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Decentred Hospitality: *Omotenashi Culture and the
Foreign Visitor in Japan*

Dennis Harmon II

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Abstract

With the approach of the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, a more robust study of the interaction between Japanese nationals, particularly those working in service or nightlife industries, and visiting foreign tourists is necessary. Hegel (1977) and Honneth (1995), provide a unique framework for understanding the importance of mutual recognition in the efforts of identity co-construction. That is, that self-consciousness (self-construction) can only occur through the reflection of another self-consciousness. This joint construction of self is vital to understanding how communities form and how they interact with others outside their community. Despite Japan's insular community and sometimes isolationist cultural posture, mutual recognition plays a valuable role in hospitality through the concept of *omotenashi*. Further, the culture of *omotenashi* provides a unique avenue for the Japanese service industry and its participants to develop cosmopolitan values without comprising their domestic cultural norms. Through analysing the philosophy of self and understanding some of the roots and perception of *omotenashi*, I intend to put forward an introductory methodological approach to exploring the importance of *omotenashi* in providing a space for mutual recognition and for developing connections and friendships with foreign visitors to Japan.

* 国際コミュニケーション学部 Faculty of International Communication

Introduction

To understand recognition, we first must understand the concept of language. Language is primarily a social process. From the Vygotskian perspective, the culture and socialization of language work to both define the language we use, and the language itself, in a continuum of give and take (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). That is, that language and cultural mutually co-create one another as one shapes perceptions of reality through symbols (language) and one expresses the norm of those living within in the reality (culture). The aim of this project is to explore the construct of the self through its social grounding and challenges with a linguistic and cultural other. In other words, to explore how communities and positioning operate to create or exclude individuals or groups. One way to explore this is through examining the social nightlife of Japan. Access can be a rather significant challenge considering historical, cultural, and linguistic barriers. Furthermore, even if the subject can overcome these initial barriers there is still the lingering aspect of *the other* that can often be written on the subject's face (the fact they do not *look* Japanese). One perceived challenge of non-Japanese individuals is finding access to the community groups of practice in Japan, these can include smaller and more local commercial establishments, sports clubs, and local access to festivals or other activities. In a social or nightlife setting the staff of establishments serve as a lifeline for interaction and communication. However, they may serve as a reinforcement of the isolation of the subject. I will discuss two interviews I conducted with staff of two establishments in Western Japan, and then discuss the implications through the concept of mutuality and recognition.

Literature Review

Identity

Understanding interaction in social settings requires some concept of identity. A good approach to developing an understanding of the situation and conditions is through the construct of positioning. Davies and Harré (1999) discuss positioning and described it as 'the discursive process whereby people are in conversations as observable and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines' (p. 37). Individuals situate themselves in situations through practice and are also situated by others (Block, 2007). The act of negotiating these positions with peers: patron, customer, friend, boss, subordinate, etc., are negotiating through social engagement and communication. Furthermore, these activities can provide stress or pressure on identity (Weedon, 1997). Block (2007) described this as the

'ongoing push and pull and give and take of discursive activity' translating into a constant state of positioning and repositioning (p. 20). Here participants in social interaction operate on a sort of sliding gradient of positioning, wherein a single interaction, participants could slide between friends, colleagues, patron and staff dynamics, and other roles through the nature of interactions.

Another method of exploring these interactions is within the concept of the community sphere. However, this poses the question: can the act of consuming and enjoying alcohol be a relevant community for analysis? If we accept Wenger's (1998) discussion this is possible. Wenger (1998) states that communities of practice are relationships between social participation and communities and that these interactions are essential. Social participation can also expand beyond local events and encompass larger areas of participants in social communities (pp. 3-4). However, it is important to recall that communities are not just collections of individuals engaging in activities, but rather they have rules of entry. Consider, new members to a community must be adopted into or welcomed by the community at large. This point of entry (gatekeeping) or membership system posits the largest challenge for an outsider. Wenger (1998) said that individuals can gain entry through legitimate peripheral participation and states that this done through 'mutual engagement with other members, to their actions and their negotiation of the enterprise, and to their repertoire in use' (p. 100). These negotiations require the creation of a space for mutual respect and a granted legitimacy to be treated as a potential member. The concept can be associated with Bourdieu's (1977, 1984) theory of collecting "cultural capital". Cultural capital is the necessary information, resources, experience, etc. to participate in that community.

This presents a challenge for the non-Japanese participant in Japan. How does a non-Japanese individual find entry into a community of practice in Japan? Yamashiro (2013) discussed that this can prove challenging, as the construct of Japan conflates not just race and ethnicity but is further entwined in language, culture, class, and citizenship. This produces a society that is constructed against the other or "foreigner." Yamashiro continued, 'Japanese citizenship is racialized in Japan. Legal citizenship in Japan is based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*' (p. 151). Further, "Japaneseness" is measured by culture, behaviour, and language ability. Being fluent in Japanese is another marker that can pose a challenge to Japanese nationals partially raised abroad (returnees). Returnees, as a result of their time abroad, their cultural, behavioural, and linguistic capacity might not be enough to be considered true or mainstream Japanese (Yamashiro, 2013: 151-152). These cultural roots provide additional nuance and layers as Japan and the Japanese national tends to identify their group as a homogeneous 'in-group' versus a universalized or foreign 'out-group.' This

problem further is conflated by the history of Japan's desire to be recognized as a first-world nation and to be equated with while remaining differentiated from traditional western powers.¹ Yamashiro (2013) stated that even if foreign workers pick up the culture, behaviour, and language; their lack of Japanese ancestry results in them being always considered foreign (p. 155). This puts group membership and community entering at a superficial or precarious place in some, but not all conditions.

The need for mutual recognition of *other* requires that the in-group develop a comradery in position to the other or non-group presence that exists in the Hegelian substance (Hegel, 1977; Honneth, 1995; Žižek, 2013). From this contrast, the group can form its position or place in society. A structured identity can take shape around the group membership that operates adjacent to, in concert with, or in conflict with other identity constructs individuals hold in a community.

Omotenashi

Omotenashi officially does not have a definition, but we can develop a sort of image by exploring the root of the word in its verb form, "motenasu" along with some similar expressions. Historically, Omotenashi is thought to have its origins in connection with Heian era tea ceremony, which later developed under the guidance of Zen (See, De Bary et al, 2001 for descriptions on the history of tea in Japan). Al-alshiek (2014) divided omotenashi into three elements: the physical environment, preparation for serving and the host's responsibility, and the process of the guest's participation in the delivered service; elements of these come directly from the tea ceremony (pp. 27-28). Ohe and Peypoch (2016) said '[Omotenashi] is commonly perceived as a way of offering hospitality to guests among people in Japan' (p. 1263). Further, the Tourism Agency in Japan utilises the term as a catchphrase for its campaigns for attracting inbound tourist from abroad. This is done despite its lack of a clear definition (Ohe and Peypoch, 2016). According to Ohe and Peypoch (2016), ometenashi focuses on politeness and kindness with relationship to customers or guests in contrast to western concepts of hospitality that focus on friendliness. Belal et al. (2013), described it by saying, 'The "omotensashi" in Japan has a very big significance that is to fulfill the guest's requirements by presenting super service from the core of the heart without expectation of any return...' (p. 29). In a true Hegelian turn, they state this is accomplished through, 'a deeper part of the recognition of a human being' (p. 29). That is, ometenashi does not anticipate a transactional relationship. This act requires nothing in return except the

recognition of enjoyment or pleasure from the receiver. This matches well with the philosophical and cultural norms to create mutual recognition among subjects.

In figure 1, we can see a chart describing the concept of entertaining guests. Here we can see four different words used to describe the action of entertainment.

Table 1

Entertaining guest and word forms for its expression.²

	料亭で At a fancy restaurant (Place)	客に酒食 を・・・ Serving food or alcohol (Action/Direct)	客にフランス 料理で・・・ By serving French food (Action/ Indirect)	友人に夕食 を・・・ Serving dinner to a friend (Action/Direct)
もてなす “motenasu”	○	△	○	○
供応する “Kyoousuru”	○	—	○	—
(御) 馳走する “(Go) Chisousuru”	○	○	—	○
ふるまう “Furumau”	○	○	—	○

Note: ○ means used in these situations, △ means usable but awkward, — means not used in these situations. Source: Goo Dictionary – 「もてなす／供応／馳走／ふるまう」 Accessed: <https://dictionary.goo.ne.jp/thsrs/8628/meaning/m0u/>

Table 1 shows the concept of “to entertain” through four distinct words and describes them against situations or conditions. A circle indicates it matches, a triangle indicates that it does not fully fit the condition but could be used, and a dash indicates that the term is not used. What this shows, is that motenasu requires a direct connection with a human subject to make sense in Japanese. Meaning that it is for entertaining people in a great or culturally sophisticated way regardless of the conditions being affluent or not. The expectation is that the recipient of the entertainment will express or feel pleasure from the experience. However, its counterparts can be both directly or indirectly connected to subjects through objects. That is, motenasu and the spirit of omotenashi resides in a service that rests in the relationship between staff and the customer.

Interviews

Understanding the nature of the other and its relationship to communities, ethnic organizations, and social identity is a challenging construct. To explore it, interviews were conducted with local bar staff.³ The primary focus of these interviews was to understand the nature of foreign customers visiting their establishment and how that impacted their work and the atmosphere of the bar. These establishments are markedly different from a normal “chain” environment due to the nature of them being considered “specialized” or “local.” That is, these establishments do not find themselves in the normal rotation of tourist locations and exist in rather local environs in western Japan.

The first interview was conducted with a female bar manager for a local establishment in Osaka.⁴ This bar is in a more residentially focused neighbourhood and away from most of the main attractions of Osaka. As a result, most of their customers are also considered locals, living within walking distance of the establishment.

1	D: バースタッフとカスタマーサービスに関連するあなたの仕事と責任を説明してください。
	D: Bāsutaffu to kasutamāsābisu ni kanren suru anata no shigoto to sekinin o setsumei shite kudasai.
	D: Please explain your work and responsibilities related to bar staff and customer service.
2	K: お客様があつての商売なので、こちらにできる限りのことは全てさせて頂いた上で満足して帰って頂けるように心がけてます。 店長という立場もあるので、お客様にどう満足してもらえるか、スタッフがいかに働きやすい環境を作ってあげるかを日々色々な所から学ばせてもらってます。
	K: Okyakusama ga atte no shōbainanode, kochira ni dekiru kagiri no koto wa subete sa sete itadaita ue de manzoku shite kaette itadakeru yō ni kokorogaketemasu. Tenchō to iu tachiba mo aru node, okyakusama ni dō manzoku shite moraeru ka, sutaffu ga ikani hataraki yasui kankyō o tsukutte ageru ka o hibi iroirona tokoro kara manaba sete morattemasu.
	K: It is a service industry. So, I try to satisfy all my customer’s needs so that they feel fulfilled when they return home and potentially will come back in the future to my establishment. I am also the manager and that position requires me to make sure those I work with learn how to satisfy customers and I work to make an environment that the staff can work comfortably in.

In the first parts of the interview, K simply described her work and the responsibilities that are required to be carried out from her viewpoint in section 2. She described the responsibilities as maintaining a pleasant atmosphere and a need to make sure customers are completely satisfied when they go home; additionally, there is a need to keep her staff comfortable. This expectation of customer joy or pleasure is indicative of the *omotenashi* spirit.

5	D: 「満足」って言った。あなたの店で、あなたのスタッフとお客様が良い雰囲気を体験のための最良の方法は何だと思う
	D: “Manzoku” tte itta. Anata no mise de, anata no sutaffu to okyakusama ga yoi fun'iki o taiken no tame no sairyō no hōhō wa nanida to omou
	D: You said you have a feeling of completeness. In your establishment what is the best way for your staff and customers to experience a good atmosphere?
6	K: 正解がないからそれはなんともいえないなあ
	K: Seikai ga naikara sore wa nantomo inai en nā
	K: There is no real correct answer, so there is nothing wrong with it

When asked about the details of the idea of the complete experience in section 5, she did not know how to offer a clear answer. This suggests that the concept of hospitality in the Japanese sense is deeply ingrained in the cultural outlook. It makes up a portion of their ethnic identity and has perhaps long since been automatized. The interview then shifted toward the discussion of international visitors to their establishment. The spirit of *omotenashi* may have the interviewee forgo their feelings for the sake of the interviewer. However, as Žižek (2009) stated, from the Lacanian perspective and with the pervasiveness of ideology, there is, indeed, no such thing as meta-language. The absence of a truly meta-level interaction is the pervasive nature of the construct itself. *Omotenashi* could be firmly viewed as being inside the cultural ideology and by default is implicit and difficult to identify, describe, or define (Žižek, 2009; Žižek, 2012). The struggle itself identifies the boundaries of belief and these can be marked by responses such as in section 6: “there is no real correct answer” can be interpreted as a deflection or in a Hegelian sense the necessary gap in the dialectic which produces a contradiction and allows for the thought and culture to continually evolve through time.

7	D: じゃ、外国人の方入り時どう感じる、店の空気とか
	D: Ja, gaikoku hito no hō-iri-ji dō kanjiru,-ten no kūki toka
	D: Well, how do you feel when a foreigner enters the establishment, about the atmosphere etc.
8	K: 言葉が通じるかは不安かなあ、でも日本語少しでも話せる人ならこちらとしてもありがたい！
	K: Kotoba ga tsūjiru ka wa fuan ka nā, demo nihongo sukoshi demo hanaseru hitonara kochira to shite mo arigatai!
	K: I get a little uncomfortable or nervous as to whether we can communicate, but if they speak a little Japanese I am very thankful.

In sections 7 and 8 the interview turned to the topic of foreigners (non-Japanese) customers entering the establishment and how it influences the establishment. What is key to note in this exchange is in K’s response to the question: in section 8 she uses the expression 不安

(fuan) which translates as uneasy or nervous. This can be a result of a feeling or a sort of tension that arises from experiences. In line 15 she said that she worries primarily about the ability to communicate and that if the non-Japanese customer demonstrates some ability to speak Japanese she is grateful or thankful. Yamashiro (2013) introduced some of these issues up about the Japanese construct. That is, language represents one of the fundamental pillars of the Japanese identity along with a blood lineage to Japan. The construct of otherness is somewhat lessened by the ability to communicate in Japanese, as it is viewed as holding at least some cultural capital in the concept of Japan or Japanese. The key construct here, however, is that the first assumption is there will be a communicative or cultural problem, and if this is disproven then there is some sort of ease. This concept of unease or nervousness was further explored in the interview.

9	D: 不安と言うものをもうちょっと説明をできる？ 後, 外国人にくる経験をちょっと教えてくれる？
	D: Fuan to iu mono o mō chitto setsumei o dekiru? Ato, gaikoku hito ni kuru keiken o chotto oshietekureru?
	D: Could you explain the idea of being uneasy/nervous a little more? After that, can you talk about any experience you have had with foreign customers in your establishment.
10	K: オーダー取ったり、会話に困ったりするのが一番かな。色んな国の人きてくれるけど、どの国の人も統一して日本とはぜんぜん違う価値観だったり世界観だったりするから刺激はもらえる！
	K: Ōdā tottari, kaiwa ni komattari suru no ga ichiban ka na. Iron'na kuni no hito kite kurerukedo, dono kuni no hito mo tōitsu shite Nihon to wa zenzen chigau kachikandattari sekai-kandattari surukara shigeki wa moraeru!
	K: Conversations and taking orders are the biggest troubles. But, having people from other countries come together in Japan and to see those different views of the world stimulates the environment of the establishment.

The concept of unease becomes the focal point and this is followed by requests for some experiences. K responded in a more restricted sense and avoids details or experiences and chooses to speak in a general sense. I did not pressure K for any experiences, which is likely something that was adjusted for in the second interview. K, in section 10, discusses the primary challenge as a procedural one. That is, despite perhaps being uneasy or nervous the spirit of hospitality takes priority. The procedural issue is the ability to converse and take orders. One of the tenants of good staff in establishments such as bars is the ability to converse. The bar staff at K's establishment often speak and talk about a wide variety of things with their regular customers and often the staff is quick to remember the names and details about their customers. This is difficult with foreign customers and it interrupts some

of their respective goals, but if the customer is seen as transient or a one-time event it provides a spectacle for the staff and patrons.

K discussed the idea of the opportunity for these non-Japanese customers to flavour the atmosphere with different worldviews and experiences, and views that as a sort of value of having foreign visitors. The issue primarily being, if they can or cannot communicate those interests and views to the staff and other customers. The last part of the interview focused on concerns of other customers and any advice she may have to give to Japanese and non-Japanese alike.

11	D: 他の日本人お客さんの思い聞いたことある？後、外国人に入る時にバースタッフとお客さんのアドバイスがある？
	D: Hoka no nihonjin ogyakusan no omoi kiita koto aru? Ato, gaikoku hito ni hairu toki ni bāstafu to ogyakusan no adobaisu ga aru?
	D: How about other Japanese customer's feelings, have you ever heard anything from them? And do you have any advice for those customers and your staff when foreigners enter your establishment?
12	K: 特にはないけど、こんなイベントしてほしいとか希望があるなら参考にしたいとおもう！
	K: Tokuni wanaikedo, kon'na ibento shite hoshī toka kibō ga arunara sankō ni shitai to omō!
	K: I don't recall anything of note, but I hope that we have opportunities/events like this in the future. (referring to Foreigners coming to the establishment)
13	D: 逆に外国人のアドバイスは？
	D: Gyakuni gaikokujin no adobaisu ha?
	D: On the other hand, do you have any advice for foreigner customers?
14	K: アドバイスはなくても、言葉とか文化とか気にせず気軽に飲みきて楽しんで頂ければ
	K: Adobaisu wanaikedo, kotoba toka bunka toka ki ni sezu kigaru ni nomi kite tanoshinde itadakereba
	K: I don't have any advice but, don't worry about words and culture, just come and enjoy drinking.

In section 11, the first question is about the concerns of other Japanese customers and the presence of non-Japanese customers. K did not seem interested in discussing anything she may have heard and said that there was nothing of note that she could recall, and instead focused on the idea of having more opportunities and a desire for more non-Japanese to come to her establishment. This seems to support the interest or the spectacle of the international visitor and how it provides some novel experiences for the staff and regular customers. Section 12 seems to support this theory, where her advice is just for non-Japanese folk to stop worrying about the details. It says, in essence: yes, you are the other but do not let that worry you, just come and enjoy and we can mutually benefit from the experience.

The second interview was with another female participant that is also in her mid-20s and works in an establishment in western Japan. Her establishment is not a standard bar, but rather a hostess bar where customers pay an hourly rate to sit and talk with women, sing karaoke, and buy staff drinks. The atmosphere typically has customers sitting on sofas around tables with women sitting between them to pour them drinks and to engage in conversation. These women tend to wear cocktail dresses or fancier clothing to match an atmosphere. The conversation began with discussing the types of customers that come into her establishment. She responded by expressing that it was all types. After a gentle exchange about the consumer types, the interview moved into discussing Y's impressions about the work she does. Unlike in the K interview, Y directly used the expression of *omotenashi*. She described that her responsibility is to make the customer pleased and to extend the most hospitality. I followed up by asking about *omotenashi* and to get a clearer picture of what Y means when she uses the expression, regrettably a portion of the audio was unclear, but it aligns with K's efforts with her customers without the use of money.

7	D: うん。で、一番大事の仕事のポイントは？
	D: Un. De, ichiban daiji no shigoto no pointo wa?
	D: I see. So, what is the most important part of your work?
8	Y: それはお客様を、喜んでもらう、楽しんでもらうっていう気持ち。おもてなししてあげる。
	Y: Sore wa okyakusama o, yorokonde morau, tanoshinde morau tte iu kimochi. Omotenashi shite ageru.
	Y: It is making sure that the customer is pleased and enjoying themselves The idea of giving them the best hospitality (Omotenashi).
9	D: うん。じゃあ、そのおもてなしっていうの気持ち、自分の意味とかを説明して。どういう意味。
	D: Un. Jā, sono omotenashi tte iu no kimochi, jibun no imi toka o setsumei shite. Dōiu imi.
	D: I see. Explain, the feeling of hospitality (Omotenashi), your own idea. What do you mean?
10	Y: うん、自分の気持ち優先じゃなくて、相手を楽しませてあげて、私全身で、(???)
	Y: Un, jibun no kimochi yūsen janakute, aite o raku shimashite ageru koto o kangaete, watashi zenshin de,(???)
	Y: Ok. I do not give any priority to my personal feelings or comfort. I think about entertaining people. My whole body (unclear from here).

Y, in section 8, said that the idea of *omotenashi* is to give priority to the customers and not consider your own personal feelings or comfort. This construct is built into the DNA of the Japanese service industry. The questions then turn to this idea in relationship to non-Japanese customers entering her establishment.

11	D : うん、なるほど。で、そういうところが、その場所で、基本的には日本の文化だからでしょ。で、もし外国の方が入れば、どういう雰囲気が出ると思う
	D: Un, naruhodo. De, sōiu tokoro ga, sono basho de, kihontekini wa nihon'nobunkadakaradeshō. De, moshi gaikoku no kata ga ireba, dōiu fun'iki ga deru to omou
	D: I see. So the place is basically built on Japanese culture. So if a foreigner comes in, what kind of atmosphere changes do you think would occur?
12	Y : かわらない
	Y: Kawaranai
	Y: No change.
13	D : かわらない？
	D: Kawaranai?
	D: No Change?
14	Y : うん
	Y: Un
	Y: Yeah

In sections 11-14 the focus turns and I asked Y about when a non-Japanese customer enters if the atmosphere will change, considering how the establishment is within the Japanese cultural context. Y stated plainly that there would be no change.

15	D : なんで？
	D: Nande?
	D: Why?
16	Y : わたしはかわらない
	Y: watashiha kawaranai
	Y: I wouldn't change
17	D : まわりのスタッフとかも？
	D: mawari no suttafu tokamo?
	D: The staff around as well?
18	Y : ああ、周りの人は、「何人？」とかいうかもしれへん。
	Y: Ā, mawarinohito wa, `nanijin?' Toka iu kamo shirehen.
	Y: Oh, the people around may ask what their nationality is.
19	D : うん
	D: Un
	D: I see

20	Y: でも、それは先入観があるから。中国人、アメリカ人、イタリア人。で、まとめがちやけど、うん、うん、それは先入観があるから。
	Y: Demo, soreha sen'nyūkan ga arukara. Chūgokujin, amerikahito, itariahito. De, matome-gachiyakedo, un, un, soreha sen'nyūkan ga arukara.
	Y: But there is prejudice prior to entering. Chinese, Americans Italians. So, it is easy to summarize but yeah, yeah there is some prejudice out there

However, upon further examination of this claim of no change, it becomes clear that Y was referring to herself (Section 16). I then ask her about the people around her (other staff members) and how she views their perceptions and she stated that they would ask questions about where the person is from. In lines 18 and 20 something more interesting occurs. Y admitted that there can be some prejudice but does not elaborate. That is, at the gate exclusion can occur on the streets by staff (both men and women) who attempt to invite or recruit people to visit their establishment and, in those cases, they will not actively approach or communicate with perceived non-Japanese clientele. However, once in the establishment that changes and the omotenashi cultural imperative takes over.

Like K, Y discussed the challenges of communicative obstacles and discusses how staff will rely on gestures, drawing, and any other sort of tool available to make sure they are understood if a customer does not speak any Japanese. I then asked Y to recall and talk about one of these experiences and to share it.

23	D: うん。で、職場で、その会ったことある？その外国の方入ってるのときとか
	D: Un. De, shokubade, sono atta koto aru? Sono gaikoku no kata haitteru no toki toka
	D: I see. So at your work, have you met or interacted with foreigners before?
24	Y: あるある
	Y: aru aru
	Y: Sure.
25	D: どういうときに、ちょっと説明して。何があったとか。
	D: Dōiu toki ni, chotto setsumei shite. Nani ga atta to ka.
	D: Can you explain a little about those times? What happened, etc?
26	Y: (Silence) やっぱり、日本人と比べたらそりゃあ違うんかもしれへんけど、うん、でも結果はおんなじかな。同じ人間っていうか
	Y: (Silence) Yappari, nihonjin to kurabetara soryā chigau n kamo shirehenkedo, u ⁿ . demo kekka wa on'naji ka na. Onaji ningen tte iu ka
	Y: (Silence) Actually, when I compare Japanese with the foreign customers they are different, but hmmm the results of the experience are the same. humans are the same.

27	D: うん。もうちょっと、何が違うんっていうのだけど
	D: Un. Mō chotto, nani ga chigau n tte iu nodakedo
	D: I see, but what is a little different, like you said?
28	Y : 日本人は謙虚だけど、またちょっと、外国の人やったら、うーん、(silence)何を求めてきているかで、性格がかわってくる
	Y: Nihonjin wa kenkyodakedo, mata chotto, gaikoku no hito yattara, u`n,(silence) nani o motomete kite iru ka de, seikaku ga kawatte kuru
	Y: Japanese tend to be humble but with foreigner customers considering my experiences your character changes.
29	D: うん、どうやってかわってくる
	D: un, douyate kawattekuru?
	D: I see, in what way does it change?
30	Y : (silence)うーん(silence) まあ、前、イギリス、イギリス?の人が来て、その人は全然しゃべらなかつた。うん、でも日本人だったら絶対しゃべって、しゃべるけど、そのイギリスの人は、うーん、そんなにしゃべること、重視してないし、うん、無駄なことはしてないだけ、ただ、やりたいことをやりにきだけっていうか。
	Y: (Silence) u`n (silence) mā, mae, Igirisu, Igirisu? No hito ga kite, sono hito wa zenzen shaberanakatta. Un, demo nihonjindattara zettai shabette, shaberukedo, sono Igirisu no hito wa, u`n, son'nani shaberu koto, jūshi shi tenaishi, un, mudana koto wa shi tenai dake, tada, yaritai koto o yari ni ki dake tte iu ka.
	Y: Hmm. Well, one time before an English person. English person? Came. He didn't speak at all. But if it were a Japanese customer he would have definitely spoken. That English person wasn't too concerned there wasn't much emphasis on speaking. He just wanted to do what he
31	D: うん。その雰囲気は変わった?その店とか
	D: Un. Sono fun'iki wa kawatta? Sono mise toka
	D: I see. Did the atmosphere in the establishment change?
32	Y : 変わってない。あ、でもやっぱりみんな見るから
	Y: Kawattenai. A, demo yappari min'na mirukara
	Y: It didn't change, oh but everyone was looking.

In section 27, I asked if Y had any experience with non-Japanese customers and she confirmed there have been non-Japanese customers in the establishment. In section 30, Y explained the differences and recalls an experience with an English customer. The responses are similar in many ways to K's response. The presence of the non-Japanese customer becomes a spectacle for the interest or joy of the Japanese staff and Japanese customers. In section 32 she confirmed this with the fact that everyone is looking and, as discussed previously, about interest in non-Japanese customers such as wondering where they are from. Furthermore, Y explained what she felt is fundamentally different about Japanese and foreign guests. When she works with Japanese guests she tends to maintain a humble approach, but with the foreign guests she finds her character changing to match their needs,

though this may be a form of *omotenashi* this could represent an avenue of further study as she attempted to adapt her concept of hospitality but reconcile it with the cultural other.

Discussion

Y and K's experience and responses provide a brief glimpse into the culture of the Japanese nightlife and social places where few non-Japanese tend to find or have opportunities to visit. Despite some hurdles, there is a vast network of smaller establishments and places where visitors could experience a deeper connection with the Japanese and their culture. These smaller establishments, though less accommodating for non-natives at the surface, provide a rich opportunity for a deeper connection and experience with Japanese citizens and culture. The ultimate challenge is finding a good practice and methodology for applying what has been discovered here into a guide to aid both the staff and establishments as well as customers wishing to see the truer sides of the Japanese experience. With the approach of the Olympics, Japan will once again find itself on the world stage and this will bring with it the need for both Japanese and those who visit Japan to reconcile cultural paths and networks and to avoid conflict or exclusion.

Identity plays a major role in how K and Y perceive encounters with customers from outside of their normal social and identity groups. Gilbert (2010) encouraged readers to understand that, 'there is no unitary notion of cultural, including national identity' (p. 70). That is, that identity is a fluid and subjective device that conforms and reshapes based on experiences and circumstances. In the case of the Japanese identity, it is important to understand its historical roots and the contradictions emerging within it.

Japanese identity has challenges. Smith (1991) described Japan as 'the most successful case of modernizing nationalism by the imperial route' (p. 105). However, he goes on to indicate that Japan suffers from identity issues at a cultural and political level. Despite the homogeneous nature of the nation, when compared to other nations, it is easy to forget a cultural diversity of its history which was suppressed by its powerful elite through the Tokugawa and Meiji Restoration periods (Smith, 1991: pp 105-106). Smith (1991) claimed the issues of with Japan's strong ethnic basis within their national identity rests in its history. That is the emperor system that was overthrown after the second world war. Further, he indicates that the modern state, in many ways formulated by intellectuals drawn from various areas of society (See, Ishihara, 1991) and this new ethnic identity was grafted upon the existing ethnostate (Smith 1991, p. 106). Smith (1991) said, 'where the process has been

relatively successful, nationalist ideals and symbolism have helped to redefine an imperial community as a fairly compact nation and political community' (p. 106).

This construct is important in understanding Japan. The political and social identity of Japanese has maintained its historic flow since the Meiji Restoration and has been programmed to be reduced from its former imperial perspective. This concept proctored by the elites, and those operating in the upper strata, in efforts of reproduction of their ideological apparatus has come through with some success, however, there is another layer of the economic elite since the onset of the neoliberal economic order of the 1970s that exists on the international scale. These two reproductive systems compete through education and media for the hearts and minds of its citizens.⁵ This is not unlike the cultural arrangements of other states. The need for a unifying feature or culture to define it is part of the pathos of constructing a national or cultural identity (Anderson, 1983).

From the two interviews conducted in this study are to some significant degree is winning the cultural capital battle, though the linguistic homogeneity of full-time blue collared and service workers serves as a barrier to greater intersubjective interactions with international visitors. Indeed, the commonality of struggle for both K and Y in their respective interviews is both the real and perceived language barrier. Their respective practice of *omotenashi* culture provides them with a space to attend to the needs of any customer despite the presence of cultural or linguistic challenges. In *omotenashi* rests the space and a needed contradiction and challenge to traditional top-down cultural distribution. In the case of *omotenashi* a traditional Japanese marker of identity acts as a catalyst for the inherent desire and internationalization of the identity of its wielder through the wielder's desire to aim to comfort and transmit pleasure to the recipient. The act of being Japanese through *omotenashi* results in the participant opening themselves to becoming less Japanese in the presence of international contact. This is reflected in the interviews by their respective desire and the desire of others around them to know more about the non-Japanese customer and their cultural background. In both cases, the interviewees did not seem interested in providing Japanese cultural information, but rather gleaming the ideas and interests of the foreign visitor. This participant desire to know the other is met with an equal desire from the other creates a space for intersubjective recognition or as Honneth (1995) said, 'the relationship of recognition can only be that an obligation to reciprocity is, to a certain extent, built into such relations' (p. 37). That is, that preconceptions of recognition are not forced onto the other participants, thereby denying them their respective identity. In the case of these interviews and discussion, this seems not to be the case. The linguistic barrier deserves further exploration in the role of mutual recognition and intersubjective cultural contact.

Conclusion

This study looked to explore the intersubjective qualities and stress of the other entering into a Japanese service context and how the staff and other consumers would react to a non-Japanese participant. Ultimately, the study discovered that the role of *omotenashi* could act as a route for non-Japanese individuals to find grounding in Japan through mutual intersubjective recognition in a nightlife setting. Some of the shortcomings of this study are the limited number of interviewees, both were women and have experience in the international context to some degree. Further, I, being non-Japanese, could have produced a halo effect and resulted in more favourable answers, and in several cases, my lack of experience in qualitative interviewing is demonstrated with double questions or pointing out contradictions. Fortunately, my relationship standing and history with both interviewees was relatively high and I could mitigate any misunderstandings. In the future, expanding the number of interviews and utilizing native trained interviewers could deepen the results of projects like these. In addition, expanding the subjects of the interview process to areas outside of nightlife to develop a comparative theory of differing commercial areas of Japan. Future steps in this area of research will also benefit greatly from a more robust interview design and rubric. Decentred self and the hospitality sector in Japan show great promise for future research endeavours.

¹ See among others, John Dower, 1986, 1999.

² I would like to acknowledge my colleague Professor Hiroyuki Shimada from the faculty of International Communications at Hokuriku University for the linguistic discussion related to *motenasu*.

³ For full transcripts e-mail: d-harmon@hokuriku-u.ac.jp

⁴ It is important to note that I am not a native speaker of Japanese, the transcripts will contain some grammatical and style errors in Japanese in the interviewer position “D”. The responses are from native speakers of Japanese. These responses are given by “Y” and “K”.

⁵ See Althusser, 2014, for more on the theory of reproduction of ideology.

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