examines two types of relations between the stranger with members of the in-group. One which is an exclusivity "exist (ing) only between the participants in (that) particular relationship". The other is composed of features "common to them because they are common to a group, a type, or mankind in general" (p. 404), that is, many people can relate to him on the same plane which they cannot so categorically assume among themselves. Riley (2007) in his explication of Simmel's essay, brings out two special roles the stranger has in these relationships: as "confidant" because "people will share thoughts with (him or her) that they would withhold from closer acquaintances, precisely because there is less likelihood of their confidences having any consequences" (p. 166). The other attractive

role of the stranger is as "judge or mediator" (p. 167) as a third party called in to intervene in disputes.

I can fully relate to this 'near and far' role of the stranger as the lone native English speaker professor in my department. My name is rendered in *romaji,* what feels like a saving grace, solely due to being an American born-Japanese with a U.S. passport. At the beginning of my employment, I sort of felt more like a novelty piece than confidant, only spoken to by those colleagues who wished to converse with me in English but not in the presence of others.

How has this positive objectivity of a stranger, being both far and near, manifested itself with the student community at the university where I spent my sabbatical abroad? My raised sensitivity concerning my supposed English language ability had me assuming that students there would be confused by my presence as a visiting scholar. In some classes, I specifically told the instructors not to inform students I was a professor in Japan. But the students themselves did not seem to regard me as another instructor in the class. When I came out with my actual status, their response was decidedly muted and I found myself overly agitated with their acceptance. I found it interesting how students addressed both adjunct and full-time instructors as "professors" which helped smooth over such status differences.

I found myself serving as confidante with several students in the university. Tiring of micro-aggressions with people questioning my English-speaking ability, I spent more time with those who accepted me the first time without further prompting. Those included native English speakers who I later realized had experienced some form of life-related and cultural dislocation. Age was a clear discriminating variable, even as little as one year's difference. I also became close friends with a white 5th-year undergraduate who disclosed to me that he felt different from other students in his major because he was a holdover from the previous year who had all graduated. Moreover, this male had spent his formative education in schools dominated by students of Chinese ethnicity. He remarked that the university was the 'whitest' school he had ever attended. His love for classical music coincided with mine and my adolescent experience as a choirboy resonated with his own desire to have the same experience. Another undergraduate friend was a Latino male in his late 30s who had emigrated from Nicaragua when he was a child. He felt almost alone in his age bracket among millennials who he felt lacked both respect and awareness of generational realities. I frequented a Chinese student gathering of both mainland and Taiwanese students, led by a native of Shanghai in his 40s who took to me and addressed me as 'Uncle Ken'. He told me that he yearned to make friends with native English speakers on campus, but felt denied in his first year of studies because the age gap with them was too great. My arrival on campus coincided with his second year and we often talked together despite his strong Shanghai dialect and my complete lack of Chinese language ability.

Simmel's emphasis on the positive objectivity of the stranger gives strength to the outsider. Yet, as positive the objective role of the stranger may be with regards to accountability to the community, Simmel does not seem to consider that the stranger may harbor desires

to integrate within it, which may be exacerbated by the indwelling motives of the stranger. These desires may also be motivated by conscious acts to mitigate outstanding features of difference, such as appearance, accent and expertise, which I have found to be true of my personal experience.

Simmel provides insights into the roles and relationships of the "stranger". He empowers the stranger by imbuing these with positive regard. I find Simmel relevant because he articulates what the stranger does than be simply the affected recipient of the in-group or host society view or acts.

Block's Call for Identity Recast as Informed by Self and Social Class

Block (2013) questions the efficacy of the poststructuralist notion of identity, on the basis that it has neglected certain aspects (14–15), namely:

1. Utilizing research looking into psychology of self than "predominantly social". He calls on researchers to examine Lucan's "psychoanalytic theories of identity", in which "an inner core self which is not entirely stable, is thoroughly conflicted and is a constraint both on human development and ongoing participation in mundane activities" (p. 21);
2. Involving a "socioeconomic stratification and social class angle" which favors "identity politics (identity inscriptions such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nationality and language) over the material conditions of life." Rather, Block calls for looking into an expanded set of social class dimensions that interrelate with each other: wealth, occupation, place of residence, education, social networking, consumption patterns, and symbolic behavior (p. 33).

Block's fleshing out these social class dimensions brought up an activity which I participated which triggered a memory of my economic-deprived childhood. In one summer session at the university where I spent my sabbatical, I enrolled in a week-long intensive intercultural communication class with field-based MA.TESL students who were English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors in universities in China. These were mainly white students, some of the more vocal ones questioning the legitimacy of ethnic minority claims of inequity. This persuaded the professor (herself white, who teaches refugees, married to a native Chinese) to hold a privilege walk based on a list of unseen privileges detailed by McIntosh (1989). We stood in a line as she read statements which required us to take one or two steps forward if they experienced a positive privilege, steps back if deprived. At end of the exercise, I saw most of the student participants had reached a position where they were eye-to-eye with the professor. She asked everyone to turn around, to find me almost at the back gate. I suspect my position may have a lot to do with memories of my low socioeconomic upbringing.

My father came to the U.S. in the mid-1950s on a refugee visa program, provided to those

who could prove they had been in Communist-occupied soil. He had been a prisoner of war who escaped from a death camp in northeast China. Five years later, my mother came over in an arranged marriage as a picture bride. Their first jobs were menial: my father mowed lawns while my mother went from being a maid to earning a bookkeeping degree to work as a bank teller, eventually a bookkeeper at a nutrition center for the Los Angeles City board of education. As their eldest son, I was mindful not ask for vain things; I was content with my mother sewing my clothes which were more in vogue with Japan at that time than in America. My sister is fond of telling her friends that she did not like sushi until she was an adult because my parents never bought raw fish of high enough quality.

Reviewing the privilege walk, I realized that the disparity of privilege could not just be due to racial-ethnic differences. There was a female native Southeast Asian who stood much closer to the front. I recall that her parents employed maids employed at her home and she had attended international schools for her English education. This woman was able to develop her language ability to the level of being hired as an English teacher in a Chinese university EFL program, whereas my only ticket to this haven of privilege was the accident of being born in the U.S. and receiving a solid education in public schools.

This combination of being sensitized to ethnic identification and awareness of my socio-economic upbringing made me ponder about my overt sensitivity to the two above conversational encounters. My adverse reactions showed how I felt micro-aggressions more than other American-born Japanese. But I have realized that it was less racial sensitivity and more awareness of my precarious status of 'not-belonging' economic vulnerability that mainly drove me. Inasmuch I have been piqued by the reactions over my English-speaking ability, I now realize that telling about it actually serves as a conversation piece, not a defining attack on my psyche when it comes to questions of my personal identity.

Block (2013) argues for more studies that incorporate Bourdieu's cultural capital which is the possession of "legitimized knowledge" and social capital which utilizes cultural capital in ways that help pave the way to success in individuals' life journeys (p. 32). Despite of social economic upbringing, I was privileged in the sense that my cultural capital consists of my public school education in California from elementary school, ending at a major public university, which has translated into a social capital ticket as the university enjoys prestige value in Japan and has helped me to procure university teaching positions.

Concluding Thoughts and Lines of Inquiry

This paper was initialized on the premise that Sussman's cultural identity model would inform my identity puzzles. Now I am aware that this model does not adequately address my particular perspective, that there is "more than meets the eye" about my own identity (Yang 2006, p. 28). I recognize that my sojourner experience cannot be easily answered by attributing my encounters to simple racial or ethnic misidentification, but that Block's 2013 paper shows how psychological study of the self and social class should be involved in issues of understanding language identity. My recollections, stark in their transparency, are psycho-

analytical in the sense that I hope these stories serve as liberation from the effects of the unconscious by bringing this material into the conscious mind through therapeutic intervention. As my conversation with the locals wondering at my English-speaking skill reveals that this was actually a cover for something deeper. It may have been just a conversation piece to mask my memory of having grown up economically deprived.

I would argue also such an inquiry involves generational and historical dynamics, especially when it comes to English educational experiences. Block (2013) argues that proponents of post-structuralism who celebrate diversity while ignoring real social and cultural inequities fall into "judgmental relativism" (pp. 18, 37) because they are unable to take sides on the basis that every stance is relative to each other. When researchers are able to be transparent about their personal and social perches and research benefits, the illusion will be dispelled if it is made clear that they are an imagined community on the basis of Anderson's (2006) "sovereignty". Knowing the social economic upbringing of researchers and the learners they interact with could go a long way in understanding the motivations of learning and their aspirations for attaining a level of English proficiency.

Identity salience research is a promising area to seek answers in the self and class tensions for therapeutic purposes. In clinical psychology, Yakushko, Davidson, and Nutt Williams (2009) propose an identity salience model that clinicians use to help guide patients to reach healing and change with multiple sociological and cultural identities such as race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, ability, status, age, and religion/spirituality (pp. 185–186). Black and Weinreich (2003) in their analysis of trauma suffered by counselors treating bomb victims in Omagh, Northern Ireland in 1998, state that "(a) core evaluative dimension of identity is highly evaluative and (judgmental) in nature, and therefore resistant to change" (p. 353). A considerable part of my adverse reaction to incidents during my one-year stay back in my hometown area stems from beliefs and attitudes formed during my childhood years that retain this "highly evaluative and judgmental" nature, not so much due to ethnic discrimination, but class sensitivities. I wish to discern to what extent my dimensions are evaluative and judgmental in these spheres.

I continue to study Block's (2013) call to extend the study of identity beyond the poststructuralist paradigm. Another neglected aspect of identity that Block claims is "(Clarifying) interrelationships between individual agency and social structures", declaring "much has been made of agency but almost none on structure (p. 24)".

As much as I have been affected by adverse experiences, I do not wish to lose this sensitivity to traumatic events. As an educator of color, I believe both my ethnic background and economic upbringing can serve to sensitize Japanese learners to embrace a larger picture of who constitute as English speakers. I actually enjoyed the privilege walk exercise and other such societal awareness experiments, since these inevitably put me in the spotlight as a representative of the have-not minority. This experience has persuaded me to ask my seminar students to reflect on their respective socio-economic class background which I point out involves their place of residence, family income, education, and life experiences, a normally taboo topic in Japan which espouses a middle-class consciousness to mask great social ine-

qualities.

Byram's (1997) words concerning the sojourner brought me hope: "Where the tourist remains essentially unchanged, the sojourner has the opportunity to learn and be educated, acquiring the capacity to critique and improve their own and others' conditions" (p. 1).

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