

“I want to live as a Korean with confidence, but I am afraid of discrimination” (“Be Myself [2],” 2005, paragraph 11).¹ These are the regrettable words of an ethnic Korean student who was born and raised in Japan. For many ethnic Koreans living in Japan, this fear of discrimination is a real and unfortunate circumstance they must endure in their everyday lives from childhood through adulthood. To better understand the situation of ethnic Koreans in Japan, this study utilizes methods and theories, more commonly found in analyses of Western racism and minority group discrimination, and applies them to the Japanese context. These techniques are used to explore and reveal cases of both subtle and overt discrimination, how the Korean ethnic minority community confronts them, and the lasting effects upon their community.

When examining race and gender stereotyping and issues of discrimination, it must be recognized that they manifest in several different forms. In many cases, racism and other types of discrimination come in the form of *macroaggressions*, which are generalized and deliberately damaging insults, stereotypes, attitudes, or actions (Russell, 1996). However, when overt forms of aggression are socially unacceptable, they can continue to manifest in less obvious ways. Recognizing this, psychiatrist Chester M. Pierce (1970) coined the term *microaggressions* in reference to the subtle forms of insults, insensitivity, or disregard that can occur in everyday interactions. Since the creation of this concept, analyses of microaggressions have been used in numerous studies on gender, culture, and race. In particular, research employing critical race theory (CRT) explores racism while noting the pervasive, institutionalized, forms of racism and the power relationships that oppress minorities. CRT and racial microaggression analyses are often combined to reveal cases of racial inequality in many different contexts in the United States. For example, in the field of education, many scholars seek to empower minority groups by exposing the falsehood that educational systems are places of equal opportunity with a level playing field for students and faculty of all races (Yosso, Villalpando, Bernal & Solórzano, 2001). If these research strategies were to be extended beyond the context of the United States, how could they be applied to minority struggles in other countries?

In this article, we explore the above-mentioned question by examining ethnic discrimination in contemporary Japan. We are particularly interested in examining how the concept of microaggressions can be utilized to explain what is occurring in this setting. Originating in the United States, CRT has predominantly focused on inequality along White, Black, and Latino/a racial lines (cf. Bell, 1995; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solorzano, 2009; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

¹ All translations of interviews, newspapers, and biographies from Japanese to English are provided by the authors.

These racial groups are generally perceived to be readily apparent due to racialized physical characteristics (sometimes referred to as *phenotype*) like skin color. Though CRT, by definition, approaches analysis of inequality and discrimination bounded by racial categories, we employ the CRT framework while examining and evaluating *ethnic microaggressions*. According to Spencer, Swanson, and Cunningham (1991), “Ethnicity refers to the customs, language, and social views usually associated with a particular ethnic group” (p. 368). The term ethnic microaggressions is not meant to detract from the relevance of race in the CRT framework, as microaggressions by ethnicity or race are not mutually exclusive. Alternatively, we utilize the concept of ethnic microaggressions to more accurately portray the implications of discrimination and subordination that work predominantly along ethnic divisions rather than racial ones.

Although Japan is often perceived as a homogenous society in contrast to the United States and other countries, there are in fact many ethnic minorities living in Japan. To apply the methodology to the Japanese setting, this paper retargets the CRT framework along ethnic lines rather than those of race, identifying and analyzing cases of ethnic microaggressions toward Japanese Koreans in Japan. Unlike cases of racism in the United States, where race serves to visually categorize people and discriminate against them, in the case of Japanese Koreans, ethnic markers play a stronger role than those of race. Because individuals may have some choice in their overt ethnic identity and its public display, we argue that there are potentially some important differences in how occurrences of ethnic and racial discrimination manifest and are dealt with.

In Japan, Japanese Koreans are known as *Zainichi Koreans*, which literally means “Koreans residing in Japan.” It should be noted that the term *Zainichi Korean* itself bears an implication of temporary residence and non-belonging within mainstream Japan. *Zainichi Koreans* are the largest ethnic minority in Japan, and this is a direct result of Japan’s colonization of the Korean Peninsula from 1910-1945 (Okano, 2006). *Zainichi Koreans* tend to be descendants of workers coerced or conscripted to migrate to Japan in order to alleviate workforce shortages during World War II. For many *Zainichi Koreans*, entrenched historical tensions and attitudes toward and from Japanese society only add to their present struggles since their roots in Japan began in a context of war.

Employing the concept of microaggressions, we question why *Zainichi Koreans* tend to be segregated within Japanese society. More specifically, what issues do they struggle with, and what microaggressions might they endure on a daily basis due to their ethnic identity? By analyzing the context and effects of ethnic microaggressions, we can consider what actions are necessary to address them. In addition, understanding the ways in which microaggressions impact individual identity formation and notions of belonging in mainstream society

provides unique insight for educators. We will investigate some of these questions by first explaining the CRT framework we wish to employ. Second, we will explore the existing literature on CRT analyses of minority groups in educational settings to provide the reader with an understanding of the sociohistorical contexts into which these techniques generally fit. Finally, we will offer an outline of research findings relevant to the discrimination and microaggressions faced by Zainichi Koreans in Japan, particularly in education.

Theoretical Framework

In order to inform the approach of this study, we draw from several theories and previous studies summarized in this section. Primarily, we utilize critical race theory and microaggression analysis, and their application in studies of racism in the United States education system as a starting point. This research comprising our theoretical framework informs our use of existing research on Zainichi Koreans as the primary data for our study.

Critical Race Theory

CRT developed out of the critical legal studies movement, which examined race-based subordination subtly enacted through laws and institutions. However, CRT expands this practice beyond laws to recognize dominant control structures in a variety of settings and applications (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Dominant groups inherently possess power to control and maintain their position, which can be used to further legitimize their members' interests or positions through ideological means. Solórzano (1998) explains that dominant groups use socially constructed concepts such as race as a means to legitimize their position of privilege. In effect, ideologies based on racial difference can be utilized to enable racism, both overtly and discreetly. These ideologies can be ingrained into institutions and mainstream thinking in such a way that requires CRT researchers' analysis to fully expose and understand subordination and discrimination. These means of control can be very subtle, such that people can unknowingly be participating in propagating uneven power relations. By bringing these issues to light, CRT empowers subordinated groups to resist and challenge racism and discrimination.

CRT exposes racial discrimination and its underlying mechanisms, such as the production and maintenance of stereotypes that automatically or unconsciously threaten minority groups. As Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) state, "CRT offers insights, perspectives, methods, and pedagogies that guide our efforts to identify, analyze, and transform the structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions" (p. 63).

Because the dominant discourse may be inherently skewed by structures of oppression, CRT methods emphasize the use of qualitative counter-storytelling to give voice to groups experiencing oppression, whose voices would be otherwise unheard or ignored. Yosso et al. (2009) explain, “CRT explicitly listens to the lived experiences of People of Color through counter-storytelling methods such as family histories, parables, testimonios, dichos (proverbs), and chronicles” (p. 663). An important aspect of counter-storytelling methodology and analysis is gathering individual narratives to more fully comprehend experiences of oppression across an entire group. Furthermore, the experiential knowledge that comes from first-hand discrimination and microaggressions is essential to a complete analysis of its occurrence and effects. By examining a group as a whole—yet still maintaining the validity of individual voices from writings, newspaper articles, and personal interviews—CRT fully evaluates discrimination from the context of its occurrence through the viewpoints of those experiencing the discrimination. Favoring this comprehensive counter-story methodology, application of CRT emphasizes the lasting aftereffects of marginalization and prejudice by extending analysis to the personal nature of individual cases of discrimination.

Microaggressions

As mentioned, the recognition and analysis of microaggressions can uncover systematic underlying incidences and effects of discrimination that generally go unrecognized in society. Solórzano et al. (2000) describe a microaggression as “a subtle insult, verbal, nonverbal, visual and non-visual and it is directed toward people of color” (p. 60). While these everyday slights and sometimes unconscious insults are perceived as less harmful than overt forms of racism and discrimination, studies in American academic settings have shown they can be just as damaging, especially when accumulated over time (Solórzano et al., 2000; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, and Solórzano, 2009). Furthermore, in societies where overt discrimination is publically unacceptable, microaggressions reveal aggressions that still must be tolerated on a daily basis. Solórzano et al. (2000) explore and reveal racial microaggressions against African American college students and the influences of the campus’ racial climate on them by using critical race theory. They argue that poor academic achievement and high dropout rates can be related to a negative or non-supportive racial campus climate. These students feel frustration, isolation, discouragement, and exhaustion, and their experiences of subtle racism can be linked to low academic performance. As a result, the African American students who joined in Solórzano’s research as a focus group showed a tendency to organize academic and social *counter-spaces*.

In a separate study, Yosso et al. (2009) examined and revealed incidents of

racial inequalities that Latina/o students experienced at three universities by using critical race theory. The CRT strategies of counter-storytelling, recognition of microaggressions, and uncovering of white privilege supported their findings of non-overt subordination. They found that Latina/o students experienced many types of microaggressions, including not only race, class, and gender inferences, but also insinuations about language, culture, immigration status, phenotype, accent, and surname in both the social and academic spaces on campuses. Their findings suggested that Latina/o high school students could not enjoy and fit into college in the same way as White high school students because of a rejection of their integration efforts, race-related stress, and the threat of stereotyping. As a result, these Latina/o high school students engaged in very different processes when compared to White high school students. In order to reject negative racial climates at their schools these students instead embraced their heritage through their community. This involved separating and navigating between the school and home as two distinct environments. Moreover, this research showed that Latina/o students responded to their stressful campus racial climate by employing specific actions, *community building* and *critical navigation on the margins* (e.g., in their home and school communities), behaviors very different from White students, which were necessary in order to culturally nourish and replenish themselves. Yosso et al. (2009) explain, "To counter the cultural starvation they experienced, these students also sought out Chicana/o studies courses, Chicana/o faculty, and Chicana/o student organizations" (p. 676). Latina/o students engaged in community building along the margins specifically with other individuals who shared their cultural heritage and their struggles with discrimination. These physical and social environments where they could find acceptance were labeled as counter-spaces, in opposition to potentially negative school climates at large. Drawing upon the aforementioned research on microaggressions and the use of counter-spaces in an American academic setting, we examine the microaggressions Zainichi Koreans face, bearing in mind the substantial negative effects of discrimination that can accumulate over time.

In this study, we posit that CRT is useful not purely on the basis of race, but also toward analyzing these issues of discrimination faced along ethnic boundaries in Japan. The ideological basis that CRT provides is important for examining dominant and non-dominant relations in the nation, specifically how power is distributed and wielded in Japan. We explore how the CRT perspective of racially-defined counter-spaces in the United States can also be applied in the context of ethnic minorities in Japan, their resistance to the dominant Japanese mainstream, and, additionally, how they create and reform their own community spaces. Through CRT analysis, Zainichi Korean home life, ethnic community, and ethnic schools can be viewed as physical and social counter-spaces where Zainichi Koreans' identity can be explored and strengthened.

Literature Review: Zainichi Korean Research

Japan tends to be perceived as a homogenous country, but careful consideration reveals a diversity of ethnic groups and an ethnic hierarchy (cf. Douglass & Roberts, 2000; Lie, 2001; Murphy-Shigematsu, 2001). Previous studies by Lie (2001), Motani (2002), and Min (1992), provide insight into Zainichi Korean issues in Japan with regard to education, socio-economic status, politics, and how they constantly challenge the myth of Japanese homogeneity.

Lie, born in Korea and raised in Japan, describes in *Multiethnic Japan* (2001) the ethnic order that exists in Japan and how minority groups like Zainichi Koreans fit into this hierarchy. In addition to drawing from historical sources and modern evidence of a multiethnic Japan, he conducts interviews and shares his personal interactions with Japanese and Koreans that reinforce his research. Taking an ethnographic and historical approach, his study provides a broader understanding of ethnic and cultural diversity in contemporary Japanese society. His research traces the inclusion of ethnic minorities from Japan's imperial history from 1895 to 1945 and the development of a nationalist ideology that included conquered peoples such as the Koreans, Okinawans, and Taiwanese, as part of an extended family. Under this ideology it was deemed natural that peoples of shared origin should be re-unified in the Japanese empire. Lie (2001) declares, "The myth of monoethnic Japan is fundamentally a post-World War II construct" (p. 141). It wasn't until the collapse of the pre-war empire and a post-war economic resurgence that the Japanese identity was rebuilt under a monoethnic ideology. This idea still holds strong in modern Japanese society, so even when individual members of minority groups choose to assimilate, the overbearing denial of a multiethnic Japan by mainstream Japanese prevents groups as collectives from being accepted as Japanese. Lie (2001) believes, "the single most important institutional impediment against the advancement of non-Japanese Japanese remains the state bureaucracies, which continue to be exclusionary against cultural Japanese without state citizenship" (p. 171). Thus, despite Japan being multiethnic, its government policies and societal attitudes do not lend to incorporation of ethnic minorities.

Motani (2002) focuses on Korean schools and their application in expanding Japan's cultural diversity. These Zainichi Korean ethnic schools in Japan operate as a complete alternative to the standard public education that Japanese students receive. She notes that Western societies often fear separate schooling on the grounds that it can lead to promotion of ethnic separatism, and instead they may favor treating all students as a single group under liberal democratic and multicultural policies. However, closely studying Japan as its own case, Motani (2002) strongly defends the legitimacy of Zainichi Korean ethnic

schools, stating, “it is clear that the oppression of ethnic schools has been the result of a discriminatory assimilation policy rather than the application of liberal principles that are intended to achieve greater equality and justice” (p. 234). Her research found that developing a positive bicultural identity was key to Zainichi Korean students from experiencing negative self-esteem from discrimination experienced from the 9 to 12-year-old range. A study by Kim that found more than 60% of Zainichi Koreans from ages 18 to 30 had negative self-esteem from their ethnic identity (as cited in Motani, 2002, p. 233). Motani (2002) sees separate ethnic schools for Zainichi Koreans as an important tool for identity formation “as a secure space for them to affirm the cultural and linguistic heritage, which is hard to find in the mainstream Japanese society” (p. 232). Zainichi Korean ethnic schools provide a means for students to develop a strong bicultural identity, which helps them handle discrimination both as children and adults.

According to Min (1992), minority groups face discrimination from dominant groups under particular conditions. For instance, Koreans in China have succeeded in keeping high levels of ethnic autonomy and a positive ethnic identity. In contrast, Min notes that Koreans in Japan have faced a negative ethnic identity and painful losses in their cultural repertoire. Min emphasizes that the difficulties of Koreans in Japan are caused by institutional policy toward minorities. Min (1992) states, “The Koreans who maintain their alien status receive all kinds of legal discrimination” (p. 15). He notes that this historically came in the form of alien registration and fingerprinting, ineligibility for pensions, and welfare, despite paying taxes. Furthermore, the government’s stance against ethnic education was made clear when 92 of 337 Korean language schools were abolished in 1949 (Min, 1992, p. 15). Min also cites the historic differences as detrimental to Japanese and Zainichi Korean intergroup relations. Whereas Koreans in China were considered equals, Zainichi Koreans labor and military conscripts “treated as subjects of a colony” (Min, 1992, p. 17). The effects of this historical difference still linger in Japanese society, to the detriment of their relationship with Zainichi Koreans. Lastly, Min points out that more dispersed Korean communities in Japan and fewer ties with their homeland negatively affect their ethnic identity. Not only are they physically further from their homeland; they are politically isolated in Japan due to ongoing diplomatic tensions between Japan and North Korea.

Applying CRT in Examining the Status of Zainichi Koreans in Japan

CRT provides a means to explore how minorities, like the Zainichi Koreans, can challenge discrimination and resist subordination. Just as race is a

social construct that enables discrimination by racism, ethnicity is yet another constructed category that can also serve a similar form and function. Zainichi Koreans do not have stark racial distinctions from other Japanese people; instead, one can see strong discrimination within Japanese society on the basis of ethnic differences (Lee, 2012).

By applying the CRT framework to analyze Zainichi Koreans and the ethnic aggressions they face, we aim to expose both overt and non-overt forms of discrimination and how Zainichi Koreans can be left out of dominant discourse. Our research inquiry into the Zainichi Korean case used counter-storytelling by sharing the individual voices—oral and written testimonies—as primary sources of information. Personal interviews provide a space where the interviewee can disclose their discriminatory experiences without being filtered through mainstream perceptions. For this study, interviews and personal accounts came from a series of articles in two separate Japanese newspapers: the autobiographies of two Zainichi Korean media figures, and a personal interview conducted by one of the authors. These sources were all selected for their standpoint inside (or directly interacting with) the Zainichi Korean community.

Status and Perceptions of Zainichi Koreans

In order to understand the cultural spaces and forms of resistance Zainichi Koreans engage in, it is essential to understand the historical context of Korean Japanese issues in Japan. Zainichi Koreans make up the largest ethnic minority in Japan. The 2014 CIA World Factbook broke down Japan's population by ethnicity as 98.5% Japanese, 0.5% Korean, 0.4% Chinese, and 0.6% other ethnic groups. Other large ethnic minorities include Taiwanese, Filipinos, Vietnamese, and several new groups from South America (Douglas & Roberts, 2000). However, unlike other minority groups, most Koreans were not immigrants, but were forced to come to Japan as laborers as a result of Japanese colonization during World War II. Contrasting with ethnic Koreans in China, Min (1992) identifies the forced historical relationship between Japanese and Zainichi Koreans as one of the key factors in Zainichi Koreans' poor adjustment into Japanese society. Because the majority of Zainichi Koreans who arrived in Japan did not come to Japan of their own free will—in other words, they did not experience the push and pull of a traditional immigrant's experience—they tended to resist assimilation into Japanese society while preserving their ethnic identity and communities.

Beyond resisting assimilation, other issues complicate the situation of Zainichi Koreans. One important obstacle toward integration into mainstream Japan is that Japan's nationality system is based on ancestry rather than territoriality (Motani, 2002). This means that unlike countries like the United States, being born in Japan does not grant Japanese nationality. Instead, this

depends on the parents' nationalities. Some Korean schools and communities have historically discouraged the acceptance of Japanese nationality as a breach of Zainichi Korean ethnic identity and pride. This practice, in combination with Japan's selective nationality policy, has resulted in second and even third generations who are not Japanese nationals and who are marginalized institutionally based on their foreign nationality. For example, on the technicality of nationality, these Zainichi Koreans confront marginalization in public service employment practices, public housing, and pension collection, creating economic disadvantage in the Zainichi Korean population (Chapman, 2007). While government policy is one way ethnic minorities are structurally subordinated, Zainichi Koreans are also sociologically isolated by selective media portrayals.

Looking at Japanese media, newspapers, and other public spaces, it may appear that Japanese culture does not tend to differentiate or make distinctions between Japanese and Zainichi Korean-born people. However, this is not due to assimilation or acceptance into Japanese society, but rather a pattern of non-recognition toward minority groups like Zainichi Koreans. Murphy-Shigematsu (1993) argues that mainstream Japan's cultural hegemony propagates a "monoethnic myth" (p. 69), which hides discrimination and prejudice by subtly denying the existence of the minority groups in question. For example, public information such as Japan's most recent 2010 National Census provides measurements based on nationality, but neglects to account for ethnicity, thus obscuring Japan's true diversity (Arudou, 2010). This policy of non-recognition means these groups operate with little visibility and on the margins of society until unfortunate events draw them into national attention.

Unfortunately, when Japanese media engages in Korean topics, they frequently involve stories that cast Zainichi Korean community groups and ethnic schools in a negative light. For example, after the Korean War, Japanese people's perception of Korea changed dramatically as South Korea became a democratic society, and thus was viewed more favorably than communist North Korea. During this period the mass media created strong stereotypes of deception and distrust toward North Koreans, which threatened Zainichi Koreans of North Korean descent. In the 1970's the Chongryon, a North Korean group known as "the general association of Korean residents in Japan," (Lynn, 2006) was heavily investigated for involvement in North Korean espionage and abduction of Japanese civilians. More recently, in 2003, stories involving North Korean nuclear espionage within the Chongryon were widely reported (Hook, 2010, p. 74). The images the media provide can severely impact the public image of the Zainichi Korean community and these negative portrayals have real consequences in terms of both macroaggressions and microaggressions against their community.

With the negative portrayals of Zainichi Koreans in media, indifference from local and state government, and strained historical relations, there are

significant issues in the interactions between the Zainichi Korean community and mainstream Japanese society. Motani (2002) explains Zainichi Koreans' situation:

[F]oreign nationals in Japan, Korean residents were a target of various kinds of discrimination. They were excluded from social welfare, such as national health insurance, national pension programs and unemployment benefits. Large corporations rejected Korean applicants as employees, and marriage proposals by Korean residents were often not accepted when it was revealed that they were Korean. (p. 228)

Furthermore, intermarried Korean-Japanese couples often face problems adjusting to each other's cultural differences and coping with strong resistance to their union from parental prejudice (Min, 1992). Facing difficulties in so many aspects of interaction within Japanese society, the Zainichi Korean ethnic community relies on community counter-spaces such as ethnic schools in order to embrace their heritage.

Ethnic Schools as Potential Counter-Spaces

Korean ethnic schools in Japan serve descendants of North and South Korea, offering alternatives to standard Japanese public schools. These schools range from the elementary level all the way to the university level. Korean ethnic schools can be broken down into North and South Korean based on their national allegiance. Schools for children whose relatives are from South Korea attend Mindan schools, also known as "Korean residents' union schools in Japan." However, there are very few Mindan, and the Mindan curriculum does not focus strongly on ethnic education, in contrast to the North Korean Zainichi schools. According to the Japanese Ministry of Education, in 2009, there were 73 schools for students of North Korean descent and only three Mindan. Both of these ethnic schools have seen some limited support over the years. Okano (2006) notes, "Korean ethnic classes were conducted at government schools in Osaka prefecture under the 1948 agreement; and by the late 1960's concerned parents and teachers at schools with large numbers of Korean students in neighboring prefectures had begun to run similar classes" (p. 482). Furthermore, a civil movement in the 1970's helped gather greater public acceptance and approval for ethnic education and Korean ethnic schools in particular. However, more frequently, the schools have historically been sites of political sparring between the Japanese government and the Zainichi Korean community, with cuts to public subsidy funding being a high-profile issue. Because ethnic schools are classified as private institutions, they can only receive state and local government subsidies, which provide a limited, but important, form of financial support for Zainichi schools. Subsidy cuts pose a significant threat to the existence of these schools, whose closure would force students to return to public Japanese schools. The response of the

Japanese government toward Korean ethnic schools provides an important indicator of mainstream commitment toward a monoethnic society, and resistance to cultural diversity.

These ethnic schools function as an important form of resistance to the Japanese monoethnic myth and its non-recognition of minorities. In many ways, these schools are essential to the continuation of the Zainichi Korean community and often discourage assimilation and loss of Korean heritage. Similar to the findings of Yosso et al. (2009) and Solórzano et al. (2001), Zainichi Korean children often cannot operate in the same manner as their mainstream Japanese counterparts. Zainichi Korean children must navigate the public (i.e., Japanese society) in relation to the private (i.e., ethnic community and home) settings, knowing that choosing to reveal their ethnic identity can result in microaggressions or overt forms of ethnic discrimination (See Motani, 2004; Shipper, 2010). Whereas African American and Latina/o students in the United States formed academic and community support circles while confronting racism and microaggressions in school (Solórzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2009), private Zainichi Korean ethnic schools take this a step further and offer a completely alternative setting that fully supports and fosters their ethnic heritage. Thus, their ethnic community and ethnic school serve as effective counter-spaces that allow Zainichi Korean children to learn about their ethnicity, embrace their heritage free from discrimination and microaggressions, and resist assimilation and ethnic obscurity. Motani (2002) describes Korean school education:

[The] main medium of instruction is Korean. Since the mother tongue of most current Zainichi Korean students is Japanese, the education given in Korean ethnic schools is immersion-type, bilingual education. The schools focus more on teaching the Korean language, history and geography, and their educational achievement is considered to be high. (p. 231)

The ethnic education provided by these schools also features cultural elements like ethnic dance, and Korean cafeteria food. North Korean schools tend to favor stricter adherence to traditions and ideology. For example, they try to instill a sense of allegiance and reverence to North Korea's past and present leaders, Kim Il-Sung, Kim Jong-Il, and Kim Jong-Un. However, these schools are starting to shift away from more controversial practices in order to gain greater acceptance. Zainichi Korean ethnic schools are one of the few places that provide Zainichi Korean youth affirmation of their cultural and linguistic heritage (Motani, 2002).

Beyond Korean subject matter, other cultural aspects are brought into students' lives. For example, North Korean students use their traditional ethnic dress, the *chima jeogori*, as a school uniform. Unfortunately, these markers of resistance toward educational assimilation (e.g. Korean uniforms and attendance at a Korean school) result in strong negative stereotypes, and further

microaggressions against these students (See Shipper, 2010). There have been cases where some female students have refused to wear the Korean uniforms because they very explicitly mark them as of North Korean descent, and the majority of students wearing them experience discrimination while riding the train or walking on the street (Shipper, 2010, p. 57). In contrast, South Korean schools do not have a Korean uniform system as North Korean schools do. Because of the images and stereotypes associated with North Korean descendants, the Mindan decided to prohibit the Korean uniform system used by North Korean schools.

Historically, many of these schools were taught in a manner that pushed students toward a stronger Zainichi ethnic consciousness, creating an atmosphere of resistance to assimilation into the Japanese mainstream. Rather than seeing assimilation as a solution, the schools taught the principle that strong ethnic identity could prevail over the inequality and discrimination Zainichi Koreans face; these schools' efforts directly discredited Japan's monoethnic myth by nurturing a strong and separate ethnic group. With these intentions, North Korean ethnic schools have not been just a unique cultural space, but also represent a counter-space against the dominant Japanese culture where a student's ethnic identity is developed as a proud Zainichi Korean. Lie (2008) explains, "[Chongryun] schools cultivated ethnonational pride, and inculcated Korean language, history, and culture" (p. 77). However, the heightened ethnic discrimination perpetuates Zainichi Koreans' low social status in Japanese society with clear implications for education. Okano (2004) notes the link between discrimination and Zainichi Korean educational outcomes, "Koreans have developed a belief that they cannot capitalise on their educational qualifications in the employment market; and the value of school credentials is questionable for them, a attitude still held amongst the older generations" (p. 125). Creating an ethnic school, changing their Japanese names to Korean, refusing to give up their foreign nationality, and forming a distinct Korean ethnic community are four main points of resistance. Nonetheless, Zainichi Koreans' resistance to Japanese society has consistently been tied to accumulated stress, incidents of discrimination, and the lasting effects of individual microaggressions.

The Experiences of Japanese and Zainichi Korean Students

Disregard and Denial of Zainichi Koreans in the Society

Wearing a traditional Korean dress is a sign of a person with a strong sense of ethnic identity and pride. The traditional Korean dress, the chima jeogori, is generally the school uniform in Zainichi Korean ethnic schools in Japan. However, Japanese antagonists repeatedly slashed dress uniforms while Zainichi students were on their way to school in 1994 due to an increase and deepening of

North Korea's negative image during this period. The international community started to cast doubt on whether North Korea had developed nuclear weapons, and North Korea refused to submit to an inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). As a result, some Japanese people expressed their frustration with North Korea by slashing traditional Korean dress that ethnic school students wore as a uniform every day. "Japanese do not care about other people, or maybe it is because I am a Korean who wears chima jeogori" ("Sadness at the slashing," 1994, paragraph 1). Mika (16 years old), who was in the second year of high school in a Tokyo Korean Secondary School, noticed her chima jeogori had been slashed on her way to school in a crowded Shinjuku Station in the middle of April. She was paralyzed with shame because a section the size of a fist had been cut out of her chima jeogori and her underclothing was revealed. She said, "I felt a lump in my throat just remembering the incident in Shinjuku station when nobody told me that my chima jeogori had been cut" ("Sadness at the slashing," 1994, paragraph 5). Though numerous passengers passed close by to her, no one told her that her uniform had been slashed.

The disregard of the people around her when the incident happened shocked the student. This incident suggests that she experienced overt ethnic aggression, disregard and denial in Japanese society despite being born and raised in Japan. Moreover, other Korean ethnic school students who wore chima jeogori faced several shocking and frightening situations on their way to school, such as being stared at on the platform at the train station, being followed, being tossed a lit cigarette, and being told, "I will kill you" ("Chima Jeogori, the reason why we continue to wear it," 1994, paragraph 6).

Korean ethnic school students were afraid and their parents also worried about these incidents. Wearing chima jeogori visibly marked the students as Korean, and this made it easy for them to be made the target of microaggressions and macroaggressions. The negative image of North Korea in international politics created a negative climate against Zainichi Korean ethnic schools where students learned subjects following the guidelines and policies of the North Korean government. Shipper (2010) explains, "the Japanese public connects acts conducted by agents of the North Korean government that threaten Japan's national security with Chongryun, because the group maintains strong ties and loyalty to North Korea" (p. 70). This has resulted in numerous incidents tied to the negative image of the Chongryun, including phone and bomb threats, envelopes containing bullets, gunfire, and hundreds of cases of harassment of Chongryun students (Shipper, 2010). Mindan schools decided to abandon the use of the chima jeogori as a school uniform in order to avoid this negative climate, while Chongryun schools developed a dual uniform system where students switched into chima jeogori inside school premises (Ryang, 2009, p. 70).

The same newspaper article on the chima jeogori slashing occurrences

went on to describe bullying in a Japanese elementary school because of Japanese attitudes towards ethnic Koreans. One mother, a second-generation Zainichi Korean, did not want her daughters to hide their Korean identity like she had as a youth. Her daughters wore chima jeogori to celebrate their birthday and sang a song in Korean. This mother recalled, “My daughters had a positive image of their Korean identity before they started elementary school” (“An appeal to the reality of discrimination against Zainichi Koreans, National meeting for Korean school education in Kawasaki,” 1988, paragraph 9). Her daughters’ classmates asked teachers and parents, “What is Korea?” and, “What does it mean to be Korean and not Japanese?” out of pure curiosity. However, the teachers and parents avoided answering their questions directly. Because none of the adults intervened to explain issues of ethnic difference and tolerance, children developed negative attitudes towards Korea and started to bully her daughters. Zainichi Korean parents complained, “I want to respect my Korean identity as part of my precious ethnicity” (“An appeal to the reality of discrimination against Zainichi Koreans, National meeting for Korean school education in Kawasaki,” 1988, paragraph 12). Yet, teachers often wish to ignore the issues of Zainichi Koreans in schools because they believe it is better not to confront such controversial issues directly.

Popular Names and Real Names

It is very common for a Zainichi Korean to have two names, a Japanese popular name and a Korean real name, in order to hide their Korean roots and avoid macroaggressions and microaggressions. First-generation and second-generation Zainichi Koreans faced discrimination in Japanese schools, causing third- and fourth-generation Zainichi Koreans to choose and use a popular Japanese name to avoid being bullied in school, and to further themselves in the workforce and everyday life. It has been estimated that only 14.2% primary school students and 9% of secondary school students use a Korean name because of the significant stigma from mainstream Japanese (Diène, 2005). Since Korean and Japanese names are very distinct from one another, the usage of a Korean name is perhaps one of the most common ways Zainichi Koreans are identified.

Yet, there are Zainichi Koreans who can use their real name proudly, one stating, “I can’t like Zainichi Koreans who use their popular name instead of their real name. They haven’t experienced and understood how Japanese society oppresses Zainichi Koreans for using their real name” (“An appeal to the reality of discrimination against Zainichi Koreans, National meeting for Korean school education in Kawasaki,” 1988, paragraph 12). For this small subset, it is important to confront and resist microaggressions and macroaggressions head on, and they would rather endure abuses than give up their ethnic identity and pride. However,

this is not the norm, and the bitter experiences of Zainichi Koreans in Japanese schools and the climate against them, has made Zainichi Koreans tend to hide their real names. Additionally, interviewed parents who were bullied in their past as Japanese school students advised their children to hide their Korean ethnicity. Sin Jeom-bun (mother, 54 years old) said that she had advised her daughter not to disclose her Zainichi Korean heritage and to use her popular name to avoid the bullying at school that she had experienced as a student (“Be Myself 2,” 2005). As described within the articles above, experiences of macroaggressions and microaggressions and the frequent negative climates that harm Zainichi Koreans in public schools have led most not to use their real names.

Ignorance Causes Discrimination

Moments of overt racism often garner the most attention due to their shocking and blatant nature, but in Japan they only comprise a small amount of discrimination that minorities actually deal with on a day-to-day basis. When one analyzes dialogues within private spaces and examines the counter-stories told by ethnic and racial minorities, a person more clearly understands the moments in which microaggressions and discrimination occur. Solórzano (1998) notes, “It is in private conversations and interactions where racism and sexism can exist in subtle and covert ways in the form of microaggressions” (p. 124). This statement holds true for the situation of ethnic minorities, especially Zainichi Koreans, in Japanese society.

Looking at the case of one particular Japanese interviewee, referred to with the pseudonym “Taro,” illustrates how aggressions against Zainichi Koreans can form. Taiko Yusa conducted a personal interview with Taro in March 2012, in order to learn more about his firsthand experiences as a Japanese person who quarreled with Zainichi Koreans. Taro, who is now a 31-year-old Japanese man, used to fight with a group of Zainichi students from a Korean ethnic school when he was a high school student. It was popular for groups of certain high school students in Japan to fight. Taro said:

The Korean ethnic school was one axis of conflict. We sometimes fought against other Japanese high school students and groups, but when we fought with Zainichi Korean students, groups of Japanese high school students cooperated to fight against the Zainichi Korean students, even though the Japanese groups were on bad terms.).

Taro explained that the reasons why high school students fought each other were as simple as, “They stared at us,” or “They are cheeky.” When Taro was asked whether he had special feelings such as prejudice against Zainichi Korean students, Taro stated that he used discriminatory terms daily, but unconsciously,

against Zainichi Korean students. He responded:

Actually, I was not familiar with Korea... I did not know the term “discrimination”... I believed “chon-kou” was an abbreviation of “chosen koukou” (Korean high school), not a discriminatory term... Zainichi Korean high school students go to Japanese universities and Zainichi Korean and Japanese students became friends and talked with each other. One day, I went to my friend’s place and met a Zainichi Korean undergraduate who had graduated from a Korean ethnic school. The Zainichi Korean undergraduate and I enjoyed a conversation about “our old memories” in which we fought each other. And then, I said, “Zainichi Koreans in chon-kou are...” He got angry and told me, “Fuck you!” I was confused because we had just been talking in a friendly way. I asked him, “Wait a minute. Why are you so angry?” He responded, “Don’t you understand what you are saying?” I said, “What are you talking about?” The Zainichi Korean undergraduate told me “You said ‘chon-kou’ now!” I answered him, “‘Chon-kou’ is an abbreviation of chosen koukou, isn’t it?” The Zainichi Korean undergraduate told me ‘chon-kou’ is a term of Japanese discrimination against Korean ethnic schools. ‘Chon’ means looking down on Koreans from a Japanese point of view, and Japanese people call Koreans ‘chon’ as a term of discrimination. I think it is discrimination because of ignorance. I followed the negative climate against Zainichi Koreans because of my ignorance about Japanese-Korean history, and I had adopted a negative image of Korean people on the basis of colonization from my parents’ and grandparents’ generation. I thought Zainichi Korean students and I were different, therefore I fought with them.

Taro became interested in Zainichi Koreans because of his experiences during high school and as an undergraduate student. He angered some Zainichi Korean students because of his ignorance of the relationship and history between Japan and Korea. After these experiences, he tried to learn more by having several conversations with Zainichi Koreans about their feelings and relationship with Japanese people. He asked Zainichi Korean students who had graduated from a Korean ethnic school and had fought against Taro’s high school group what Zainichi Korean students thought about Japanese people in order to learn more.

Having to deal with microaggressions on a daily basis, Zainichi Korean students often seek counter-spaces within their own community and heritage. However, over time this can result in rejection of the mainstream society they inevitably must face. When considering his past relationships with Zainichi Koreans, Taro recalled:

For example, my Zainichi Korean friend never talked in a friendly way with Japanese until he graduated from Korean ethnic high school. He had never talked in a friendly way with Japanese people since he was child, even though he lived in Japan and spoke Japanese. He lived in a Korean community, and he understood the Japanese as an enemy and was not allowed to speak in Japanese

in his school. I think I fought with Zainichi Korean students in the Korean ethnic school because Zainichi Korean students showed their stubbornness and hatefulness against Japanese through their eyes and attitudes.

Taro's case is evidence of the ignorance that exists in relationships between Japanese and Zainichi Koreans, and how this results in microaggressions and macroaggressions. Misunderstandings based on ignorance create negative attitudes and result in inflamed conflict between Japanese and Zainichi Korean students. Moreover, it is also important to note that these misunderstandings and aggressions only add to generations of greater conflict with Zainichi Koreans and ethnic Japanese in Japanese society, and schools are just one area where this can be seen.

Zainichi Korean Identity

As demonstrated in previously mentioned cases, students have very different views about preserving their ethnic heritage despite potential stigma in greater Japanese society. More recently, third- and fourth-generation Zainichi Koreans have reached a position of being able to decide whether or not to sustain the Zainichi Korean community in Japan through their individual choice of assimilation or resistance toward mainstream Japanese society. For the most part, these youth do not identify themselves as being either completely Korean or Japanese, and they have mixed feelings of belongingness. Many of these later generations are content to just be Zainichi Korean, somewhere between the two extremes of Korean and Japanese.

Despite ethnic identity association being a very personal decision, some publically recognized Zainichi Koreans embrace their heritage and help provide visibility for their community. For example, Kang Sang-Jung was born and grew up in Japan as a second generation Zainichi Korean. He is well known for his status as a political science professor at the University of Tokyo and as a media figure for his social commentary on issues of politics, especially relating to Koreans. After struggling between his Japanese and Korean identities, he established his identity as a Zainichi Korean when he was an undergraduate at university. As a youth, he studied at a Japanese school using the Japanese name Nagano Tetsuo. However, he decided to use his real name as a Zainichi Korean during the summer vacation of his freshman year. Kang (2004) describes his memory of this event in his autobiography: "Yes, I will become another self. When I realized this, I decided to remake myself [with my real name] 'Kang Sang-jung' instead of [my popular name] 'Nagano Tetsuo'" (p. 18). This decision was a symbolic moment for him to move forward as a Zainichi Korean and to not look back. He has stated that he desires more people such as himself to come forward in the public domain in order to promote diversity in Japan. Publically

recognized minority members like Kang help dispel the monoethnic myth that works against recognition and acceptance of minorities in Japan.

Another famous Zainichi Korean is Chong Tese, a professional soccer player who grew up in Nagoya, Japan. Despite playing in the Japanese soccer league, in the 2010 FIFA World Cup he chose to play as a member of the North Korean international team. Chong (2011) describes his identity in his autobiography, explaining

I am “Zainichi Korean” even though I was born and grew up in Japan. I grew up as a Zainichi Korean. I questioned why I was born as a Zainichi Korean, a minority group in Japan, when I was at elementary school. However, I [eventually] accepted my identity as a Zainichi Korean as my destiny. (p. 189)

Chong felt a strong attachment to North Korea because his grandmother came from the nation. Additionally, as a child he studied at a Korean ethnic elementary school, high school, and later entered Korea University in Japan. He suffered as a result of others’ negative image of North Korea. However, Chong (2011) finally understood himself: “Now, I think my motherland is always my motherland, even though [North Koreans] have miserable memories of the past” (p. 87).

Chong’s case highlights the mixed emotions of a person living as a Zainichi Korean, somewhere between, but separate from, being either Korean or Japanese. Despite having strong North Korean pride, Chong (2011) reveals his attachment to Japan stating

I have never thought of the Japanese as my enemy and hated them. I think this is the feeling of Zainichi Koreans... Japan has occupied a huge area in my mind... Finally, Japan is always the place to return to for me, although I can go anywhere in the world. I love Japan. (p. 200)

On the other hand, Kang (2004) still struggles between Japan and Korea, even though he discloses his attachment for both Japan and Korea.

Japan is my favorite country in the world, at the same time, Japan is the country I hate the most. The Korean Peninsula is a place I hate the most, at the same time, I should love the Korean Peninsula in some sense. Why have I struggled with this situation for such a long time? (p. 64)

Both Chong and Kang struggled with crises resulting from the diffusion of their identity by establishing their identities as Zainichi Korean. These issues of identity formation are the same that many Zainichi Korean students experience as they grow up. Both Chong and Kang chose to use their Korean names, despite knowing that this act would strongly identify them as Zainichi Korean. However, many Zainichi Koreans still feel they cannot disclose their Korean names because they are afraid of the resulting microaggressions and macroaggressions.

Challenges and Changes

Although microaggressions (and even macroaggressions) against Zainichi Koreans have remained a constant in Japanese society, Japanese public schools are now attempting to bridge the gap between Japanese and Zainichi Koreans. Modest progress toward ethnic awareness and tolerance has been made in some public schools. While the Japanese central government has been slow to rectify the situation of Zainichi Koreans in public schools, many local governments have taken the initiative to develop and implement their own policies. In 1970, the Osaka city education board created its own local school policy that has served as a model for 47 other local governments to follow suit (Okano, 2006). These policies often add after-school ethnic classes teaching Korean language, history and culture, and providing materials for Japanese students to learn more about Korean culture. For example, ethnic classes have been held in public elementary schools in Osaka and have helped to bridge Japanese and Korean students' perceptions. Korean ethnic classes in Japanese public schools have played an important role in enabling Japanese and Zainichi Koreans to understand one another. According to Okano (2004), Zainichi Korean students have had their identity as Zainichi Koreans strengthened through ethnic classes that have helped to reduce cultural and ethnic misunderstandings and intolerance. Third- and fourth-generation Zainichi Korean students who publically embrace their heritage are able to receive the same benefits from Japanese schooling as Japanese students, whereas earlier generations experienced such discrimination that they were forced to hide their ethnic identity. Zainichi Korean students who study in Japanese schools have attained the same academic achievements and access to the employment market as their Japanese counterparts. Furthermore, in several prefectures foreign public school teachers help students to understand other cultures. Public schools that have established their own policies to support Zainichi Korean students often "encourage students to adopt their real (Korean) names (instead of Japanese sounding names) at school, and to create the kind of school environment and subculture which would enable Korean students to feel comfortable doing this" (Okano, 2006, p. 483). As a result, over time, the Zainichi Korean community's perception of Japanese schools has become more positive. These public school improvements earn trust from the Zainichi Korean community, and gradually demonstrate their services extend to both Japanese students and the Zainichi Korean community (Okano, 2004).

As a result of changes in the educational attitudes of public schools, some Zainichi Koreans now disclose their ethnic identity and use their Korean name in Japanese public schools. "I am Korean. My real name is Yune Juri. Thank you," said a 17-year-old second-year high school student in Hyogo prefecture in her homeroom at the beginning of the second semester. Before revealing her Korean

name, Juri asked herself, "Have I been protected by my popular name, which my parents hated, while in Japanese school?" She realized this and consulted her parents about using her real name in her high school. Her mother was worried about her and said, "You might be bullied in the school." However, her mother did not directly oppose her idea. After Juri stated her real name, her classmate told her, "I will call you Juri. It's simple" ("Be Myself 1," 2005, paragraph 11). Juri succeeded in revealing her real name, and her classmates accepted her real name. While this still remains a big challenge for Zainichi Koreans, there is hope that school climates and perceptions of Zainichi Koreans are changing through the awareness raised as a result of ethnic classes and other efforts in Japanese schools.

Conclusion

Social structures and hierarchies have often been created by majorities in power while exploiting and oppressing minorities. The researchers in this study relied on CRT methods and microaggressions analysis as essential tools for understanding the subordination and discrimination of Zainichi Koreans. By looking at structural and subtle forms of prejudice, and discriminatory aggressions, a clearer picture of all the issues Zainichi Koreans must face on a daily basis emerges. Furthermore, looking at personal cases recounted from the Zainichi Korean community and from individuals interacting with the community provides insight into the personal and lasting damage of these discriminatory events. Our study has demonstrated that significant experiences of discrimination exist not only between different racial groups in Western countries, such as the United States, but also between ethnic groups in countries perceived as homogenous like Japan. Dominant groups still discriminate against minority groups whose members have the same physical features and very similar cultural characteristics to their own, as evidenced in the case of Japanese and Zainichi Koreans.

This study examines how Zainichi Korean students have suffered microaggressions in Japanese schools and society. Zainichi Koreans are recognized as "different" from Japanese, even though Zainichi Koreans are born and grow up in Japan, speak Japanese, and act as members of Japanese society. Commonplace disregard for Zainichi Koreans has wounded them and caused their alienation from mainstream Japanese society. Furthermore, microaggressions in the Japanese school climate and society have not allowed Zainichi Koreans to use their real name. As a result, Zainichi Korean students have protected themselves by using their popular names in order to hide their Korean identity. Moreover, ignorance of the relationship between Japan and Korea perpetuates everyday aggressions against Zainichi Koreans.

During Japanese schooling, some Zainichi Koreans built an identity for

themselves as a Zainichi Korean, which is neither Korean nor Japanese. In addition, some have succeeded in stating and using their real name in their Japanese school without being the target of bullying. Some Japanese classmates have accepted Zainichi Korean classmates' identities in their mainstream Japanese schools. Yet, there are still many Zainichi Koreans who suffer from negative perceptions of their ethnic identity and hesitate to disclose their identity as Zainichi Koreans in Japanese society.

This paper discusses a small number of cases describing the experiences of Zainichi Koreans. It has used newspaper articles, books, and interviews to provide the counter-stories from those directly affected by the rules and values of Japanese society. To understand and know how and what type of microaggressions Zainichi Korean students have suffered in educational settings, it is important to gather more personal experiences. It is also essential to examine how Zainichi Korean students react against microaggressions by creating counter-spaces and how microaggressions have affected their school life. The sources referenced in this study noted examples where discrimination was borne by ignorance and misunderstanding, sometimes even when educators and adults had opportunities to intervene and correct these situations. We stress the importance of additional studies researching how formal and informal education that promotes cultural and racial awareness and tolerance can reduce subtle and overt discrimination in Japan. Such research can reveal how curriculum may advance and affect understanding and acceptance between Japanese and Korean students in educational settings and beyond.

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Authors

Aki Yamada is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies (GSE&IS) at University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). Her research interests include Japanese communities in the greater Los Angeles area and also Asian and Asian American communities in Japan. Her dissertation research is an ethnographical study of the contemporary Japanese community in Los Angeles, focusing on the educational strategies they formulate for their children.

Taiko Yusa currently works as the Programme Officer at the World Food Programme (WFP) of the United Nations, Peru Country Office. She earned a M.A. in Social Science and Comparative Education (SSCE) at the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles in 2012. She has worked in the field of education from Japan to Venezuela to Guatemala. She has also worked in Emergency Preparedness and Response in Japan and Peru. Her research and work interests are education development and education in emergencies.