

# Experiences and Identities of Zainichi Korean Students at Chongryun-affiliated Schools

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## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between ethnic schools and the identity construction with the focus on a subset of Zainichi Koreans who affiliate with the pro-North Korea group Chongryun (the General Association of Korean Residents) and received education from Chongryun-affiliated schools. This study adopts an empirical qualitative method based on in-depth interviews with thirty-seven Zainichi Koreans as well as field observation which were conducted between 2007 and 2010. The findings of this study show that Chongryun Koreans still share the collective identities despite decline of Chongryun's unifying force. Their identities are based on a sense of belonging to the ethnic schools and the local Korean community, which has displaced allegiance to North Korea and Chongryun as the major force that unites its members. For some of them, their *Zainichi Korean identity* is not separated from a sense of being part of Japanese society. This study of a subset of Zainichi Koreans is one example of an ethnic minority group in a global context and it seeks to contribute to the wider understanding of ethnicity and identity formation in contemporary societies.

## 1. Introduction

Zainichi Koreans have historical origins traced back to Japan's colonisation of the Korean peninsula during the period of 1910-1945. The majority of them are now those of the second, third or fourth generation born in Japan. The organisation of Chongryun (the General Association of Korean Residents) was established by Leftist Zainichi Koreans in 1955 and has offered firm loyalty to North Korea. This paper explores the experiences of students, parents and graduates of Chongryun-affiliated schools in order to understand the relationship between ethnic schools and their identity construction. This paper starts by describing the experiences they had at schools in relation to the ethnic education provided in these schools. The results of this exploration also explain why some parents choose Chongryun-affiliated schools over Japanese schools and vice versa. Next, it investigates the students' different reactions to the given education and also the nature of their collectivism. Finally, the changes in the students' attitudes and life courses are examined. In this paper, the following questions are answered: What were the internal and external factors which

caused generational differences in the experiences and ethnic identities of Chongryun students? How have the life courses of Chongryun students become diversified beyond the typical ways in which Zainichi Koreans used to live?

## 2. Data and Methods

This study uses an empirical qualitative method based on in-depth interviews with thirty-seven Zainichi Koreans as well as field observations which were conducted between 2007 and 2010 in the Kanto Region, mainly in Tokyo. All the interviews were conducted in Japanese. The purpose of this research was to analyse the circumstances of young Zainichi Koreans and their articulation of their identities. It aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the social meanings and realities of Zainichi Koreans through rich and detailed empirical data. This is part of a Ph.D thesis which the author submitted to the University of Leeds in 2012. This paper focuses on the data collected from the interviews with twenty-two research participants who had experiences of going to Chongryun-affiliated schools for varying periods of time. Table 1 is a summary of interviewee profiles whose statements are cited in this paper. For data collection, snowball sampling was adopted because access to the target population was limited and thus it was impossible to draw a random sample. Most respondents were introduced through family members and personal friends of the author and the other interviewees. Those interviewed were between the ages of 18 and 41 years old at the time of the interviews. Whereas most young respondents in their late teen and 20s were university or technical school students, most of the older respondents held full-time jobs.

During the interviews, the author attempted to be active and reflective rather than to be neutral, and tried to develop the conversations for in-dept understanding and creating meanings through active interactions. As Holstein and Gubrium argue, respondents' comments construct aspects of experiential reality in collaboration with the interview (Holstein and Cubrium 2004: 156). The type of approach to hearing data used in this research was basically life histories. Focus was mainly on the experiences of an individual and what they felt as they passed through the different stages of life (Rubin and Rubin 1995: 27). Nevertheless, if the respondents showed discomfort or reluctance to discuss certain sensitive matters, such as ongoing domestic violence or financial problems, they were not asked searching questions. Respect for their dignity must take precedence over the data collection and trust maintained. The author also tried to articulate her feelings and experiences whenever the interviewees asked. Also, while listening to their stories, the author tried to use her full capacity for empathy and attempted to 'accept people for who and what they are' (Berg 2009: 135). In many cases, maintaining a balance between these attitudes apparently helped to build a rapport with them. The author's *outsider* status, being ethnically Japanese and a Ph.D student of a British university, probably brought some disadvantages in certain respects. It is possible that some respondents felt uncomfortable to talk freely. The author's lack of knowledge on language and ideology within the Chongryun arena possible interfered with her deeper

understanding of Chongryun culture and social realities. On the other hand, there were advantages to being an *outsider*. The interviewees did not assume that the author knew ‘everything’ and thus frequently most respondents shared their life experiences in detailed accounts. Moreover, the author was probably able to grasp their social realities constructed by some of their everyday actions and knowledge that may be taken for granted and unnoticed by *insiders*.

Interviewee number	Sex	Age when interviewed	Generation	Education at Chongryun-affiliated schools	Education at Japanese schools	Occupation/student
1	female	35	third	elementary to university	none	teacher at Chongryun high school
2	male	41	third	elementary to high school	none	self-employed in waste management
3	male	22	fourth	elementary to university	none	student at Chongryun university
4	male	41	third	elementary to high school	none	manager for Pachinko-related company
5	male	40	third	elementary (from second grade) to university	first grade at elementary school (1 year)	owner of Pachinko-related company
6	male	26	third	elementary to junior high school	high school to university	part-time worker
7	male	32	second	elementary to university	none	full-time worker for Chongryun organisation
8	female	21	third	elementary to high school	technical school	technical school student in medical profession
9	female	31	third	elementary to junior high school	high school to university	full-time worker for Japanese company
10	female	38	third	kindergarten to university	none	worker for Zainichi Korean-owned company
11	female	31	third	elementary to university	none	full-time worker for Chongryun organisation
12	female	19	third	elementary to high school	university	university student
13	female	39	third	elementary to high school	none	worker for Japanese company
14	male	39	third	elementary to high school	university	medical-related professional working for Japanese company
15	female	19	third	elementary to high school	university	university student
16	female	35	third	elementary to high school	none	yoga instructor/ part-time worker in a Korean food shop
17	male	19	third	elementary to high school	technical school	technical school student
18	male	21	third	elementary to high school	university	university student

Table 1. Summary of interviewee profiles

### 3. Chongryun-affiliated School and Ethnic Education

#### 3.1 Ethnic Education at School

The number of Chongryun-affiliated school entrants has been drastically decreasing. According to a Chongryun high school teacher, Interviewee 1 (female, age 35), when she was a high school student in the early 1990s, there were about 400 students in each grade at her school. Now that number was down approximately by half. As reasons to explain this decrease, Chongryun respondents often cited: the grim economic conditions of both schools and families; the worsened image of North Korea in Japan along with political disturbances in Korea; the low birth rate; and the limited number of Chongryun-affiliated schools across the nation. Due to their status as miscellaneous schools, Chongryun-affiliated schools are exempt from complying with the Japanese

School Education Law. Unlike regular Japanese schools, there are no teaching employment examinations or qualifications for Chongryun-affiliated schools. Chongryun's Korea University arbitrarily appoints teachers for the schools from among its university students. Some respondents find the salaries for school teachers too low to continue working for the schools. The Chongryun activist Interviewee 2 (male, age 41) noted that Chongryun teachers considered their work for the schools as more than just an occupation, rather it was their passion.

Ethnic education at Chongryun-affiliated schools is designed to 'foster Koreans who love the "real homeland" DPRK (North Korea)' (Lee, G. 2006: 107), and to build a strong Korean identity among students. According to respondents, a focal point of the schools' ethnic education is to provide a fundamental knowledge of Korean language, history, values, traditions and culture, including dance and music. Since Chongryun-affiliated schools are designated as miscellaneous schools, the Japanese government is not in a position to exercise influence on Chongryun-affiliated schools in terms of curriculums or textbooks they adopt. Being autonomous from the Japanese government (Ryang 1997: 25) allows the schools to focus on teaching young Zainichi Koreans how to develop their ethnic identity and cultural heritage. Korea University student Interviewee 3 (male, age 22) stated that the school taught him how to live and identify as *Chōsenjin* (Korean). Similarly, Interviewee 2 and Interviewee 4 (male, age 41) remarked that students were sent to schools in order to live proudly and acquire ethnic identity as *Chōsenjin*.

The schools' ethnic education plays an enormous role in Korean language teaching. Chongryun-affiliated schools are the only educational institutions providing education in Korean in Japan. Two fathers, Interviewee 5 (male, age 40) and Interviewee 4, who sent their children to the schools, found the acquisition of the Korean language an invaluable benefit of studying at Chongryun-affiliated schools. At school all instruction and communication are conducted in Korean. Speaking Japanese is strictly banned, and the Japanese language is taught as a foreign language (Fukuoka 2004: 223). According to Chongryun respondents, children had to report to their teacher and the whole class on how many Japanese words had slipped into their speech at the end of the day. Even in the absence of teachers, some students in charge of the 'national language section' supervise to make sure that their peers do not speak Japanese. Thus, 'a Korean only space' is secured within the school without Japanese language interference. Nevertheless, students' use of the Korean language is basically restricted to spaces within the schools. Outside of school, students speak Japanese almost all the time. All respondents found it easier and more comfortable to speak Japanese than Korean. Interviewee 1 revealed that Korean was rarely used even among teachers in teachers' rooms at school, when students were not around.

### **3.2 *Shisō kyōiku*: Ideological Education and Division within Schools**

Another significant aspect of Chongryun ethnic education is ideological education, often called *shisō kyōiku* in Japanese. Chongryun is interested in the consciousness-raising of its members through the school education system and other ideological apparatuses. This is done with an aim to

achieve devotion to North Korea as the sole and authentic homeland of Koreans in Japan (Ryang 2000: 36). The expression *shisō kyōiku* was frequently mentioned by Chongryun respondents. Interview data draws divided reactions to ideological education between the supposed North advocates and the non-fervent Koreans. Among the supporters of the ideological education, the aforementioned teacher, Interviewee 1 defended it, claiming that every education system in the world has an ideology behind it. A Chongryun activist, Interviewee 2 argued that the ethnic schools had the obligation of nurturing and educating children for their ‘fatherland,’ by which he presumably meant North Korea, and not South Korea. The influence of ideological education was often seen in the interviewees’ accounts. Interviewee 5 (male, age 40) and his family changed their nationality to South Korean several years before the interview. This was because he was worried that they would become ‘war captives’ if war broke out. Meanwhile, Interviewee 8 (female, age 21), a graduate of Chongryun high school and a student of Japanese technical school, could not stop thinking that she as a Korean, and her Japanese classmates would become ‘enemies’ if war broke out. Their comments show that their schools’ education has been effective in making some Chongryun Koreans identify themselves as ‘North Koreans in Japan.’

Nevertheless, Chongryun Koreans did not necessarily fully accept the ideological education. Interviewee 9 (female, age 30), who had received a nine-year education from Chongryun-affiliated schools, called the ideological education ‘brainwashing,’ and she was reluctant to let her Japanese friends know about her graduation from the schools. Even Chongryun Koreans staying in the community appeared to be confused. Interviewee 10 (female, age 38) showed mixed emotions:

In my life I received the Korean education at schools, so I don’t hate [North] Korea. Yet it doesn’t mean I believe in [its ideology]. I think some of what they did was wrong, like the abduction of Japanese. It’s not acceptable from an international perspective. I can’t really understand them on some points. But I’m willing to try and understand them. I can’t leave or hate them completely. I want [North Korea] to be successful and developed as a good nation. [...] I have special feelings for the North because of my education and I can’t just eliminate it.

Others found the ideological education rather radical. Interviewee 11 (female, age 31), a Chongryun fulltime worker, had lived within the insulated Chongryun community all her life and admitted her support for the North. Yet she felt that some expressions in the ideological education were radical and understood that other Zainichi Koreans were sceptical about this ‘radicalism in the education.’ This perplexity of some Chongryun Koreans is indicative of the big gap between the reality in which Chongryun Koreans live and its portrayal within Chongryun’s Korean language (Ryang 1997: 161).

A process of the ideological inculcation through education, which was revealed by Interviewee 12 (female, age 19), involved debates, discussions, and essays about how students should contribute to the Zainichi community and the North. She had become tired of these

assignment and tasks because ‘the final outcome was always the same, and there was a one-track process of reaching a conclusion.’ To quote Interviewee 12:

That [the outcome] is, ‘even though we continue living in Japan, we have to maintain Zainichi *Chōsenjin* identity.’ We had to reach the same conclusion every time. If we went around and around, we had to get there in the end. I was always wishing the debate would be over soon.

Having repetitive debates and writing essays with the same conclusion is, in Ryang’s words, ‘a performative statement’ (Ryang 2005). They know ‘the rule of the game’ to earn their grades. They are clearly aware of appropriate manners and behaviours to be ‘a good student.’ These tactics were acquired through the insidious training of years of ideological education. However, in the case of Interviewee 12, those statements had little ‘performative effect’ (Ryang 2005) on her. She mentioned:

If my teachers were here, I would be scolded, but what we feel [about Chongryun and North Korea] is pretty much the same as what ordinary Japanese feel. Of course I am proud of being Zainichi *Chōsenjin* but we were born in Japan. I feel we have nothing to do with North Korea and Chongryun, even though people say we do. [...] We all felt that way.

She viewed ‘the ideological education’ as irrelevant for their lives in Japan. She felt that being open about their Korean ethnicity was enough to be Zainichi Koreans. According to her, many young Chongryun Koreans found aspects of events associated with North Korea boring and meaningless. However, they rarely confronted the school or its supporters and attended organisational events relevant to North Korea at schools. Despite their criticism, they loved their schools due to their teachers and friends. Similar criticisms were expressed by other respondents. Interviewee 13 (female, age 39) was twenty years older than Interviewee 12. According to Interviewee 13, in her time students had also been polarised into fervent supporters and non-ardent ones in terms of their reactions towards ideological education. However, she said, if students criticised the North openly, they were sometimes subjected to strong rebukes from other students. She seldom discussed the issues with her friends even in private. Younger Zainichi Koreans are seemingly more outspoken in their criticism of Chongryun and the North. In this sense, the effect of ideological education on individual identities became less significant over twenty years and it rarely achieves the mobilisation of all young Chongryun Koreans. Even so, their accounts clearly showed there were still some constraints on overt criticism. There was a big gap between their personal feelings and the accepted view within the schools. This suggests that these Koreans may make different presentations of their ethnic identity to different audiences and in different settings (Fenton 1999: 94).

### 3.3 Chongryun Collectivism ‘One for All, All for One’

A further feature which Chongryun-affiliated school graduates showed was their strong group mentality, or collectivism, which some respondents referred to as *shūdan shugi* in Japanese. The importance of collectivism was underlined by one of the school slogans, ‘one for all, all for one.’ In effect, individuals seemed to be expected to contribute to the wellbeing of their friends and the Chongryun community. Each of them tacitly understood a role they should play within the school. For example, it was observed at an athletic event in the high school that agile students helped slow students to climb the obstacle walls in a steeplechase race. They helped the slow students before they themselves crossed the finish line. They did this voluntarily. This scene exemplified their priority for friendship and cooperation over individual desires and success. Friendships characterised by a high degree of mutual help can be seen in every aspect of students’ lives. Chongryun respondents revealed another tradition; students help each other in pairs or teams voluntarily to prepare for term exams. They stay with underachieving students at home and help them study for days. Bullying issues rarely come to the fore within the Chongryun community; by contrast, these issues have attracted widespread concern in Japanese society. This communal mentality is manifested as friendships and strong communal ties that are maintained after graduation.

Korean cultural values, largely influenced by Confucianism, also partly account for their group-oriented disposition. They place a great deal of value on vertical relationships between seniors and juniors and the virtue of courtesy. Interviewee 4 had both Japanese and Chongryun subordinates at work. He felt Japanese youths lacked proper decorum, but in contrast Chongryun youths had good manners and respect for their superiors. He attributed this difference to their school education. This contrast was supported by Interviewee 8 (female, age 21), who was aware of the cultural differences between the ethnic schools and Japanese schools. For example, when receiving something from higher ranking people, Chongryun students would always take it with both hands and bow in salutation to them, both signs of courtesy. However, her Japanese classmates appeared to have no such manners. Realising this difference, she felt proud to have attended Korean schools. As Song argues, adherence to group norms and values provides group members with an important sense of belonging and self-determination as well as a sense of security about who they are (Song 2003: 53). Moreover, they both commented that junior Koreans rarely ‘talk back’ to seniors and teachers. This discipline is obviously crucial to unite people of all generations. It helps them to avoid conflicts and divisions in a small, close-knit community.

This collectivism has also been reinforced by external factors, the specific social situations surrounding Zainichi Koreans. Visible minorities like Chongryun Koreans appear to be easy targets of suspicion and hatred in Japanese society. Some respondents had experienced racially motivated attacks and hostile reactions in the street. For example, Interviewee 5 (male, age 40) discussed the frequent verbal abuses he experienced on the train since he was at elementary school. The abusers included Japanese school children, university students, and other adults. They identified him as an ethnic school attendee by his school badge. Since ‘the outside world’ was hostile, they were vigilant;

it was common for male students to walk female students to and from school to avoid racial attacks, when serious incidents related to North Korea or Chongryun take place. Consequently, their 'collective identity for resistance' (Castells 1997) has been effective to strengthen the ethnic consciousness and solidarity among Chongryun Koreans. Partly because of their collectivism and a high degree of cooperation, the dissimilar political perspectives held by the students are a minor source of conflict among students.

As collectivism is a central priority in Chongryun-affiliated schools, the schools expect students to fulfil their obligations as a Chongryun member first and foremost. Some students conformed to Chongryun's social ideals, while others opted to pursue their individual desires and goals. Interviewee 3 often served as a leader in Chongryun schools. He was never distressed about how he should lead his life because he 'was brought up *healthily* in the Zainichi community.' Living for his community was always his primary concern. To quote Interviewee 3:

My juniors and the succeeding generations will probably be upset that the ethnic education of Chongryun schools emphasises the importance of serving the Zainichi community. Some people prioritise their own desires, and say 'I want to become a pilot' or something like that. I want to teach those people how important it is to think about living for the Zainichi community. I want to listen to their stories and give them advice.

His statement shows how certain constraints and a set of norms have been imposed on Chongryun students by the schools, and these restrictions regulate their actions and behaviours. The schools are a powerful factor in building and sustaining the group consensus and cohesion, which determines the obligations that students should uphold for the community's interests and survival. Sometimes their commitment has to be fulfilled at the expense of their personal desires.

The above discussions led to the following conclusions on why some parents choose to send their children to Chongryun-affiliated schools despite some economic and social disadvantages that their attendance may result in: parents may send children to ethnic schools in one or several of the following cases, namely when parents: (1) hope to provide children with a strong ethnic identity as a Zainichi Korean; (2) want them to learn the Korean language and culture; (3) endorse the Chongryun's (political) ideology; (4) value the collectivism and cooperativeness taught within schools; and (5) maintain strong connections within the Chongryun circle.

### **3.4 From Defiance to Coexistence**

Interview data revealed the attitudes of Chongryun-affiliated schools and students have shifted over time. Most Chongryun respondents in their 30s and 40s had experienced varying degrees of insult and harassment by Japanese when they were students. At that time, antagonism between Japanese high school students and Chongryun students was manifested in violence. The street battles were the only occasion in which they interacted with each other (Nomura 1996). Fights

against Japanese students were part of their lives and ‘one of their traditions,’ as Interviewee 14 (male, age 39) described. Interviewee 14 and his friends always carried a sheet of iron as a weapon in their school bags in preparation for street fights. Their teachers rarely dissuaded them from fighting because ‘the teachers themselves used to fight frequently as students.’ Interviewee 13 (female, age 39) reported some female students also fought their Japanese counterparts.

Most female students at that time had a strong sense of attachment and adherence to their *chima chogori* (traditional Korean dress) school uniform. *Chima chogori* is one of the significant ‘index features’ (Nash 1996), which mark the boundaries between Japanese and Koreans. Interviewee 1 (female, age 35) and her friends ‘staked their lives on wearing *chima chogori* beautifully.’ As a junior high school student, she meticulously pressed the pleats of the skirt every day and never sat down on the train or bus so as not to ruin the pleats. In 1987, a Japanese man slashed the *chima chogori* of a female Chongryun student and attempted to strangle her at a station in Tokyo. In response to this incident, the schools instructed female students to conceal their *chima chogori*. They were ordered to wear coats over them on their way to and from school. However, Interviewee 1’s seniors at high school ignored this instruction. They all walked proudly in public wearing *chima chogori* without covering them up. The junior students, including Interviewee 1, followed their example. In her generation, *chima chogori* was the embodiment of Korean ethnic pride for female Chongryun students. It was a powerful representation of their defiance, while it was the target of Japanese racial hatred.

A major turning point came in the early 1990s onwards. Around that time Chongryun-affiliated schools began seeking the right to compete in Japanese national athletic events. Chongryun people advocated for public support for their participation in national sports championship competition. Consequently, in 1994, they were permitted to compete in the national high school athletic events. In these circumstances, the emphasis of Chongryun schools gradually shifted from resistance to coexistence. Interviewee 1 said:

In those days, with this aim, we were told not to do anything that would break the law [by teachers]. [...] We were appealing for the right to play in sports events on an equal footing. I suppose that was the time where we changed from resisting to living together with the Japanese, hand in hand.

She also explained generational shifts of Chongryun Koreans’ experiences as follows:

Even today, some politicians still deny the fact of Japan’s colonialism. So there’s a big difference in the perception of historical issues [between Japanese and Koreans]. Some of our grandparents were deceived into coming to Japan and others came to escape poverty. Their descendants, especially the second generation, have witnessed their struggles. So they were more likely to resist discrimination rather than seek to live in harmony.

For the first generation, their lives were completely altered by colonialism and direct exploitation. One of the third-generation interviewees argued first-generation Koreans were ‘still at war with Japanese in their mind.’ The second generation observed their parents’ sufferings from lingering discrimination and socio-economic hardship in Japanese society. Some of them strongly rejected assimilation and tried to overcome their exclusion via collective resistance. This was expressed in the forms of the Zainichi rights movement and street fights. In contrast, for the younger generation, direct discrimination against them has decreased, even to the level that some of them have never experienced discrimination personally. Consequently, their focus tends to be on harmonious coexistence with Japanese, rather than resistance and complete separation from mainstream society.

The shift of the students’ circumstances has also led to the changes in their needs and wants. This has a major impact on the schools’ stance. For example, an increasing number of Chongryun students have begun to attend Japanese universities. Accordingly, the ethnic schools started adopting the academic curriculum to the students’ needs. Interviewee 12 (female, age 19) stated that the schools now teach academic subjects aligned with Japanese schools to help students to pass entrance examinations for Japanese universities. In the meantime, some former students stated that the ethnic schools did not take actions to establish integration with the Japanese. Interviewee 18 (male, age 21) claimed that the schools should be more open to the outside world, and that ‘a revolution’ was necessary. He warned ‘the extremely radical education would end up being reverse discrimination.’ To avoid this, he argued, teachers both at Chongryun and Japanese schools should actively interact with each other more frequently. Likewise, Interviewee 15 (female, age 19) contended that deeper interactions between the schools were necessary in order to eliminate hostility on both sides. Interviewee 12 insisted, ‘while students have been changing rapidly, schools have yet to catch up with them.’

The circumstances of female students has also changed. In 1998 when the Japanese media covered the presence of North Korean missiles, anti-Korean sentiment grew rapidly in Japan. This led to frequent racially-motivated attacks on Chongryun female students in *chima chogori*. Out of concern for their daughters’ safety, mothers of female Chongryun students strongly opposed the wearing of *chima chogori*. As a result, in 1999 the schools implemented ‘the dual-uniform measure’ (Ryang 2009: 70); they spend most of the time at school in *chima chogori*, but on leaving school they wear a regular school blazer and a skirt to blend in with Japanese society. According to Interviewee 1, current female students no longer had as strong a passion for *chima chogori* as her generation did.

#### 4. Life Courses after High School

##### 4.1 'The Way a Zainichi Lives'

According to several Chongryun interviewees, the children of high-ranking officers and fulltime workers in Chongryun were expected to take up jobs inside the organisation. For these people, their family life occurs in a wide network of communal and associational ties (Rex 1997). Many spheres of their social life were restricted by the values of the organisation. Some became distressed on finding that their hopes for a career were dashed on account of their position in the organisation. Others, including Interviewee 11 (female, age 31), were willing to accept the job that was arranged for them. She considered it inevitable that the children of Chongryun officials were preferentially admitted to its schools or offered jobs in the organisation. This helped to preserve the schools and the organisation. Their private living sphere and the public sphere are inextricably linked and overlap with each other.

Meanwhile, interview data identified substantial differences at different ages in the life courses of those who were not Chongryun officials. For those who had graduated from ethnic high schools in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the range of jobs available to them was limited. According to Interviewee 14 (male, age 39), these jobs were concentrated in particular sectors, such as *pachinko* parlours, industrial waste processing, garbage collecting, night entertainment business, show business, Korean barbecue restaurants, the consumer lending industry, and sports-related businesses. Interviewee 16 (female, age 35) commented that 'none of us would ever conceive of entering Japanese society,' and most Chongryun students joined Chongryun-related or Zainichi-owned companies. For example, Interviewee 4 (male, age 41) continued working in the Korean community throughout his life. At that time everyone felt they should work for Chongryun after graduating from high school. This, he claimed, is because of 'a sort of brainwashing.' Although he enjoyed working for Chongryun, he quit his job because of the very low salary. He subsequently applied for positions in many Japanese companies. Some of his friends who had also been seeking a job from Japanese companies were hired under their passing names. He applied to companies under his Korean name, and was never called for an interview. In the end, his former classmate introduced him to a Zainichi-owned *pachinko* company. Interviewee 4 commented:

I thought again, 'after all, this is the way a Zainichi lives.' I worked in a consumer lending company before. Now it's the *pachinko* industry. Just for the record, my grandma owned a barbecue restaurant. I thought, 'well, I'm going through the whole of the Zainichi community.'

His disappointment was succinctly expressed with a tone of resignation when he said, 'this is the way a Zainichi lives.' At that time overt discrimination against Zainichi Koreans hindered them from getting 'a proper job.' An exception to this occurred when they had acquired professional qualifications, such as in medicine, business and science (Kim, C. 1995). It was difficult for

Chongryun graduates to find a job without relying on their Korean networks. Their discouragement affected their attitudes towards Japanese society, and at the same time, the experiences of exclusion from mainstream employment possibly reinforced their adherence and allegiance to the organisation and their own community.

Interviewee 14 (male, age 39), on the other hand, pursued an advanced education in order to extricate himself from ‘the way a Zainichi lives.’ He obtained a professional qualification in the medical field at a Japanese university. He said:

I asked my parents to let me go to a Japanese university. They also wanted me to go to a Japanese university, any university, [...] but not to Korea University. They also found it useless to attend Korea University too, because the graduates couldn’t get proper jobs. Besides, in the end, we would continue living in Japan. So they just wanted me to go to a Japanese university, whichever one it was. Maybe they did it out of vanity or something.

His second-generation parents, working in the waste disposal industry, encouraged him to pursue his education in a Japanese university. Interviewee 14’s statement suggests attending a Japanese university was regarded as a respectful course of life in the Chongryun community. Getting out of the Chongryun circle and joining the Japanese employment market is rather prestigious. Furthermore, the large presence of Zainichi Koreans in the medical field, as was pointed out by Interviewee 14, indicates the huge advantage that a professional qualification can offer them in the matter of employment opportunities. Asked why he did not choose to stay in the community, he replied that that was the way of life for his parents’ generation, and ‘it was time we entered Japanese society.’ In Interviewee 14’s words:

I didn’t want to get typical Zainichi jobs like working in barbecue restaurants, motels, industrial waste disposal, consumer lending, bars, or as a *yakuza*. I wanted to do something more decent. [...] It would have been easy to choose that [typical Zainichi] way. I could have earned more money doing it. But I wanted to get a decent-status job in Japanese society.

Only a handful of Chongryun graduates attended Japanese universities and became socially and financially successful in Japanese society at that time. Nonetheless, a great number of young Zainichi Koreans are currently seeking life paths beyond the realm of the community. This tendency signifies their growing aspiration for social acceptance in Japanese society. In the case of Interviewee 14, however, he never intends to leave the Chongryun community. While he gets along with his Japanese friends and colleagues, he values the friendships and relationships he has with other Zainichi Koreans. He feels the difference in social status between him and his Chongryun friends had little impact on their friendship.

Many young Chongryun respondents studied hard to acquire professional qualifications and certificates. They aspire to avoid ‘the way a Zainichi lives.’ The remarks of Interviewee 12 (female, age 19), a student of a Japanese university, affirmed this viewpoint:

I have to make more of an effort than the Japanese people make, and acquire a qualification. I have to be always more competent than the Japanese in all aspects of my work. Otherwise, I will not be treated on an equal footing with my Japanese contemporaries. [...] My mother always says I should study hard to get a qualification that would help me find a job.

Presumably, the parents and the children alike are striving to ensure that this generation does not suffer the same hardships the previous generation experienced. Interview data shows that young Zainichi Koreans regard themselves as socially more integrated into the Japanese mainstream, but firmly believe that educational achievement is necessary to evade discrimination. It enables them to gain access to future social and financial security. The accounts of these interviewees thus suggest that the perceptions of themselves as disadvantaged still remain.

#### **4.2 Diversifying Life Courses**

Some Chongryun Koreans have been close to each other for a long time, even for generations. They have engendered a self-supporting community through their collective efforts and organisational life, where they have helped one another with social and economic problems. On the other hand, their individual lives and personal decisions are frequently interfered with by their family and community members. Interviewee 14 (male, age 39) saw some Zainichi Koreans elope with their Japanese partners in the face of overwhelming opposition to the relationship from their parents and grandparents. Others give up their personal dreams to take jobs in Chongryun. Nonetheless, the individual life courses of young Chongryun members have become diversified, as their expectations and aspirations for careers are higher than ever before. Recently more young Chongryun Koreans started working outside of their community; fewer Koreans are staying only within the Zainichi sphere. According to Interviewee 12 (female, age 19) and Interviewee 15 (female, age 19), about half of their former classmates of Chongryun school went on to Korea University. The other half went to Japanese universities/technical schools or started working.

Under these circumstances, some young Koreans seem to be seeking an equilibrium between the fulfilment of their obligations to the Chongryun community and their personal desires. For example, Interviewee 3 (male, age 22) emphasised that his aim in becoming a lawyer was to benefit the Chongryun organisation, rather than the fulfilment of his personal passion. He argued that as a lawyer he would help promote social equality, eliminate discrimination, and establish minority rights. He stressed his selflessness and substantial dedication to both Chongryun and Japanese society. Other young respondents also linked their personal desires to the potential benefits to Chongryun and Japanese society. Interviewee 17 (male, age 19) chose a Japanese technical school

over Korea University because he ‘wanted to be of help to other Zainichi Koreans by letting Japanese people know about Zainichi.’ Intriguingly, all of these youths, who stressed the importance of their roles in the community and their selfless commitment to it, were male students. Meanwhile, most female students rarely hesitated to show their personal desires and more materialistic outlooks.

The respondents cited several reasons why they attended Japanese universities instead of Korea University. Firstly, they viewed Korea University as a place that fosters Chongryun employees, and is thus for the students who are ardent supporters of Chongryun and North Korea. Secondly, attending Korea University is not likely to be held in esteem by Chongryun Koreans. Third, another concern was the psychological effects resulting from the four-year isolation from the mainstream society, which attending Korea University would inevitably necessitate. All Korea University students are obliged to live in a school dormitory under strict supervision and curfews. Some were concerned that attending Korea University would make it difficult for them to adapt to Japanese society. Lastly, some respondents mentioned the economic and social disadvantages in relation to future career prospects for Korea University students. They believed that Japanese universities would provide them with many opportunities, enabling them to ‘see a new world and broaden their perspectives.’ In sum, while both parents and children appreciate the fundamental education received at Chongryun-affiliated schools (from elementary to high schools), Korea University is not highly valued; rather the University is regarded as narrowing the life choices for graduates both in terms of educational quality and future prospects.

## **5. Conclusion**

Ethnic education at Chongryun-affiliated schools is designed to build a strong Korean identity. The schools have maintained various distinctive features: language teaching, ideological education, a sense of resistance against Japan, and strong group mentality. Their collectivist disposition has given strong meaning and purpose to the everyday lives of Chongryun students and members within the community. However, numerous young Chongryun Koreans now seek life paths beyond the Chongryun realm, and they no longer see themselves as socially isolated from the Japanese mainstream. Community involvement has become optional and limited for them. Despite all these changes, some of them are still attracted to ethnic schools, and choose to remain in the community. This is largely because they believe Chongryun-affiliated schools are the only institutions in Japan that offer ethnic education, which has helped them to understand and accept their ancestral roots. They also have provided more intense inter-personal relationships than are available in Japanese schools. The networks guarantee mutual practical and emotional support. In most cases, this has been obtained in return for less freedom in terms of individual behaviour. Evidently, for Chongryun Koreans, ethnic schools remain the main source of their ethnic identity.

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