AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Mika Kawano for the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Anthropology presented on December 8, 1999. Title: An Observation of the History and Discrimination of the Buraku in Modern Day Japan.

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Nancy Rosenberger

The Buraku people have been segregated, oppressed, and discriminated against throughout Japanese history. The Japanese can dismiss the Buraku issue because of assimilation theories, the belief in homogeneity, and passive attitudes by the Buraku people. The Buraku Liberation League (BLL), which has fought for equal rights on behalf of the Buraku people since 1955, has the potential to effect changes that will improve minority issues in Japan.

This thesis examines the historical formation of the Buraku people and the ideological aspects that reinforce discrimination against them. The historical observation of the Buraku, conducted by reviewing the existing literature, focuses on how the Buraku people and the discrimination against them originated. To understand the ideological aspects of the Buraku issue, focus groups as well as individual interviews were conducted in Osaka from June to September 1993 to gain a general overview of the problem. There was a total of four focus groups: three Buraku focus groups (young adults, parents, elderly) and one non-Buraku focus group (young adults). In addition to the focus groups, five BLL officers were individually interviewed. Subsequently, questionnaires were distributed in 1997 in various geographical areas to verify the findings of the first research. Non-Buraku subjects came from Hokkaido, Tokyo, Kanagawa, and Osaka, while all the Buraku subjects were from Osaka. Each of the Buraku and the non-Buraku were categorized into two age groups: parents and young adults.
The results of the historical observation demonstrated that the Buraku people were derived from people with various backgrounds and occupations. Also, they have contributed to traditional Japanese art forms (such as dance and arts and crafts) as well as human rights advancement. The results of the ideological observation revealed that many non-Buraku subjects had the misconception that Buraku discrimination has disappeared. Most of them were indifferent toward the Buraku issue and had little knowledge about Buraku history and the current Buraku issues. Because the present school curriculum seldom provides information, especially positive information, about the Buraku, the non-Buraku tend to focus only on the negative aspects of being Buraku. The ideological study also discovered that non-Buraku subjects tended to avoid involvement with the Buraku, whereas Buraku subjects hesitated to reveal their identity and often tried to pass as the non-Buraku. The negative image of the Buraku, the image of isolation and exclusion induced by discrimination, appears to instill a fear of exclusion from the majority among both the non-Buraku and Buraku when they become involved in the Buraku issue.

The research suggests that it is essential for the BLL to confront indifference, lack of knowledge, and the fear of discrimination. In order to accomplish these goals, it is essential to raise awareness of the Buraku issue and to communicate the positive aspects of the Buraku. Accordingly, the BLL needs to request that the government, especially the Ministry of Education, restructure the history and moral education curricula, and provide nationwide mandatory human rights education to include the Buraku issue. In addition, in order to confront anti-Buraku liberation theories and for the future success of the Buraku liberation movement, the BLL needs to focus and define the future direction of the Buraku liberation movement.
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Mika Kawano
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For My father, Toshinori Kawano, 
and My mother, Yasue Mizugushi, 
with All My Respect and Love
An Observation of the History and Discrimination of the Buraku in Modern Day Japan

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Belief in Homogeneity

As a Japanese studying in the United States, I am frequently asked whether there is racial prejudice in Japan. It is a difficult question to answer because most Japanese still adhere to the basic premise that Japan is homogeneous (Hane 1996: 146; White 1987: 14). The Japanese reaction is “How can there be racial prejudice in a country where everybody is the same?” However, this attitude may underlie discriminatory practices in Japan. Compared to other countries, Japan is geographically isolated and historically inexperienced with other cultures and people. This inexperience interacts with the belief in homogeneity, creating distance between the Japanese and non-Japanese, and at the same time, dismissing racial differences among the Japanese (Murphy-Shigematsu 1993: 70). This results in non-acceptance, non-consideration, and a basic unawareness of cultural and racial differences within Japan and elsewhere.

The global community has often perceived Japan as lacking human rights awareness and its people as being racialistic (Murphy-Shigematsu 1993: 70). This is summarized by Jesse Jackson’s statement:

Japan is in the black when it comes to economic achievements but in the red in terms of human rights awareness (Kobayashi 1990: 27; Oga 1991: 63).

Also, discriminatory acts and statements by Japanese political and business leaders support this view. For example, former Prime Minister Nakasone attributed the slow growth of the American economy in the 1980s to the low intelligence level of Puerto
Rican and black workers (Kobayashi 1990: 27; Oga 1991: 63). Although such statements are reported internationally, media coverage tends to be minimal in Japan. Because not only are the Japanese sensitive to public embarrassment (Lebra 1976: 79) but also they are ignorant and innocent to human rights issues; denial appears to be a suitable alternative. Consequently, the Japanese tendency is to overlook discriminatory actions and the lack of human rights awareness by their own leaders as well as themselves.

A classic example of Japanese ignorance and innocence toward discrimination is seen in the marketing of goods by Sanrio, one of Japan’s largest manufacturers of school supplies, which targets the youth market. During the late 1980s, Sanrio expanded its market into the United States, featuring cute human and animal characters on their merchandise. African-Americans were extremely offended by one of the characters, Little Black Sambo, and protested to both the manufacturer and the Japanese government. Japan’s lack of experience with discrimination could hardly be expected to connect the cuteness of the Sambo design with discriminatory actions (Kobayashi 1990: 25-30). In fact, the Japanese could not see why the African-Americans were so offended. Rather than acknowledging the discriminatory act, the Japanese government apologized for the incident to preserve good trading relations with the United States. This reaction by the Japanese, denying the existence of discrimination or of being a discriminator, is assumed to stem from a lack of human rights awareness which is derived from the belief in homogeneity.

These types of incidents also occur when the Japanese are dealing with minority issues within Japan. Although they recognize minority groups such as the Ainu (aboriginal Japanese), Chinese, Koreans and Okinawans; the Japanese simultaneously dismiss problems and issues associated with these minority groups due to the belief in homogeneity. Most Japanese are not aware of this contradiction, nor is the Japanese government (Murphy-Shigematsu 1993: 65). According to a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the United Nation Human Rights Committee on discrimination in Japan, only the Ainu are officially considered a minority group in Japan (Murphy-Shigematsu 1993: 67; Weiner 1997: xiii). Closer examination of minority issues in Japan leads to the Buraku issue.
The Buraku issue focuses on the discrimination against those who were born in Buraku areas, and their children or descendants. Buraku literally means “village” or “hamlet”; however, it is usually used to describe “special hamlets” or “special districts,” which were historically designated for outcast status people. Nowadays, these Buraku areas are called *dowa* (assimilation) districts. The word *dowa* is a euphemism, commonly used by the Japanese government when referring to these special districts. Buraku people have been called by various discriminatory names such as *eta* (great filth), *hinin* (non-human), or *yotsu* (four-legged animal). In the present day, they are commonly called *buraku-min* (hamlet people).

Historically, the Buraku people were engaged in occupations which dealt with death. For example, they were tannery workers, undertakers, or caretakers of temples and imperial tombs. When Buddhism spread throughout Japan around the sixth century, the stigma attached to occupations dealing with death became stronger. Buddhism detested anything associated with death, considering it to be impure. Although Shintoism (the native religion in Japan) shared similar views, Buddhism promoted various taboos associated with death. As a result, Buraku people were considered impure, filthy beings.

For nearly one thousand years, the Buraku people have been an outcast group, despised by other Japanese even though they are biologically and ethnically Japanese. Ignorance and denial derived from a lack of human rights awareness as well as the belief in homogeneity seem to have perpetuated the discrimination against the Buraku. This is demonstrated by former Prime Minister Nakasone’s statement at an international conference in 1986:

*We Japanese do not have any discrimination against Japanese people* (Teraki et al. 1988: 310).

De Vos and Wagatsuma define the Buraku people as an invisible race of Japanese (1966) since they “exhibit the political and cultural traits of an ethnic group” despite being considered Japanese (Murphy-Shigematsu 1993: 64). The invisibility of the Buraku makes the Buraku issue a blind spot within the blind spot of failing to recognize minority issues in Japan.
Because they are phenotypically indistinguishable from the non-Buraku population, the Buraku people have a choice in how they confront discriminatory practices: (1) declare themselves as Buraku and confront the problem directly or (2) hide their identity and hope to avoid discrimination, adapting a passive "leave us alone" attitude. Having this choice makes the Buraku situation somewhat unique compared to other examples of discrimination where "differences" are more apparent. One example is racism against African-Americans in the United States. Although some fair-skinned African-Americans also have the choice of "passing" as a member of the majority group, most do not have this choice (Haizlip 1995). Dave Specter, a prominent American commentator in Japan, discusses the difference between the African-American and Buraku issues:

Even though discriminatory practices still exist, successful African-Americans have proven that they are able to excel not only in the field of entertainment such as music and sports but also in the field of politics, business, and other areas. This can be a source of inspiration and hope to other African-Americans. However, this is not the case with the Buraku people, since the more famous they become, the harder they try to hide their identity (Quoted by Oga 1991: 77).

This comment suggests that the passive attitude taken by the Buraku people may negatively affect progress in the Buraku issue.

Most Buraku scholars and leaders assert that this passive attitude perpetuates denial, or the notion that discrimination against the Buraku does not exist. They also state that it has promoted anti-Buraku thinking like the fade-away and yugo (assimilation) theories, which argue that if left alone, issues surrounding the Buraku will go away. These theories further encourage the Buraku people to hide their identity and discourage the Japanese government and people from confronting the Buraku issue. Because discrimination against the Buraku people continues to exist in the present society, this passive approach does not appear to work.

---

1 In order to avoid the confusion between the frequently used terms: Buraku and non-Buraku, I have italicized the term, non-Buraku in this thesis.
Since 1955, the Buraku Liberation League (BLL) has fought for equal rights and government assistance on behalf of the Buraku and other minority groups. With branches throughout Japan and a research institute in Osaka, the BLL is currently re-examining its strategy for the future Buraku liberation movement. In the past, Buraku scholars have concentrated on ideological inquiry mainly understanding the psychological aspects of Buraku discrimination (Kawamoto 1985: 35-41). In the 1990s, many Buraku scholars started to examine the historical formation of the Buraku in order to understand the root cause and to develop workable theories for Buraku liberation. According to Harris’ theory, in order to understand a culture or a cultural problem, understanding the origin of the issue through a historical-economic inquiry is necessary (1964: 55-56).

Recently, some scholars argue that the motivation behind examining Buraku history has been leaning too much towards serving the Buraku liberation movement. They assert that it is time for researchers to distance themselves from the movement in order to study the history of the Buraku as a scientific inquiry (Fujino 1998: 95; Watanabe 1998: 33, 49). Despite this debate, the historical inquiry can provide valuable evidence that would reduce prejudice and correct misconceptions. For instance, the misconception that the Buraku people are biologically different from the Japanese can be easily corrected by the historical observation which traces the origin of the Buraku to special status people who were Japanese. Although it is essential to cover the historical or historical-economic observation of the Buraku, ideological elements of the Buraku issue cannot be ignored. Both the historical-economic and ideological observations of the Buraku are important in achieving a better understanding of the Buraku; therefore, this thesis will attempt to inquire into both of these domains with respect to the Buraku issue.

1.2 Theoretical Development

1.2.1 Ideological and Historical-Economic Domains

The task of anthropology is to understand the important dimensions of human existence. These dimensions are categorized into the two essential parts of being human:
the maintenance of human life and the maintenance of human identity (Lett 1987: 153). Consequently, understanding a socio-cultural issue requires an investigation into (1) the historical-economic domain associated with the maintenance of human life, and (2) the ideological domain associated with the maintenance of human identity. A holistic anthropological approach examines both dimensions of a socio-cultural phenomenon.

A study of the historical-economic domain focuses on how basic needs such as food and shelter are acquired to sustain human life and also how humans develop economic and political systems to maintain their lives over time. It is essential to examine life-sustaining dynamics chronologically to discover the origins of a socio-cultural phenomenon and the economic and political systems which shape the phenomenon. A study of the ideological domain examines collective thoughts and actions that reinforce a socio-cultural phenomenon. For instance, a dominant ideology such as the belief in homogeneity pervades Japanese society, affecting the Buraku issue. Ideology involves socio-cultural, political, religious, and other beliefs. Examination of the historical-economic domain may shed light on how a cultural problem came into being, while the ideological domain may explain how it is maintained over time. Thus, elements of both the historical-economic and ideological domains interact to shape a culture or a cultural problem.

A culture or a cultural problem is shaped first by historical-economic element(s). As a society becomes more civilized and complex, ideological element(s) interact with the historical-economic element(s) and play a significant role in shaping the socio-cultural phenomenon. A historical examination of the Buraku issue supports this theory. The origin of the Buraku people is closely related to that of special status people in the ancient and medieval periods who were descendants of former slaves. Because the development of agriculture supported the ancient slave system, the origin of the Buraku people seems to be determined by a historical-economic element: agricultural production to maintain human life. However, the Buraku people and the continued discrimination against them seem to be facilitated by the interaction between historical-economic elements (class system, capitalism) and ideological elements (the maintenance of the ruling class, religious beliefs).
The approach, which inquires into both historical-economic and ideological domains, covers both the human-life dimension by examining economic elements and historical backgrounds, and the human identity dimension by examining ideological elements. Studies that concentrate on historical-economic elements help to correct misconceptions of the Buraku by providing historical evidence of its development throughout Japanese history. Studies that focus more on ideologies would aim at determining the socio-cultural elements responsible for the current discrimination against the Buraku. Accordingly, looking at both ideological and historical-economic elements may provide a deeper understanding of an issue, which can lead to potential solutions. In order to accurately analyze the data through historical-economic and ideological observations, another theoretical inquiry examines an approach which looks into both particular and general elements in a culture.

1.2.2 Pluralism

In the past, many anthropologists, as well as some sociologists, advocated the particularist approach to study different societies and cultures, while de-emphasizing the generalist approach. The particularist approach focuses on unique elements of a particular society or culture, while the generalist approach concentrates on similarities between different societies and cultures. In *Homo Hierarchicus*, an examination of the Indian caste system, Dumont criticizes the generalist approach because it imposes a Western-bias in interpreting another society or culture. He advocates the particularist approach in which researchers immerse themselves in an indigenous society or culture (Dumont 1966: 3). His study, therefore, focuses on unique elements in the Indian caste system and separates Indian culture from western culture.

Based on the particularist approach, Dumont concludes that the caste system in India is an integral part of Indian society and that the Indian people, including the untouchables, accept it. However, because he seems to fail to consider key universal elements, there are theoretical blind spots in Dumont’s research. In general, oppressed people do not willingly accept a system that perpetuates differential, power-influenced
relationships in society. Yet, this concept is central to Dumont's interpretation of the Indian caste system, failing to see the caste system from the untouchables' perspectives. The untouchables accept the caste system not because they want to but because they have to (Deliège 1992: 169-172). Focusing too much on the particular elements may have caused Dumont to overlook this important point. His failure to examine the native point of view demonstrates some of the pitfalls associated with the particularist approach.

Although the discussion has focused on Dumont and the particularist approach, the purpose is not to criticize, but rather, point out the risk of theoretical blindness by adopting the particularist approach. Many social scientists have re-examined both the particularist and generalist approach in order to develop a new approach. In fact, a fundamental and profound theoretical question in the field of anthropology is whether anthropologists should be particularists, generalists, or both (Moeran 1990: 12-13). Over the past few decades, this theoretical debate has involved Japanese anthropologists as they sought a more precise interpretation of Japanese society. After recognizing that the Japanese may have created their own particularities and defined Japaneseness, past approaches appear to have overemphasized "particular" elements and failed to examine Japan from a more generalist approach (Dale 1986; McCormack 1996: 1-12; Moeran 1990: 1-13; Murphy-Shigematsu 1993: 75; Weiner 1997: 1-14). A new approach that has been gaining favor with many anthropologists is called pluralism, which integrates the particularist and generalist approaches (Moeran 1990: 12-13).

The next important inquiry is how we can apply the pluralist approach to socio-cultural phenomena such as the Buraku issue. Minority issues have been formed by a unique historical process of exclusion and oppression and also influenced by particular socio-cultural and biological elements (Murphy-Shigematsu 1993: 64). Weiner states that the historical experience of minorities in each society tends to be "country-specific" (1997: xii). Nevertheless, such scholars are not ignoring the fact that there are continuities and similarities among all minority issues (Murphy-Shigematsu 1993: 75; Weiner 1997: xii). The pluralist approach, therefore, may be able to provide useful tools in the analysis of minority issues. General comparisons may make us realize the
fundamental aspects of minority issues, while the particulars of each minority issue may lead us to the proper approaches toward a solution.

Okuda suggests that this holistic approach should be the Buraku liberation movement's next step:

None of the problems facing Buraku people are exclusive to them. The movement must distinguish between the universal and specific elements in each issue area, then the movement can work with other social movement groups to create a comprehensive solution to that particular problem (Ian Neary 1997: 74).

In this way, the BLL can become a catalyst to induce rapid social change for the betterment of the Buraku people. For instance, denying the existence of discrimination against minority groups is not a Japanese-specific phenomenon. As many scholars in the United States point out, denial also occurs with minority issues in their country (Coleman 1997: 27, 87; Cose 1997: 83-84, 179; Moraga 1992: 20-27; Russell 1992: 86). This common feature between two different societies may provide strong reason to confront the dominant ideology of denial, although the approach taken will differ with each society. One of the goals of this thesis is to explore the universal elements in the Buraku issue through comparative analysis with minority issues in the United States. Hopefully, the findings will lead to constructing practical approaches for improving the current status of the Buraku people.

1.3 Goals and Prospects

Many people have asked me: "Why did you choose to study the Buraku issue, and why are you conducting your studies based out of the United States instead of Japan?" As explained previously, the notion that Japan is homogeneous creates a blind spot in the minds of the Japanese people, including myself. Distancing myself from Japanese culture and society may provide me with more objectivity. Objectivity combined with anthropological perspectives (an approach to socio-cultural issues using both native and
scientific points of view) provides an excellent tool to explore socio-cultural elements which may otherwise fall into a blind spot.

Because the Buraku issue is connected to Japanese history and culture, examining how Buraku discrimination has been established and reinforced throughout history allows us to understand Japanese thoughts and actions regarding discrimination. Japanese society has to accept and confront the fact that discrimination against its own race occurs. Until then, there cannot be a true understanding or improvement of minority issues in Japan. Furthermore, without a full understanding of the Buraku and other minority issues, the Japanese will not be able to achieve human rights awareness that will allow them to understand cultural and racial issues in other countries.

Social scientists study individuals in groups in order to reveal the social structures shaping collective experiences, and correspondingly, they study social institutions, which strongly impact our everyday lives (Andersen and Collins 1992: 5, 174). Considering this sociological premise and the interaction between the two forms of Buraku discrimination (institutional vs. individual), the main focus of this thesis is to examine how institutional elements have influenced individual elements and vice versa. In order to do so, I attempted to determine how the Buraku people view themselves and the Buraku issue in relationship to non-Buraku people, and also how non-Buraku people perceive the Buraku issue in relationship to themselves through the interpretive approach.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definitions and Concepts

Discrimination against the Buraku people is at the center of the Buraku issue. In the study of social issues involving differential, power-influenced relationships, the word discrimination not only signifies “distinction” but also “exclusion” and “oppression” as well (Doob 1993: 1-12; Rothenberg 1992: 5-16). This section will clarify and define key terms and concepts associated with discrimination, and address the definition and theoretical aspects of race and racism.

2.1.1 Minorities, Prejudice and Discrimination

A minority refers to a group of people who are excluded from mainstream society because they are considered physically or culturally different. As a result, they are restricted socially, politically, and economically in terms of power and influence (Ponterotto and Pedersen 1993: 7-8). In the United States, the definition of a minority often focuses on race or ethnicity, although the term can include gender, class, race, or other elements. In contrast, the majority refers to a group of people which holds “the balance of power, influence, and wealth in a society” (Ponterotto and Pedersen 1993: 8-9).

Prejudice is a highly negative judgment toward a minority group, comprised of real or alleged assumptions that are shared by members of society, especially the majority group. A person who firmly believes that all members of a racial or ethnic group are intrinsically lazy, stupid, or violent is considered to be prejudiced toward that group (Doob 1993: 3-4). Doob distinguishes misconception from prejudice by stating that prejudice is not easily reversible whereas those who have misconceptions are willing to change their opinion when facts are provided (1993: 4).
Prejudiced individual attitudes and behaviors are considered to be the most familiar form of discrimination (Rothenberg 1992: 6). This type of discrimination, called *individual discrimination*, occurs in actual or face-to-face situations (Lott and Maluso 1995: 4; Rothenberg 1992: 10-11). Allport (1954) describes individual discrimination as a continuum of behaviors, ranging “from passive avoidance through active exclusion, derogatory stories and comments, unfair treatment and evaluation, to physical attacks and even murder” (Lott and Maluso 1995: xi-xii). Individual discrimination can be innocently unintentional at one extreme, while at the other extreme, it can consist of open, intentional discriminatory practices by prejudiced individuals (Rothenberg 1992: 10). Another type of discrimination is called *institutional discrimination*. It refers to the accepted practice of exclusion within religion, employment, education, politics and other social institutions (Lott and Maluso 1995: 3). Institutional discrimination limits minority group access to scarce political, economic, and social resources (Doob 1993: 3).

Individual and institutional discrimination interact to strengthen each other (Lott and Maluso 1995: 4). Rothenberg defines this as the process of discrimination, and points out that fundamental to the process of discrimination is to reinforce and reconstruct differences (1992: 6-15). The following quotation clarifies how and why these “differences” are reinforced and reconstructed in society:

> While the people, places, and things that make up our physical environment differ in a multitude of ways, only some of these differences are emphasized, treated as significant, and then employed by our society to justify and perpetuate inequality (Rothenberg 1992: 6).

These differences are race/ethnicity, class, gender, and the like, which have been a convenient excuse to rationalize the hierarchical system of society and the unequal distribution of wealth and opportunity (Andersen and Collins 1992: 50; Doob 1993: 4; Rothenberg 1992: 6-8).
2.1.2 Race

Race is considered one of the fundamental elements that fosters discrimination against racial/ethnic minorities by the majority group. The question, “What is race?” has been asked by many scholars. Not until the seventeenth century with the exploration and colonization of the New World, did the ideologies associated with race develop in western civilization (Smedley 1999: 690-695). While the western people considered themselves civilized, they regarded indigenous people, who looked different from themselves, as peripheral or barbaric. This conceptualization evolved into a categorization of humans called race to differentiate the superior race (western people) chosen by God from inferior races (indigenous people) (Rothenberg 1992: 27-28). Race or racial categorization was emphasized and used to rationalize the exploitation of the indigenous people (Smedley 1999: 690-695). Even now, race is still used in the same way as in the colonial days, and remains a social element which can evoke strong emotions (Coleman 1997: in Prologue).

Many geneticists as well as physical anthropologists recognize that all racial/ethnic groups share mixed gene pools; therefore, there is no valid scientific foundation for race or racial classification (Cose 1997: 22; Haizlip 1995: 48; Rothenberg 1992: 27). Accordingly, the assumption that race is a social-historical-political concept rather than a biological-genetic concept is now widely accepted among many social scientists (Andersen and Collins 1992: 50; Cose 1997: 11; Coleman 1997: in Prologue; Smedley 1999: 694-695). Yet, race continues to be used to classify people into categories based on biological traits (Doob 1993: 5), and modified according to social, economic, and political forces in mainstream society (Rothenberg 1992: 29). Precisely, the function of race is to justify and perpetuate “racism,” which maintains the differential power relationship between the majority group and racial minorities in society (Doob 1993: 4-7).

Are the Buraku a race? While De Vos and Wagatsuma refer to the Buraku people as an invisible race (1966), other scholars consider the Buraku to be an ethnic group. Race focuses more on the biological or genetic classification whereas ethnicity focuses on the socio-cultural heritage. Nevertheless, as discussed above, the concept of race involves both physiological and socio-cultural characteristics, either real or imagined.
(Weiner 1997: xi). This thesis, instead of differentiating race from ethnicity, simply assumes that race or racism includes both racial and ethnic entities. Since the Buraku have historical, social, and political origins (Shimahara 1971: 18), they are a racial/ethnic group, and discrimination against the Buraku is considered racism.

2.1.3 Racism

The definition of racism is:

...the transformation of race prejudice and/or ethnocentrism through the exercise of power against a racial group defined as inferior, by individuals and institutions with the intentional or unintentional support of the entire culture (Jones 1981: 28).

Most social scientists agree that racism involves the power relationship between different racial/ethnic groups, resulting in the superiority of one group (Andersen and Collins 1992: 1-5; Doob 1993: 4-12; Rothenberg 1992: 7; Steinem 1992: 308; Yamato 1992: 66). Like discrimination, racism also has two forms: individual racism and institutional racism. Individual racism consists of discriminatory actions conducted by a racially prejudiced individual or small group. Institutional racism is the pervasion of racial-based discriminatory practices in the political, economic, and educational systems (Doob 1993: 6; Ponterotto and Pedersen 1993: 11-13; Yamato 1992: 67-68). Over time, this institutional racism evolves in order to fit itself into newer social conditions, and continues to influence individuals' lives. This internalized aspect of racism suggests that racism is not simply a psychological issue but an issue that involves the whole society (Andersen and Collins 1992: 49).

Doob introduces prominent sociological theories analyzing racism based on racial or minority issues in the United States (1993). Most racism theories analyze either the micro level (Table 1) or the macro level (Table 2). The micro-level theories examine the structure and activities of small groups; on the other hand, the macro-level theories analyze social structures (Doob 1993: 15).
§ Allport’s Social-Psychological Theory of Prejudice

This theory proposes that children in the United States learn racial prejudice in a three-stage process:

1) The pre-generalized learning stage (around six years old)
Although children accept racial prejudice expressed by adults and older children, they are not able to fully understand the racist thought.

2) The total rejection stage (around six to fourteen years old)
Parents expect the child to obey their orders which incorporates racial prejudice and discriminatory actions. By parental orders, the child vigorously rejects all members of the racial/ethnic group in question.

3) The differentiation stage (around fifteen years old)
Once the child becomes sophisticated and educated enough, racism can be masked by an outward concern for racial minorities. For example, the statement, “some of my best friends are Puerto Rican,” may express a genuine sentiment or may serve to convince others that the speaker is not prejudiced when indeed he/she is.

(Allport 1954; Doob 1993: 27-28)

§ Frustration-Aggression Theory

This theory emphasizes the displacement of aggression from the real source of frustration to an accessible substitute or “scapegoat.” There are three conditions which facilitate a racial/ethnic group to be a scapegoat:

1) The group is easy to identify.
2) The group holds lower social status; therefore, they are too weak to retaliate.
3) The group is physically accessible.

(Simpson and Yinger 1972: 66-69; Doob 1993: 28-29)

Table 1 Micro-Level Theories of Racism
Conflict Theories

Conflict theories focus on wealth and power inequalities. For example, minorities have restricted access to scarce economic, political, and social resources.

Caste Theory

This theory is also called the caste analysis of racism. The definition of a caste system is “a socially legitimate arrangement of groups in which the ranking of the different groups is clearly designated, members’ expected behavior is specified, and movement of individuals from one group to another is prohibited.”

Essential elements to maintain a caste system are:
1) Social ranking: Justification of the inferiority of a group with less social power
2) Rituals of subordination: spatial separation, deferential behavior
3) Endogamy

Three principle advantages of the dominant group are:
1) Economic benefits: the dominant group obtains benefits by exploiting lower status groups.
2) Sexual gain: men in the dominant group have easy sexual access to minority women.
3) Prestige gain: a dominant group enhances their self-esteem by looking down upon a subordinate group.

Internal Colonialism

Internal colonialism focuses on control and exploitation by the majority group. This theory contends that racial/ethnic minorities face extreme political, economic, and social discrimination like indigenous people in colonial lands.

Four conditions of internal colonialism are:
1) Controlled governance
   The dominant group controls the decision-making processes that determine major outcomes in the lives of the minority.
2) Restricted movement
   The minority group loses the freedom to chose where to live.
3) Colonial-labor principle
   A minority group must serve the interests and needs of the dominant group.
4) Superiority of the majority
   The majority group believes that a minority group’s culture and social organization are inferior.

(Doob 1993: 10-12, 20-23)

Table 2 Macro-Level Theories of Racism
Concerning Allport’s social-psychological theory of prejudice, recent studies show that young adults appear to resist prejudice imposed on either their own racial group or other groups better than young children (Aboud 1988; Spencer and Markstrom-Adams 1990; Doob 1993: 28). The current status of the frustration-aggression theory has been modified to include another point: when persons in the majority group fail unexpectedly, they are more likely to direct their aggression towards minority groups (Doob 1993: 29).

As for internal colonialism, it has been criticized for three theoretical shortcomings: (1) the accuracy of the analogy between actual colonialism and internal colonialism, (2) indefiniteness of pointing out who actually benefits from the exploitation of racial minorities (Feagin 1989: 37-38; Doob 1993: 26), and (3) underestimation of the ability of minorities to determine their own destiny (Doob 1993: 26). While internal colonialism has some theoretical shortcomings which need further refinement, Doob states that the perspectives from this theory are not only effective but also indispensable in studying racism (1993: 26-27).

2.2 Current Racial/Minority Issues in The United States

This section will address current issues surrounding racial/ethnic minorities in the United States. It focuses on the obstacles which minorities have been facing and the slow progress in achieving racial/ethnic equality. Also, some new approaches proposed and implemented by various social scientists are described.

2.2.1 Racial Hypocrisy

According to the dominant ideology, American society is open and competitive, a place where an individual’s talent and motivation, not inherited position, brings success (Mantsios 1992: 104; Mickelson and Smith 1992: 359-360). Cose calls this misconception among Americans the “myth of meritocracy” (1997). Under its influence, the white majority does not consider themselves racist, blaming other factors (e.g. social
policies) for maintaining inequalities against racial minorities (Cose 1997: 103).
Although the majority of white Americans claim that they are egalitarians, their
egalitarianism is based on the premise that racial/ethnic minorities should be “more like
us” (Coleman 1997: 31; Russell 1992: 82-87). In other words, the majority group
considers everybody as equal; however, at the same time, they still hold feelings of
superiority in that minorities should be more like them (Coleman 1997: 309, 322-323).
This phenomenon among the white majority is called racial hypocrisy (Cose 1997: xiv).

Stemming from the belief in egalitarianism, privileged people are the last to
recognize the system of privilege and inequality, the harsh realities of racial/minority
issues, and racial hypocrisy (Blauner 1992: 54-62; Bonacich 1992: 96-109). Currently,
the communication gap between the majority (whites) and minorities (mainly blacks) and
the discrepancies in opinion between both parties have increased. While minorities
recognize that there is racism, whites cannot see it as racism (Cose 1997: 191). Fifty-six
percent of whites believe that blacks have a lower standard of living and education largely
due to failed government policies and something about being black whereas blacks would
attribute their lower standard of living to institutional discrimination (Yamato 1992: 69).
By creating such discrepancies between the majority and the minorities, the racial
hypocrisy has promoted not only a rationalization of racism but also a new breed of
racism.

There are four forms of racism: (1) aware/blatant, (2) aware/covert, (3)
unaware/unintentional, and (4) unaware/self-righteous (Yamato 1992: 66). The later two
are currently the most common forms and are more subtle and difficult to confront (Cose
1997: xiv; Russell 1992: 83). These forms stems from racial hypocrisy and can be
described as follows:

With the best of intentions, the best of educations, and the greatest
generosity of heart, whites, operating on the misinformation fed to them
from day one, will behave in ways that are racist, will perpetuate racism
by being “nice” the way we’re taught to be nice (Yamato 1992: 67).

Dovidio proposes that subtle discrimination by people who do not believe they are
racially prejudiced has been replacing blatant forms of racism. Dovidio calls this
unintentional and unconscious discrimination "aversive racism." He emphasizes that discrimination occurs mostly in situations where it can be rationalized on the basis of something other than prejudice (Cose 1997: 190).

2.2.2 Blaming The Victim

Doob describes four conditions of internal colonialism which contribute to the development of racism in society. One of them is the belief that the minority culture and social organization is inferior (Doob 1993: 10-12). This notion may have led to the belief in the intellectual inferiority of minorities (Cose 1997: 32-33, 64; Ryan 1992: 365-366). *The Bell Curve* by Herrnstein and Murray contends that blacks are genetically less intelligent than whites. Many scholars including geneticists disagree with this conclusion on three points: (1) race is not solely genetically based, (2) intelligence is extremely malleable, and (3) the research method used by Herrnstein and Murray overlooks such variables as lack of parental assistance or financial resource (Coleman 1997: 182; Cose 1997: 32-33, 44). Publications like *The Bell Curve* provide a scientific basis not only to question the intelligence of minority groups but also to justify racism and maintain inequality in the society (Cose 1997: 32-33, 64-69).

The pseudo-genetic concept of minority inferiority not only degrades minorities but also serves to blame them for their problems (Rothenberg 1992: 320-324). Believing that minorities are inferior, the majority group assumes that discrimination is a result of something that minorities lack (Cose 1997: 184). Victim-blaming can be wrapped in kindness and concern, which obscures racism through humanitarianism. Furthermore, the majority group has tried to find any possible scientific evidence that justifies victim-blaming, or in other words, minority inferiority. Consequently, victim-blaming is a means to rationalize racism (Ryan 1992: 365).

The worst outcome of victim-blaming is that the minorities start to believe they are inferior and consequently accept incorrect stereotypes of their race/ethnicity (Coleman 1997: 27; Cose 1997: 42-45). In this case of self-fulfilling stereotype, the minorities themselves reinforce the assumption regarding their race, and support the victim-blaming
actions of the majority group (Cose 1997: 42-45; Doob 1993: 7; Snyder 1992: 325-331). Victim-blaming and self-fulfilling stereotypes shatter many minorities’ self-esteem and lead to self-hatred (Coleman 1997: 234). Most people who have succeeded in their lives had somebody, somewhere, who recognized their potential and encouraged them in some way. In reality, many minorities suffer low self-esteem not only because of victim-blaming and self-perpetuating stereotypes but also because of the absence of such a person in their lives (Coleman 1997: 353-355).

2.2.3 Racism and Classism

In the United States, class stratification (classism) is a function of capitalism, which:

... is based on private rather than public ownership and control of commercial enterprises and on the class division between those who own and control and those who do not. Under capitalism, these enterprises are governed by the need to produce a profit for the owners, rather than to fulfill collective needs (Mantsios 1992: 107).

The infrastructure of capitalism maintains a system of inequality, because capitalism requires class stratification or a socio-economic gap in order to prosper (Bonacich 1992: 103-107; Parenti 1994: 98). It is in the best interest of a capitalist society to maintain racism so that racial minorities can provide an exploitable, cheap labor force (BLC 1990: 95-96). The historical evolution of capitalism has developed in conjunction with racial inequality to where some claim that the western colonists rationalized the exploitation of the indigenous people, believing that colonization would help civilize the natives. This racial domination by the colonists allowed western countries to accumulate the initial capital to launch its own industrialization. Capitalism has fed on racism; therefore, many scientists assume that it is impossible to eliminate racism under capitalism (Bonacich 1992: 103-104).

Currently, the growth of the minority middle class is used to verify that American society gives equal opportunities to minorities (Bonacich 1992: 107; Cose 1997: 120).
Under such conditions, class has become a substantial mitigating factor that detracts from the racial issue (Cose 1997: 194). William J. Wilson’s *The Declining Significance of Race* is a prominent work which supports replacing race/ethnicity with socio-economic class to analyze the unequal distribution of income and wealth in the society (Blauner 1992: 61; Coleman 1997: 163; Cose 1997: 124; Doob 1993: 8-9). Also, other prominent social theorists, such as Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber, believe that the importance of ethnicity and race would fade as capitalism progressed into socialism, the final stage of an economic system. Modern Marxist theorists assume that racial inequality can be eradicated by eliminating all economic necessities for maintaining racism (Doob 1993: 8, 24-25). Accordingly, these theorists perceive class as a influential determinant of social inequality and dismiss the effectiveness of race.

The theoretical view which argues class over race has been largely criticized since it ignores the fact that non-economic factors, such as ideologies, also produce and reinforce racism (Doob 1993: 25). Besides, it is assumed that people support the idea of replacing race with class neglect to see the painful reality where most minorities are still suffering the consequences of exclusion from the mainstream society (Cose 1997: 120-121). It might be difficult for many whites to believe that race is still playing a significant role in maintaining social inequality while watching prominent minority figures, such as basketball star Michael Jordan, who are better off than they are (Coleman 1997: 165-166). However, race does play important roles in keeping minorities from achieving equality (Bonacich 1992: 106; Cose 1997: 222).

In fact, many scholars assert that the growth of the minority middle class does not negate the racial inequality that persists in the United States. The minority middle class is still unstable and fragile. The white middle class can sustain financial stability and security through both current income and assets such as heritage and bonds. In contrast, the economic foundation of the minority middle class is not based on assets but based merely on current earnings. Due to heavily depending on the current earnings, financial stability of the minority middle class can be more easily and severely damaged by negative changes in life (e.g. job layoff) than their white counterparts. Thus, it is too
early to conclude that race is less significant than class just based on the growth of the minority middle class (Cose 1997: 222).

Racial inequality has inextricably interacted with overall inequality and with dominant ideologies that support and justify widespread inequality (Bonacich 1992: 98). Therefore, race is still a significant factor in maintaining social inequality (Blauner 1992: 62; Doob 1993: 19). Yet, it is true that racism is partly a class issue. It is widely accepted that capitalism has significantly contributed to maintaining racism. Many scholars agree with the view that race and class\(^2\) are interrelated and intertwined to produce and maintain the unequal distribution of wealth and income (Andersen and Collins 1992: 2, 4; Coleman 1997: 378, 380; Eitzen and Zinn 1992: 181; McIntosh 1992: 73; Mantsios 1992: 107).

### 2.2.4 Racial Denial

Another prominent obstacle to the improvement of minority issues is denying the existence of the issues or racial denial. The dominant ideology, the belief in egalitarianism, makes people believe that they are living in a humanitarian society where equality prevails; therefore, race is a subject that is "either spoken of reluctantly or not spoken of at all" (Coleman 1997: in Prologue). Because the belief in egalitarianism has created a strong aversion to being considered a racist, many whites feel uncomfortable talking about racial issues, avoid racial topics, and at worst, deny the issues (Cose 1997: 83). Schofield explains how the fear of being called a racist affects the field of teaching:

> Teachers were so afraid of being thought to be prejudiced. They refused to see racial issues even when these issue were conspicuously relevant (Cose 1997: 188).

Avoidance of racially sensitive issues distorts facts associated with racial/ethnic minorities. For example, teachers may neglect to mention slavery or the fact that George Washington Carver was black when explaining how he was a great American. Under

\(^2\) Many scholars include gender in addition to race and class.
such conditions, the historical contributions and accomplishments of black Americans are neither introduced nor highlighted (Cose 1997: 189). School curricula as well as teachers that focus too much on the contributions of European-Americans not only deny the existence of minority achievements but also deprive minority children of a sense of self-esteem (Coleman 1997: 27, 78; Madrid 1992: 6-11).

Also contributing to racial denial is “racial fatigue.” Racial fatigue is manifested as whites tired of feeling guilty and responsible for racial inequality (Coleman 1997: 35-36, 44-45). Minorities are affected by racial fatigue, as well, but in a different way. Among minorities, racial fatigue mostly affects the minority middle class which no longer views race as a significant factor determining their fate. These minorities feel a deep weariness with racial issues and do not advocate using race as an excuse for one’s lack of success (Coleman 1997: 36). Racial fatigue among both whites and the minority middle class promotes victim-blaming and contributes to dismissing the significance of race in social inequality. This results in fostering racial denial in the society.

Racial denial has been further reinforced by the unexpected and unfortunate outcome of affirmative action (described in more detail in the next section). Affirmative action has made great strides in minority admission and hiring; however, it also has made people hold tightly to the illusion of a color-blind society where racial issues no longer exist. Although true color-blindness represents an ideal condition, the current reality in the United States is that color-blindness is a condition of social denial regarding minority issues (Cose 1997: 179-182). Color-blindness nurtures a racially hypocritical environment where unintentional and unconscious discriminatory conduct by self-righteous racists are subject to occur (Cose 1997: 190). Promoting racial denial in the society, color-blindness reinforces racism which leads, at worst, to hate crimes and riots.

The principle of solving any problem is acknowledging the problem in question (Coleman 1997: 187). Accordingly, many scholars dealing with racial issues have pointed out that racism does exist and that racial denial is not an acceptable way of dealing with racism. These scholars have focused their studies on opening communications between the majority and minorities so that people can become more aware of racial issues and confront racism instead of denying it (Lott and Maluso 1995: 1-
9). The minority struggle against racism is first a campaign to eliminate denial. Only then can the real issues be addressed (Russell 1992: 82).

2.2.5 Affirmative Action

In the sixties and seventies, people recognized the existence of discrimination against minorities and the responsibility to deal with the social inequality. The civil rights movement in the 1960s has eliminated most overt discrimination, and social policies achieved by the movement have improved the standard of living and education among minority groups. One policy resulting from the civil rights movement is affirmative action, a temporary measure that considers factors such as gender, race and ethnicity as qualifiers for special preference to achieve equality in school admission and employment (Yokota 1991: 3). Through affirmative action, the number of minority students in college has increased dramatically. Also, many minorities have been hired for challenging positions that were not open to them in the past. Despite these achievements, affirmative action has created some unexpected problems in U.S. society.

Affirmative action has created doubts about the academic ability of minority students and the general qualification of minority workers (Cose 1997: 95). Those who doubt assume qualified white candidates must compete with incompetent minority candidates, which creates an unfair stereotype that minorities lack ability. As a result, minority can fill positions in accordance with affirmative action guidelines; however, they may only be allowed to succeed to a certain point as tokens of a color-blind society (Coleman 1997: 291). Called camouflage hiring of minorities in the workplace, such actions by an employer obviously diminish the credibility of affirmative action (Cose 1997: 158). Whites may then think minorities were hired or admitted simply because they happen to be minorities, and this would strengthen allegations of reverse discrimination (Coleman 1997: 54; Cose 1997: 79).

Preferential treatment of minorities under affirmative action has led to the belief that being a minority in the United States has substantial legal, educational, or financial advantage over being white (Cose 1997: 180). Many white applicants believe they are
turned away because of affirmative action, and some have even sued institutions or corporations for reverse discrimination. However, whites who seem to be most affected by affirmative action are not necessarily the most qualified applicants. These whites are usually on the borderline of selection by schools and corporations. In 1994, approximately five thousand white would-be firefighters in Los Angeles protested after being told they could not take the required examination. Although affirmative action reserved a certain number of positions for qualified minority candidates, only a few positions were available to begin with and a limited number of examinations were administered (Cose 1997: 105). Notably, those who protested were already considered out of the running by the L.A. Fire Department. Yet, many whites focus on the unfairness of affirmative action when in reality there is a more qualified candidate, whether it is a minority or another white applicant.

Detractors of affirmative action presuppose that because America is a land of meritocracy and egalitarianism, affirmative action is not needed. To their color-blind eyes, minorities enjoy the same equal opportunities in housing, education, and employment as whites; therefore, all racial issues are behind us (Coleman 1997: 36; Cose 1997: 181-183). The color-blind concept allows people to ignore the harsh reality which minorities have been facing. The truth is that the United States is an extremely unequal society where ability as well as character do not necessarily translate into success (Bonacich 1992: 96-109; Cose 1997: 174; Mantios 1992: 96-108; NCPE 1992: 129-139). In 1996, regents of the University of California and other state officers were opposed to affirmative action for women and minorities. Although some regents claimed to be in favor of abolishing university admission preferences, they shamelessly used their power and influence to get relatives and children of friends admitted to the University of California at Los Angeles. As a result, more qualified applicants were turned away (Cose 1997: 132-133). In general, society tends to accept preferential treatment of power and position (e.g. alumni and athletes); however, they resist preferential treatment based on race and gender. Without being aware of their inconsistencies, people can criticize affirmative action and favor its abolishment (Cose 1997: 121-126).
Affirmative action has been singled out as an example of a failed policy, which has led to questions regarding the utility of such policies in present U.S. society (Cose 1997: 174). Some people criticize affirmative action as just another form of discrimination to remedy the inequalities caused by discrimination. Others criticize affirmative action because it tends to benefit middle class minorities, overlooking those who could really use the help (Cose 1997: 100-101). However, affirmative action is neither a societal cure-all nor a poverty program. According to Cose, affirmative action is "an often-justifiable, limited, and seriously flawed method of dealing with a set of problems that really require a much better solution" (1997: 98). It is impossible to enforce a policy like affirmative action without creating feelings of reverse discrimination among the majority: however, society has not come up with a better alternative (Cose 1997: 178). The key point of affirmative action in the United States is to figure out how much of it should remain (Cose 1997: 173).

2.3 Current Approaches

The numerous obstacles that hinder minority issues in the United States have been described. In trying to overcome these obstacles, many people, including social scientists, continue to search for better approaches. This section introduces some current concepts and approaches to combat racism.

2.3.1 Currently Applied Approaches

Many universities in the United States are making efforts to increase the interaction between minority and white students, which can lead to a better understanding of each other. For instance, the University of California at Berkeley requires all undergraduate students to take at least one course that provides information on the contribution of different racial or ethnic groups (Cose 1997: 91). The curriculum provides minorities and whites with an opportunity to discuss racial topics in a setting
conducive to productive communication. Racial issues can be very sensitive and intimidating, so it is essential to create situations where people feel comfortable enough to say what they honestly think. These exchanges have to be more sophisticated than “the typical town hall meeting in which people of different race come together and either proclaim their love for all humanity or shout at one another” (Cose 1997: 216). Just teaching people that “racism is bad” or “let’s just love one another” does not fully encompass the situation at hand. Instead of being a solution, it is more of a resignation not to deal with a problem (Cose 1997: 230).

Because it is not possible nor practical to simply ask people not to be prejudiced, one of the best ways to reduce prejudice may lie in an indirect approach. Providing an environment in which minorities and non-minorities work together to accomplish a task allows mixed-race teams to obtain hands-on experience in interracial cooperation without discussing racial topics (Cose 1997: 217). Also, people have a tendency to value members of their own groups; therefore, within teams that include people of different races, people see their group as homogeneous compared to other interracial groups. Dovidio states:

> If they are competing against another group, the salient category is not black versus white, but it’s “we” versus “they.” Athletic teams often have very positive race relations because the categories there are not black and white, but there’s a team: our team against another team (Cose 1997: 226).

When race is used to categorize people, other factors lose importance, and racism results. However, when the focus is on teamwork, race becomes much less important. People of different race who work together as a group more warmly accept each other than they did when the group was first formed. These participants start to share the same perspective by being on the same team (Dovidio Quoted by Cose 1997: 226). Thus, positive experiences with minority individuals help people maintain a good relationship with them (Coleman 1997: 245).
2.3.2 Theoretical Approaches

Government can play a significant role in the redistribution of income and wealth so that overall equality can be achieved; however, in reality, government has failed in this respect (Coleman 1997: 245; Mantsios 1992: 105). Although laws may exist to enforce equality, having such laws does not mean that the real world is equal (Coleman 1997: 78). In dealing with inequality and racism, education has been assumed to be a key element (Case et al. 1989: 469-482). Restructuring the educational system may diminish the prejudice rooted deeply in the human mind, but without the correct foundation on which to base this restructuring, social inequalities such as racism continue to thrive (Mickelson and Smith 1992: 360, 369; Snyder 1992: 325). Some scholars emphasize that without changes in the capitalist economy, legislative and educational reform cannot do much for eradicating racism because capitalism itself precludes equality (Bonacich 1992: 103; Doob 1993: 24-25; Mickelson and Smith 1992: 369).

Most scholars agree that reform in one area is not sufficient and that racism has to be approached from multiple angles and by multiple methods (Coleman 1997: 297; Frye 1992: 56; Yamato 1992: 66). To successfully apply the multiple approach, mutual effort and responsibility are required. Nobody can justify indifference, claiming that racism has nothing to do with them because they have not discriminated against any racial minorities. After all, racial issues involve all Americans and their lives (Coleman 1997: 298). One approach to achieve a mutual effort is “thinking inclusively” which consists of putting the experiences of those who have been excluded at the center of thought in order to achieve a better understanding of the minority experience (Andersen and Collins 1992: 2). Although it might be quite difficult, seeing with an other’s eyes or feeling an other’s pain is critical in understanding the discrimination against minorities (Cose 1997: 215; Sakiyama 1998: 214-220).

Relating with each other despite differences provides another approach in dealing with racism. Differences are fundamental to causing discrimination (Rothenberg 1992: 6), but ignoring these differences does not solve racism or any form of discrimination. Viewing differences in a minority as inferior can make the majority feel guilty or immoral; therefore, they may choose to ignore these differences in an attempt to bolster
their innocence (Lorde 1992: 497). The majority may express pity towards minorities, but doing so contains an air of superiority because their pity is based on minority inferiority. Moreover, assimilating minorities into the mainstream society can be a manifestation of superiority among the majority, since assimilation assumes that the way of the majority is the best way (Bonacich 1992: 105; Steinem 1992: 308). Acknowledging differences can be a starting point in confronting oppression if it is done in a manner where people not only recognize differences but also respect them (Lorde 1992: 495-502; Murphy-Shigematsu 1993: 76).

Minorities must also contribute to improving their situation by learning to confront and deal with difficulties that might arise from their race or ethnicity (Cose 1997: 227). Minorities should initiate any necessary action rather than relying on others to make the first move. Like any relationship between two people, both the majority and minority groups should cooperate with each other to find the best way to deal with racism, and respect the interests and needs of the other (Coleman 1997: 347). Believing that people are innately prejudiced or concluding that people are imperfect can be a dominant ideology that allows racism to take root; therefore, such notions should not be used as an excuse to avoid dealing with racial issues in the United States (Coleman 1997: 298; Rothenberg 1992: 324).

2.4 Minority Issue in Japan

2.4.1 Japanese Minorities

Japanese minorities comprise about five percent of the total population in Japan. Besides the Buraku, the main minority groups in Japan are the Ainu, Chinese, Korean, and Okinawans. Although there are many distinctive elements in the historical formation and experience of each of these minorities, a number of similarities are found by looking at their core experiences. At the core is Rothenberg’s theory that fundamental to discrimination is the creation of differences in others (1992: 6). Based on the premise that the majority group is superior, construction of those who are inferior provides a
rationale that justifies the discrimination against them. Although racial differences are not as prominent in Japan as they are in the western countries, this process has taken place in Japan and has affected Japanese minority groups (Murphy-Shigematsu 1993: 64, 75; Weiner 1997: xii).

The Chinese ka-i system, introduced into ancient Japan, viewed China as the center of civilization and the surrounding areas as barbaric or uncivilized. In the 1630s, the Japanese version of ka-i system was established and strongly influenced Japanese foreign relations and their perception of non-Japanese people (Morris-Suzuki 1996: 83). The Japanese version of ka-i was based on Japanese supremacy with the military and the Emperor as central figures (Hanazaki 1996: 118). Accordingly, those who lived in Japan's periphery were regarded as not only different but also inferior (Morris-Suzuki 1996: 82). In the process of establishing the Japanese ka-i system, the Japanese shogunate began to invade both the northern territories of the Ainu and the southern islands of the Ryukyu kingdom. Although tributary relationships no longer exist between Japan and other nations, some scholars assert that the Japanese ka-i concept still affects the relationship between Japanese and other nationalities as well as between the Japanese and minority groups within Japan (Goto 1996: 160-172; Morris-Suzuki 1996: 90-92). The Ainu, Okinawans, Korean, and Chinese experiences in Japan are an example of how the ka-i concept has contributed to the creation of these minorities in Japan.

The Ainu are the indigenous people of northern Japan now called Hokkaido. Their experiences are similar to the historical experiences of the Native American Indians, Australian Aborigines, and other native people (Siddle 1997: 17). During the 1870s, the Ainu were registered as Japanese citizens and required to assimilate into Japanese society. All Ainu traditions were banned because the Japanese believed that the Ainu would become more civilized as Japanese citizens. As a result of the assimilation policy, the Ainu lost their ancestral land and had to abandon their language and culture. Also, because the Japanese government forced them to work in agriculture, their traditional hunting and fishing lifestyle changed dramatically (Hirota 1998: 188).

The Ryukyu kingdom arose in Okinawa, an island located in southern Japan, in 1429. In 1609, the invasion of Okinawa by the Satsuma feudal clan established a
tributary relationship between the Ryukyu kingdom and the Japanese shogunate (Morris-Suzuki 1996: 83). In 1879, Okinawa was annexed by the Meiji government and integrated in Japan as Okinawa Prefecture. After the Second World War, Okinawa Prefecture was under American occupation until 1972 when it was returned to Japan. However, Okinawans are not considered pure Japanese, but rather “fail-to-be” or “half-way” Japanese. As such, they are considered an inferior race (Tsuwa 1998: 26-30; Taira 1997: 140-142).

In the ancient period, ancestors of present day Koreans started to immigrate into Japan. They were called *torai-jin* (visiting persons) or *kika-jin* (naturalized persons). Many of them were prominent people from powerful clans in the Korean Peninsula, and brought with them advanced technological knowledge in many fields such as agriculture, art, and engineering. They also contributed to the Japanese writing system by introducing Chinese characters. Without their contributions, Japan could not have transformed from a primitive society into a civilized society in the fifth century. In those days, the *torai-jin* or Korean ancestors were highly respected (Inoue 1963: 38-39).

The status of Korean descendants has drastically changed over time. In 1910, Japan invaded and annexed Korea. The colonization was justified by the misguided belief that Korea could not develop without help from a more advanced country like Japan. Similar to what the Europeans did to Africans during the slave trade, the Japanese forcefully brought many Koreans to Japan and exploited them (Yang 1991: 13-15). In 1945, when the Second World War ended, Japanese colonization of Korea ended, but it did not end discrimination against the Koreans. Koreans continue to be stigmatized as “the third nationals” (Yang 1991: 72-76). Many Koreans wished to return to Korea after the war. However, many decided to stay because the Japanese government confiscated the property of those who left the country and also because Korea was divided into north and south, experiencing political and economic instability (Yang 1991: 14). Like the Ainu and the Okinawans, Koreans who stayed in Japan were forced to assimilate into Japanese society. The government required them to change their Korean names to Japanese names and to be naturalized as Japanese citizens. Furthermore, in order to
obtain the same social benefits as the Japanese, they had to forego all Korean traditions including culture, language, and ancestry (Yang 1991: 19-20, 39).

Chinese immigration in Japan also started in the ancient era, and like their Korean counterparts, they were respectfully treated as torai-jin (visiting person). Before the westernization of Japan, the Japanese elite considered the Chinese political and socio-cultural systems to be a model system from a civilized and superior society. Around 1915, another influx of Chinese immigration occurred (Vasishth 1997: 108). Unlike the Koreans and other minorities, the contemporary Chinese immigrants have managed to avoid extreme oppression and exploitation because of their economic affluence. When they immigrated to Japan, they brought well-developed social and economic system to ensure their economic stability. This is why the Chinese are conceptualized as a model minority in modern day Japan (Vasishth 1997: 136). The same conceptualization is shared by Americans. In the United States, Asian Americans are regarded as a model minority, compared to African-Americans and Latin-Americans. Yet, this does not mean that the Chinese as well as Asian Americans enjoy equal rights in society. Society allows a model minority to succeed but up to a certain point, and in doing so, can easily cover up and overlook inequalities in the model minority. Therefore, based on the supremacy of the majority, the model minority concept retards the improvement of issues among those labeled as ideal minority groups (Woo 1992: 191).

2.4.2 Construction of Japaneseness: Homogeneity and Superiority

The social creation of Japaneseness is based on the inferiority of others, against which Japanese homogeneity and superiority are measured (Weiner 1997: xiii). The belief in Japanese homogeneity and superiority emphasizes a pure lineage, and this concept has pervaded Japanese society from the beginning of the Yamato\(^3\) state around the 5th century (Murphy-Shigematsu 1993: 66). Prior to 1945, the notion of kazoku-kokka (family nation) viewed Japanese society as the Emperor’s extended family.

\(^3\) The Yamato clan united Japan in the third century and established the Yamato regime. Many Japanese believe that the ancestry of the Imperial Family came from the Yamato clan (Yasuda 1989: 36).
presupposing a homogeneous society and a pure lineage (McCormack 1996; Murphy-Shigematsu 1993; Weiner 1997). Consequently, the desire among the Japanese to maintain a homogeneous society and a pure lineage is strongly connected to the Emperor system (Sato 1984: 25-42; Watanabe 1996: 103-104). Those with close blood ties to the Emperor or those descended from the Yamato clan were held in high regard whereas those with minority or Buraku roots were considered inferior. In addition, both Shintoism and Buddhism played a major role in justifying this thinking, equating the Emperor as the ultimate in purity and minorities or the Buraku as the ultimate in impurity (Kawamoto 1985: 141-143; Watanabe 1996: 152-153). These dominant ideologies have been deeply rooted in Japanese society, influencing people’s thinking process and negatively affecting Japanese minorities (Dale 1986; Denoon et al. 1996; Mannari and Befu et al. 1983; Murphy-Shigematsu 1993; Weiner et al. 1997).

The Edo shogunate (1603-1868) closed off the entire nation from the rest of the world since it was afraid of outside influences inducing resistance against the government. After three-hundred years of isolation from the world, Japan needed internationalization in order to catch up with the Western countries. Thus, internationalization was vigorously promoted by the Meiji government (1868-1912), and has remained an important national theme (Herbert 1983: 16-17). Under internationalization, Japanese homogeneity and superiority was transformed into a more acceptable form, called Nihonjin-bunkaron (theory of Japanese culture) or Nihonjin-ron (theory of Japanese national character), which simply emphasized Japanese uniqueness (Murphy-Shigematsu 1993: 66). Considerable amounts of publications on Nihonjin-ron have been produced by many scholars both inside and outside Japan to define Japaneseness (Befu 1983: 232-233; Dale 1986: II-III). Currently, most scholars consider this burst of publications regarding Nihonjin-ron as a counter-reaction of rapid internationalization (Dale 1986; Mannari and Befu et al. 1983). The internationalization process requires the Japanese to get along with different nationalities. Also, it obliges the Japanese to adopt as well as accept foreign culture and value systems, especially those of western nations (Herbert 1983: 21-23). As a result, internationalization may have obscured Japanese identity and caused tremendous psychological insecurity for the
Japanese. In order to regain a secure cultural identity, it was necessary for the Japanese to clarify the concept of what it means to be Japanese.

Nihonjin-ron successfully validated Japaneseness by defining how Japanese culture, society, and people are unique (Befu 1983: 253-254; Moeran 1990: 1-3). Nihonjin-ron tones down the aggressiveness of Japanese superiority by focusing on Japanese homogeneity as what makes Japan and its people unique. However, the belief in homogeneity still implies Japanese superiority (Murphy-Shigematsu 1993: 65-66). Japanese political leaders constantly remind their constituents how the Japanese are special and fortunate since they are living in a homogeneous society. Through the dominant ideology, the Japanese create a world of dichotomy: us and them, superior and inferior, male and female, rich and poor, and Japanese and non-Japanese (Moeran 1990: 9).

The belief in homogeneity illustrates the flawed logic with respect to dealing with minorities. Emphasizing homogeneity denies heterogeneity and the existence of minority groups, while at the same time, the belief in homogeneity emphasizes differences between "pure" Japanese and non-Japanese (Murphy-Shigematsu 1993: 65-66; Weiner 1997 xii-xiii). This manipulative ideology is used to covertly praise Japanese superiority and to conceal discrimination and prejudice against minorities in Japan. In addition, it provides the Japanese with denial as an easy way to deal with minority issues. Thus, the existence of minority groups, the discrimination against them, and their contributions to society are conveniently denied at all levels of society (Murphy-Shigematsu 1993: 67; Weiner 1997: xiii). Although they recognize that Japan is more homogeneous than other societies, many scholars challenge the belief in homogeneity. Considering Japan as a monocultural and monoethnic society perpetuates an incorrect stereotype which distorts reality, especially the reality that minorities face in Japan (Ben-Ari et al. 1990; Dale 1986; Denoon et al. 1996; Mannari and Befu et al. 1983; Murphy-Shigematsu 1993; Weiner et al. 1997). Without a realistic understanding of minority issues, improvement cannot be expected. However, Japan can achieve the ideology and social systems which include the coexistence of minority groups by initiating social and political movements that would expand democracy nationwide (Hanazaki 1996: 130).
2.5 Current Buraku Issues

Buraku discrimination is not racism based on biological traits such as skin color. Instead, it is more appropriate to consider it as a form of racism which is historically and socially developed (Doob 1993: 6-7; Shimahara 1971: 18). Buraku discrimination still exists in Japanese society as both institutional and individual racism (Buraku Liberation Committee [BLC] 1990; Jones 1991; Miwa et al. 1991; NCBLBL 1998; Teraki et al. 1988; Yamashita 1998). Institutional racism has deprived the Buraku of better education and jobs. As a result, the Japanese elite is made up of disproportionately fewer Buraku individuals compared to the general population (De Vos et al. 1983: 7). Although individual racism seldom manifests itself as overt racism, it still occurs in forms such as marital and job discrimination.

Misconceptions and prejudice toward the Buraku are deeply rooted in society and have acted to justify discriminatory actions against the Buraku people. Many Japanese including political, business, and religious leaders still possess the following misguided concepts:

(1) The Buraku people are not purely Japanese.

(2) The Buraku lineage is derived from criminals and a stigmatized class of people whose occupations are dirty and undesirable.

(3) The lineage of the Buraku people is inferior and impure.  

(Hane 1996: 146)

Because many of those with these beliefs are prominent figures, they have played a significant role in perpetuating these concepts and reinforcing Buraku discrimination.

In 1998, the National Committee of Basic Law for Buraku Liberation (NCBLBL) published a report called “Continued Buraku Discrimination Throughout Japan” which records current discriminatory practices against the Buraku. This report documents the frequency of individual discriminatory acts against the Buraku, and also clarifies what type of discrimination is prevalent in present Japanese society. According to this report, there are five common types of discrimination against the Buraku:
(1) Marital Discrimination
Marital discrimination appears to be more prevalent and problematic compared to other types of Buraku discrimination (BLC 1990; Buraku Liberation Research Institute [BLRI] 1990; Tsuji 1992). Buraku women have a higher rate of suicide as a result of being rejected by their non-Buraku fiancé once their Buraku identity has been discovered (Hane 1996: 148). Marital discrimination is difficult to pinpoint because other reasons can be given for breaking the engagement. For example, the non-Buraku partner can claim that they are not truly in love with the person (NCBLBL 1998: 46-52; Tsuji 1992: 76-109). While it is true that marriage between the Buraku and non-Buraku is on the rise, 30 to 40% of non-Buraku parents still oppose such unions, citing two main reasons: (1) marriage involves not only the couple but also the entire family when it comes to being discriminated against, and (2) the couple’s children will suffer discrimination (BLRI 1990; Miwa et al. 1991: 142; Teraki et al. 1988: 116-117).

(2) Job Discrimination
According to research conducted in Niigata Prefecture in 1996, approximately 5% of job applicants (out of 5922) reported that they had to fill out application forms designed by the companies instead of the Ministry of Education. These company forms often invade an applicant’s privacy and intend to reveal his or her identity as Buraku, Japanese Korean, or Ainu (NCBLBL 1998: 10). Usually, the company forms ask for the following information: (1) current address and length of residence, (2) family genealogy and occupations of family members, (3) address of parents and their birthplaces, and (4) applicant’s birthplace (NCBLBL 1998: 54-57). Almost 10% of applicants were forced to submit family registers to companies. During the interview process, approximately half the applicants were asked for their addresses and approximately one third were asked for both the names and occupations of their parents (NCBLBL 1998: 10-11). Because the Buraku were historically restricted to living in certain neighborhoods and working in stigmatized occupations, these questions are not as innocent as they may seem.
(3) Public Discrimination (School, Workplace, Community)
There are many cases of graffiti on bathroom walls, in the classrooms and other public places, sometimes accompanied by derogatory terms such as “eta” and “hinin.” Graffiti sometimes appear on the property of Buraku people and the BLL, for example, on a mailbox. Also, there are numerous cases of hate messages sent to individual Buraku people and the BLL. At school or in the workplace, discriminatory practices occur in the form of (1) derogatory statements directed at a person suspected of being Buraku, and (2) asking a person suspected of being Buraku where he or she is from (NCBLBL 1998: 60-123, 142-193).

(4) Discrimination in The Mass Media
In 1997, a newspaper criticized the slow progress of a construction project by printing the following headline: “Like The Buraku, Kumamoto Prefecture Ridiculed Nationwide.” Mass media can play a significant role in educating and enlightening people; however, by perpetuating discriminatory attitudes, the media often becomes a detriment to the Buraku liberation movement (NCBLBL 1998: 136-140).

(5) Religious Discrimination
Until the 1980s, it was a common practice among Buddhist monks to assign discriminatory posthumous names to Buraku people. For example, Chinese characters which mean “filthy” or “leather” were used in posthumous names for the Buraku. The intent of this practice was to discriminate against the Buraku people in the afterlife (Matsune 1990: 10-11). Also, there are many cases of religious leaders denying the existence of the Buraku issue. For example, at the 1979 International Peace Conference, a high-ranking individual of the Buddhist faith in Japan stated that Japanese society no longer discriminates against the Buraku (BLRI 1990: 81-82).
2.6 Obstacles in Resolving The Buraku Issue

Many Buraku scholars and leaders assert that a lack of human rights awareness stemming from the belief in homogeneity and superiority impedes the progress of the equal rights movement for the Buraku and other minorities. In addition to a lack of human rights awareness, the following factors are considered to make the current Buraku and other minority issues difficult to resolve: (1) capitalism, (2) lineage, (3) family register, and (4) denial of the Buraku issue and concealment of Buraku identity (Oga 1991: 28; Tomonaga 1998: 6).

2.6.1 Capitalism

Capitalism promotes socio-economic inequality by maintaining an upper and lower class. In a capitalistic society, the lower class provides an exploitable labor force and its existence is essential for capitalism to succeed (Parenti 1994: 98). Many Buraku leaders and scholars assert that capitalism reinforces Buraku discrimination by maintaining the Buraku people in the lower class as a source of cheap labor (BLC 1990: 95-96). As a result, there are those who believe the Buraku liberation movement should be promoted as a class struggle (Oga 1991). However, restructuring the economic system may not automatically eradicate discrimination against the Buraku (Okuda 1998; Tomonaga 1998; Yoshida 1998). Currently, their standard of living and education level have been close to the national average, yet the Buraku are still subject to discrimination. This suggests that discrimination against the Buraku is not entirely about being poor but may involve other non-economic elements (Yoshida 1998: 78).

2.6.2 Lineage

The most symbolic phenomenon of Buraku discrimination is the rejection of Buraku people by non-Buraku people when it comes to marriage (Fujino 1998: 95). Because great importance is placed on a person's lineage in Japan, family background
searches are socially accepted and justified (Jones 1991: 77; Okuda 1998: 44-46; Sato 1984: 32-33; Tomonaga 1998: 21-22). Prior to an arranged marriage (still a common practice in Japan) or marriage of choice, it is routine for both parties to submit to background checks. Due to long-standing religious beliefs, Buraku ancestry is equated with impurity. Marrying a Buraku person is looked upon as contaminating the pure blood of mainstream Japan (Monma 1990: 220-261).

2.6.3 Family Register

A family register is as an officer record of a person’s family background to document his or her lineage (Sato 1984: 49-50). The family register is different from the birth certificate in the United States in that the family register contains not only the person’s name, address, birth-date and birthplace, but also documents the relationship to immediate family and relatives, tracing familial ancestry over many generations (Sato 1984: 10-24, 134-146). It must be submitted when an individual enters school, applies for a job, marries, or gives birth. On these occasions, a person’s lineage is open for scrutiny by others, which may lead to discrimination against minorities such as the Buraku, Ainu, and Koreans (Sato 1984: 25-42, 47-51).

Because of the establishment of special Buraku districts, Buraku identity can be readily discovered by checking one’s family register. In fact, in the Meiji period, the first family records were established in order to identify former outcast people including the Buraku. Since private investigators have used family registers to reveal Buraku identity, the Buraku Liberation League worked to regulate access to family registers in the late 1960s (Hane 1996; Jones 1991; BLC 1990). The government also started to re-examine the family register system, and finally revised Article 10 of the Koseki Law in 1976 to limit access to the family register (Neary 1997: 65; Sato 1984: 21-22). Nevertheless, there are still numerous detective agencies and computer databases that specialize in disclosing Buraku identity through the family register. Furthermore, some publishers still sell top companies a directory of family addresses called the Chimei Sokan which reveals

2.6.4 Denial among Non-Buraku and Concealment among Buraku

Although the Buraku still experience discrimination in present Japanese society, there are many who simply deny that discrimination exists (Hane 1996: 146). This denial stems from a lack of human rights awareness, limited knowledge of minority issues, and the belief in homogeneity (Teraki et al. 1988: 310). Many Buraku scholars argue that denial is closely related to Japanese cultural attitudes when dealing with any problem. The saying, *kusai mono niwa futa*, literally means put a lid on the bad smell (Teraki et al. 1988: 14). In other words, instead of dealing with a problem, it is better to cover it up until it goes away. The fade-away and yugo (assimilation) theories apply this concept to the Buraku issue. Such theories are favored by the Japanese government because they justify the government’s negligence in dealing with the Buraku issue (BLC 1990: 14-17).

While non-Buraku people use denial as an indirect solution to the Buraku issue, the Buraku people use a passive approach in dealing with discrimination. Attempts to hide their Buraku identity in order to avoid discrimination prove how deeply rooted discrimination is in Japanese society (BLC 1990: 14-17; Oga 1991: 23-28; Watanabe 1998: 33). At first glance, concealing one’s identity seems relatively easy to do, but it is difficult to remain concealed. Those “in hiding” may need to move frequently, which can become expensive (De Vos 1983: 7-8). Also, many feel a certain degree of guilt because they believe their passive attitude is unfair to other Buraku people (De Vos et al. 1983: 8). Finally, there is never a guarantee of continued success in concealing their identity, which is a considerable psychological burden to carry.

The psychological burden wears away a person’s strength of character and self-esteem. Many Buraku people, especially the young, end up blaming their parents and become angry with society for the hardships in their lives (Oga 1991: 25-28). The following statement by a Buraku young adult illustrates the psychology of struggling with the decision to conceal one’s identity:
I am unable to fully enjoy myself upon entering mainstream society. I have the constant fear of discovery, and sometimes I find myself feeling inferior because I am Buraku. And I feel so guilty to be doing this (Okuda 1998: 51).

The psychological strain among Buraku people is described in the 1906 novel *Hakai* (Destruction) by Toson Shimazaki. This novel achieved a high degree of notoriety because it was the first contemporary novel to deal with the Buraku issue (Noma 1957: 341-349). Yet, most Buraku scholars and leaders believe this novel had an adverse effect on the Buraku issue. In the story, Ushimatsu, the main character (1) apologizes for concealing his Buraku identity, (2) admits that being Buraku is impure and shameful, and (3) immigrates to the United States instead of confronting the problem. Ushimatsu's mentality still exists in Japanese society today, perpetuating the negative image people have of the Buraku (Oga 1991: 23-24).

Modern day Japanese have the illusion that their society is egalitarian and a meritocracy. Consequently, the majority of the Japanese wonder why the Buraku still suffer from discrimination. Also, some reason that because the Buraku people receive government support, they should be well off. Under these dominant ideologies, many Japanese assume that those Buraku who cannot obtain a (good) job or education must have something wrong with themselves. Victim-blaming of this sort results in the self-blaming mentality and the identity concealment seen in the Buraku people (Watanabe 1998: 45).

Identity concealment by the Buraku people justifies the denial among the non-Buraku that the Buraku issue exists. At the same time, it rationalizes the belief among both the non-Buraku and Buraku that the Buraku are inferior or impure, which allows discriminatory practices to continue (Oga 1991: 24-28). Also, concealment of Buraku identity prevents an accurate estimate of the Buraku population and the number of districts (Table 3).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total population of Buraku People</th>
<th>Government Report: 1.155.733</th>
<th>Unofficial Estimation: 3 million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Buraku Districts</td>
<td>4603 (Government designated districts)</td>
<td>6000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Hane 1996: 147; Jones 1991: 6)

**Table 3** Population of Buraku people and number of Buraku districts

Without accurate statistics, it is difficult to grasp the scope of the Buraku issue. De Vos and others assert that a precondition to a solution is that both the Buraku and non-Buraku people accept Buraku identity and confront the discrimination that exists (1983: 7-8). In short, it is impossible to solve the Buraku issue by concealing or denying its very existence.

### 2.7 History of The Buraku Liberation Movement

Westernization spread over Japan during the Meiji period (1868-1912) as the Japanese government tried to modernize the nation. Many liberal politicians were influenced by western thought and initiated a movement to legally abolish the eta-hinin class. For these politicians, the existence of the eta-hinin class was a relic of the past and had no place in a modern nation (Shimahara 1971: 19). Finally, in 1871, social pressure resulting from the need to modernize brought about Buraku emancipation; however, without laws to enforce the emancipation, discrimination against the Buraku worsened. After the emancipation failed, the Buraku people themselves started to fight for equal rights. The first step was to improve morale in Buraku communities having a high occurrence of crime and social disorder (Shimahara 1971: 20). This became the Yuwa (conciliation) movement which flourished from 1900 through the 1910s.
The fact that the Buraku people themselves initiated the Yuwa movement should be noted as valuable. However, the problem with the Yuwa movement was that it exonerated non-Buraku people from having any role or responsibility in the Buraku issue. In other words, the Buraku people held themselves responsible for the discrimination they experienced and looked inwardly for a solution. This passive way of thinking, or self-blaming, during the Yuwa movement evolved into the fade-away and assimilation theories. Both theories assumed that since the Buraku people themselves are both the source and solution to their own discrimination, there was nothing more that needed to be done by the non-Buraku. This concept has promoted a passive role of the government towards the Buraku issue (Oga 1991: 14-16).

Buraku leaders later reconsidered the Yuwa policy and concluded that non-Buraku people as well as the political and economic systems played a major role in Buraku discrimination. They also asserted that Buraku liberation would be achieved only by the independent effort of the Buraku people. From 1914, these Buraku leaders started to organize a more aggressive movement which became known as the anti-Yuwa movement. Socialism, which advocated the abolishment of the class system in order to effect political and economic equality, spread throughout Japan and influenced the thinking of Buraku leaders around 1920 (Shimahara 1971: 20-21). Accordingly, Buraku leaders organized a group called the Suiheisha (Levelers Association) (De Vos et al. 1983: 5).

Inaugurated in 1922, the Suiheisha was the first national organization established by the Buraku people and was also the first association to strive for human rights for all oppressed Japanese (Shimahara 1971: 21). The Suihei (leveling) movement, which involved socialist ideas stemming from the revolution in Russia, faithfully pursued the original strategy of class struggle and proletarian movement to achieve equality (Neary 1997 57). The Suiheisha continued its mission until its dissolution in 1940 when the military dictatorship led the nation into World War II. After the war, the Buraku Kaiho Zenkoku linkai (Buraku Liberation National Committee) was formed. In 1955, it evolved into the Buraku Kaiho Domei (Buraku Liberation League), which has been leading the Buraku liberation movement ever since. Class struggle continued to be at the forefront of
the Buraku Liberation League (BLL), which assumed that Buraku discrimination is reinforced by capitalism (Tomonaga 1998: 7). The concept of class struggle is based on socialist principles, which has linked the BLL to the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), and to a lesser extent, the Japanese Socialist party.

2.8 Buraku Liberation Strategies and Anti-Buraku Liberation Theories

2.8.1 Denunciation Campaign and Fade-away Theory

The Suiheisha’s fight for equal treatment of oppressed people centered on a denunciation campaign. The denunciation campaign against individual discriminatory practices has been one of the most effective strategies by which the Buraku people have publicized social issues and reduced discrimination. The campaign consisted of confronting those who discriminate against the Buraku people, demanding a confession, and trying to re-educate the offender (Jones 1991: 7). Because there is no anti-discrimination law to prohibit individual discrimination against the Buraku, the BLL continues to implement this public denunciation campaign.

The denunciation campaign has ended most overt discriminatory practices. Also, it has changed the attitude of the Buraku people who had thought discrimination was just a part of their lives (Neary 1997: 59). Ironically, fear of being denounced by the BLL has been so effective that people now fear the BLL and the Buraku people (Tomonaga 1998: 6-8). The fear of being confronted by the BLL is partially connected to the fact that the Japanese have a low tolerance for public embarrassment (Lebra 1976: 79-80). Some non-Buraku people have taken advantage of this fear. By impersonating Buraku people, they accuse numerous individuals and corporations of fictitious discriminatory practices so that they can unlawfully obtain compensation money (ZHCKKC 1990).

The denunciation policy has had other negative effects as well. In order to avoid public denunciation, most people, including organizations, corporations, and the mass media, avoid involvement with the Buraku issue. Furthermore, those who were caught by the denunciation campaign sometimes apologized to simply “get it over with” without
heartfelt acknowledgment of their discriminatory acts (Oga 1991: 29-30). Buraku people who have chosen to conceal their identity have a strong desire for anonymity and to avoid any possible situation where their Buraku identity might be discovered. The publicity generated by the denunciation campaign often increases the anxiety among those who simply wish to be left alone. Consequently, non-involvement by both the non-Buraku and Buraku has given rise to the fade-away theory related to what Japanese call netako wo okosuna or “do not wake up the sleeping child.” Despite some unwanted outcomes, the denunciation campaign could be improved by (1) increasing people’s understanding of the denunciation campaign, (2) providing a support system for those Buraku people who have suffered discrimination, and (3) passing the necessary legislation to stop discriminatory acts against the Buraku (Oga 1990; Okuda 1998; Tomonaga 1998: 8-9).

2.8.2 Administration Struggle and Assimilation Theory

In 1955, the newly formed BLL began its administration struggle which coincided with the denunciation campaign. In response to the fade-away theory, the goal of the administration struggle was to change government’s passive attitude with regard to the Buraku issue and to obtain a bureaucratic solution to Buraku liberation. Buraku leaders recognized that the political and economic systems in Japan were creating difficulties for the Buraku in obtaining equal rights, because the government played a major role in reinforcing the Buraku discrimination. The BLL, thereby, focused its attention on the government which resulted in substantial government subsidies to the Buraku people.

The Japanese government, led by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), initiated Dowa (assimilation) projects in 1960 which provided financial assistance to improve Buraku communities. In the following year, the government established the Deliberative Council for the Assimilation of Buraku in order to more fully understand current problems in Buraku communities. The Council published a report in 1965, declaring that the Buraku issue was a national agenda and that problems in Buraku communities were caused by discriminatory practices against the Buraku. It cited the necessity for specific legislation in order to correct these problems; however, the Council’s recommendations
were not implemented. Although the Special Measures Law for Dowa Projects was enacted in 1969, despite the recommendations of the 1965 report, the law failed to assign any legal responsibilities on the part of the Japanese government or legal protection for Buraku individuals against discriminatory practices (Upham 1993: 328). In the meantime, the government continued its subsidy program to improve the standard of living and education among Buraku people. Financial assistance from the government created feelings of reverse discrimination among non-Buraku communities. Accordingly, discrimination against the Buraku remained in spite of material gains in their lives.

During the BLL's administration struggle, the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) began to form an anti-Buraku liberation campaign. In 1965, the JCP accused the BLL of leftist socialism and publicly opposed not only the administration struggle but also the denunciation campaign (BLC 1990: 85). At one time, the BLL and JCP shared the same socialist or proletarian approach to social inequality issues. The apparent cause of the break-up between the BLL and JCP is that the JCP considered the BLL its auxiliary organization. The BLL's administration struggle brought not only enormous financial assistance from the government but also autonomy from the JCP (BLC 1990: 85-86). Since then, the JCP and its supporters within the BLL have disagreed on the BLL's approach to the Buraku issue. Viewing the Buraku issue as a common case of capitalism reinforced discrimination, the JCP does not distinguish the problems faced by the Buraku as any different than other oppressed people. Therefore, the JCP was opposed to the Special Measures Law for Dowa Projects and the BLL's administration struggle, contending that the social benefits should be distributed to all oppressed people not just the Buraku (Neary 1997: 61-63). The JCP also believe that present Japanese society does not have the structural foundation to maintain Buraku discrimination; therefore, there is no reason why discrimination should continue to exist into the twenty-first century (Neary 1997: 66).

The theoretical disagreement led the JCP and its supporters within the BLL to establish a separate Buraku organization called the Zenkoku Buraku Kaiho Rengokai, also called the Zenkairen (National Buraku Liberation Alliance) in 1979. The anti-Buraku liberation campaign by the JCP and Zenkairen tried to highlight the negative
aspects of the BLL and its strategies, and supported the birth of the assimilation theory (BLC 1990: 85). The assimilation theory argues that since the Buraku people are intrinsically Japanese, the Buraku liberation movement is unnecessary. According to this theory, the Buraku should take it upon themselves to re-educate their people and rejoin mainstream society. The assimilation theory not only encourages denial of the Buraku issue and concealment of Buraku identity but also rationalizes reverse discrimination against the non-Buraku people (Oga 1991: 15-16).

### 2.9 Third Phase of Buraku Liberation Movement

The first phase of Buraku liberation consisted of the Suiheisha denunciation campaign, and the second phase is marked by the birth of the BLL and its administrative struggle. The establishment in 1988 of the International Movement Against Discrimination and Racism (IMADR), a world-wide human rights movement, marks the beginning of the third phase (Okuda 1998: 15-16; Tomonaga 1998: 3-4). The third phase is considered a global, united struggle based on the goal of "peace, human rights, and democracy" (Okuda 1998: 15-16). In addition to the IMADR, the BLL has initiated the construction of the Asia Pacific Human Rights Information Center (APHRIC), which started operations in 1994. The center provides information on human rights activities in the Asian Pacific region, and promotes research and education associated with human rights issues (Neary 1997: 76-77). The Ten Year International Human Rights Education initiated by the United Nations in 1995 also contributes to linking the Buraku struggle with the global human rights movement. With the creation of a global alliance for the human rights movement, it is appropriate timing for the BLL to promote human rights education to include Dowa (Buraku) education (Okuda 1998: 1-14, 15-16).

Currently, there is debate over the importance of Dowa education. The anti-Buraku liberation force, such as the Japanese Communist Party, insists that Dowa education is no longer necessary because it simply serves as a reminder of the Buraku issue and reinforces discrimination against the Buraku. However, most Buraku scholars
agree that Dowa education plays a significant role in increasing awareness of the Buraku issue and reducing discrimination (BLC 1990: 14-17; Okuda 1998; Yoshida 1998). It is important not only to include Dowa education nationwide as a component of human rights education but also to continuously review and improve it (Okuda 1998: 1-14). Many Buraku educators have criticized Dowa education for teaching people not to discriminate against the Buraku simply because it is wrong and immoral. Lacking a more detailed understanding, people have avoided the Buraku issue (Yoshida 1998: 73-74). Combining Dowa education with human rights education would enable the Japanese to understand human rights issues, and influence the degree of healing (Okuda 1998: 50). Instead of making non-Buraku people pity the Buraku people or making the Buraku people feel badly about themselves, the goal of Dowa education would be to communicate the Buraku experience in a manner that will instill a sense of strength and pride toward the Buraku (Okuda 1998: 57-60).

In the third phase, many BLL scholars and leaders emphasize the establishment of a Basic Law for the Buraku issue. First proposed in 1985, the goals of the Basic Law are to (1) ensure a national commitment to end Buraku discrimination, and (2) legally prohibit institutional and individual discrimination against the Buraku (BLC 1990: 109-110). Establishment of the Basic Law would commit the government and the people of Japan to the Buraku issue (Upham 1993: 330); however, the government does not support it. Instead, the government supports the JCP's view that Buraku liberation as well as the Basic Law are not necessary, and that the Basic Law will make discrimination against the Buraku worse by forcing it underground and deeply perpetuating it (Upham 1993: 331). Both the JCP and the government optimistically assume that enlightenment through general moral education alone will improve the Buraku issue. Yet, most Buraku scholars and leaders believe that discrimination against the Buraku is so deeply interwoven with the social structure that it needs to be tackled from multiple directions (Oga 1990; Okuda 1998; Tomonaga 1998; Watanabe 1998; Yoshida 1998).

From the denunciation campaign to the administration struggle to the Basic Law, the BLL has continually re-invented itself. In its most recent restructuring in the early 1990's, the BLL has expanded its role to address a broader socio-cultural, economic
inequality that is tied to global issues (Neary 1997: 68-69, 72-77). Shifting from a Buraku-oriented focus to a more general focus is one reason why the BLL did not pursue an extension of the Special Measures Law for Dowa Projects (SML). Although the law was originally designed to be a temporary measure, the BLL decision to allow the law to lapse surprised many Japanese, including Buraku leaders (Neary 1997: 72). The BLL has been hoping to expand the distribution of social benefits to all oppressed people, not just the Buraku. The concept behind the BLL decision not to extend the SML is to make the SML a general policy (Tomonaga 1998: 72-73). The BLL cites the example of a 1963 program that distributed school textbooks to Buraku children who could not afford to buy them, but which later became a general system for the free distribution of school textbooks (BLC 1990: 74-75).

Although many Buraku scholars and leaders welcome the new role of the BLL, others are concerned that too much emphasis on a broader scope may detract from the original goal: Buraku liberation. They also predict that some people will mistakenly conclude that the BLL is abandoning the Buraku issue. The BLL would not be able to fulfill its expanded role if it lost its influence in Japan; therefore, it is important for the BLL to keep its original role and goals at the center of its operation (Watanabe 1998: 47-49).
CHAPTER 3
CHRONOLOGICAL OBSERVATION OF THE HISTORICAL-ECONOMIC DOMAIN
OF THE BURAKU ISSUE

This section examines the history of the Buraku, observing the historical-economic domain chronologically from the ancient period to the present period (Table 4), and also inquires into how political and economic elements led to the formation of the Buraku people and the discrimination against them. This historical-economic study strives to emphasize that the Buraku people have descended from people with different status levels, and were engaged in a variety of occupations; therefore, the Buraku cannot simply be considered descendants of criminals or a stigmatized group of people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ancient Period</th>
<th>Yayoi Period (300 BC to 250 AD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tomb Period [State Formation] (250 to 646)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nara Period (646 to 794)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heian Period (794 to 1185)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medieval Period</th>
<th>Kamakura Period (1185 to 1392)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Nanboku-cho Period] (1336 to 1392)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Muromachi Period (1392 to 1603)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Sengoku Period] (Civil War: 1467 to 1590)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Modern Period</th>
<th>Edo Period (1603 to 1868)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modern Period</td>
<td>Kin-Gendai (1868 to 1945)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Period</td>
<td>Gendai (After 1945)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Ohnuki-Tierney 1987; Yasuda 1989)

Table 4 Chronology of Japanese History

Currently, many Buraku historians are carefully re-examining the connection between the Buraku people and "special status" people in order to more accurately understand how these special status people have evolved into the Buraku people.
“Special status” is a label that has been handed down throughout Japanese history, but it does not refer to a particular group of people. Ohnuki-Tierney describes special status people as “heterogeneous people with diverse occupations” who have been referred to by different names, mainly according to their occupations (1987: 75-76). Like the development of racial issues in the United States, socio-cultural and political-economic forces have played an important role in the formation of special status people. Accordingly, the societal meaning and valuation assigned to the status and occupation of these people have gone through significant transformations throughout Japanese history (Ohnuki-Tierney 1987: 75-76).

Thus, in order to examine the formation of the Buraku and the discrimination against them, it is essential to investigate how special status people came into being and how they, in turn, evolved into the Buraku. The life of a river provides a metaphorical example of the formation of Buraku people and the discrimination against them. From one little headspring (slaves), a stream (special status) is born. Fed by many tributaries, the stream finally becomes a river. The many tributaries represent the different types of special status people in ancient and medieval Japanese society. The configuration of the land is analogous to the ideology of the people as it creates and reinforces discrimination. The tributaries, affected by the land configuration, are then integrated to create the main river called Buraku people.

3.1 Ancient Period (300 BC to 1185)

The slave system created in the middle of the Yayoi period contributed to the development of special status people (Harada 1988: 3-6). The historical-economic element that produced the slave class was the development of agriculture, a phenomenon that encouraged people to settle and accumulate property. Because a limited number owned fertile land, a hierarchy of “haves” and “have-nots” was created and subsequently resulted in the establishment of the ancient ruling class. In order to maintain the crops and provide profits for the ruling class, a slave system was created (Harada 1988: 3-6).
Around the seventh century, the slave system was transformed into the senmin system as Japan unified under the Emperor to become a nation. Slaves, who were previously owned by powerful clans, came under the control of the Emperor and the Imperial Court after the Taika Reform in 645 AD. Because these slaves integrated into a special social status called “senmin,” they became known as special status people (Harada 1988: 6; Ohnuki-Tierney 1987:76).

Under the senmin system, the population was divided into ryomin (good people) and senmin (low/base people). The senmin population was further divided into five categories:

- *ryoko* – those who guarded and maintained the mausoleums of the imperial family
- *kanko* – those who cultivated officer land for the government
- *kenin* – those who were servants of individuals, shrines, or temples
- *kunihi* – those who were “public slaves” owned by the government and ordered to perform miscellaneous labor
- *shinuhi* – those who were privately-owned slaves (Ohnuki-Tierney 1987: 77)

Except for the shinuhi, the special status people were closely affiliated with the Emperor and the Imperial Court (ruling class). Consequently, special status people were concentrated heavily in the Kansai region (the Kyoto-Osaka area), where Japan’s first two capitals were located (Nagahara 1979: 394).

Around the sixth century, Buddhism was introduced from India via China, and greatly influenced the ancient ruling class. The relationship between the ruling class and special status people was established and maintained based on the Buddhist belief called “the jyo-sen concept,” Jyo meaning “pure,” and sen “dirty.” The jyo-sen concept is closely related with the “ki-sen concept” (ki means “high,” and sen “low/base”), which originated from Shintoism⁴ (Kawamoto 1985: 141-145). Both concepts detested the impurity of death and considered any affiliation with death leading to sen status. Due to

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⁴ Shinto is the religion native to Japan (Kuuri et al. 1978: 202).
these religious beliefs, anything associated with death had to be purified through activities conducted by the special status people.

To maintain their authority, the ruling class considered it imperative to maintain the purified image associated with the deities. In order to do so, the Emperor, Imperial Court, nobles, and large temples relied on the special status people to purify their surroundings regularly (Ohnuki-Tierney 1987: 78). This relationship between the Japanese ruling class and the special status people was similar to that of the Indian upper caste (e.g. Brahmans) and the untouchables (Dumont 1966: 55). Like the untouchables in India, most special status people were engaged in occupations associated with cleaning, guarding, or maintaining religious institutions and imperial tombs, and also occupations associated with religious and funeral ceremonies. For example, the beautiful gardens of well-known temples in Kyoto are the handiwork of special status people called *hinin* (non-human) who worked to purify them. Also, traditional dances for purification were developed by special status people and some of these dances are now highly valued as national cultural treasures in present Japanese society (BLC 1990: 9).

The religious concepts of the ruling class gradually filtered down to the commoners. Because their occupations were connected with death, the socio-cultural valuation of the special status people started to deteriorate. Nevertheless, the special status people were not yet strongly stigmatized. Although people started distancing themselves from the special status people, the distance was caused by a feeling of awe (Watanabe 1998: 35-36; 1996: 7-8, 27-28). Despite the purification rituals and their association with death, the special status people served the Emperor who was considered a descendant of the deities. Due to their close ties to those who were considered sacred and mystical, the special status people were somewhat revered during the ancient period (Ohnuki-Tierney 1987: 77-81; Watanabe 1996: 27-28).
3.2 Medieval Period (1185 to 1603)

Along with the downfall of the ancient political system, the senmin system completely disappeared between the ninth and tenth centuries (Harada 1988: 9). From the beginning of the medieval period, strong military figures started to take political control away from the Emperor and the Imperial Court, establishing the military government of the Kamakura shogunate. In 1392, the Muromachi shogunate finally established feudalism which was initially undertaken by the Kamakura shogunate. However, the oppressive feudal system of the Muromachi shogunate led to its own collapse, resulting in making society extremely unstable at the end of the medieval period (Inoue 1963: 172-188; Wakita 1967: 12-13). Without a ruling entity, civil war broke out in 1467 and lasted over 100 years. During this period, a social movement called gekokujyo or “the lower dominating the upper” became established.

Under gekokujyo, the strong preyed upon the weak to gain power, regardless of class standing. Social status no longer carried significance, enabling people to move between social classes; consequently, movement between classes dramatically increased (Watanabe 1998: 35-36). Some people entered the special status category, while gekokujyo presented opportunities for special status people to become more successful or authoritative. In fact, some special status people became farmers, creating their own communes, and others, especially those affiliated with the temples and nobility, started to involve themselves in commerce and industry (Harada 1988: 18-21). Special social status continued to exist, but special status people in the medieval period had changed considerably from special status people in the ancient period. Therefore, the Buraku people cannot be considered direct descendants of the former slaves, or the senmin, in the ancient period due to the restructuring of social classes in the medieval period, although these senmin contributed to the development of the Buraku (Hatanaka 1998: 58).

As the Muromachi shogunate began to lose power, farmers gained more autonomy and created their own village communes. Because agriculture was the dominant industry in those days, farmers comprised the largest percentage of the population. Accordingly, once farmers acquired the political power to govern themselves, they began to influence
ideologies in the society. Needless to say, the farmers' opinions started to affect cultural valuation of special status people. Prior to gekokujyo, people viewed special status people with a sense of awe; however, farmers considered the non-agricultural occupations held by special status people as "non-productive." Also, the superstitious and conservative nature of the farmers, in combination with prevailing religious beliefs, contributed to devaluing the social status and occupations held by the special status people. Consequently, contempt began to replace what used to be reverence toward the special status people (Watanabe 1996: 25-28).

Although special status people, as a whole, were stigmatized by the middle of the medieval period, cultural valuation of them still greatly varied, especially according to their occupations. For example, the nobility and samurai (warriors) supported those who performed traditional dance such as kyo-gen and jyo-ruri. As a result, special status people who were engaged in such occupations were highly valued. In contrast, those with occupations exclusively dealing with dead animals were stigmatized (Harada 1988: 12-14; Watanabe 1996: 30-32). During the civil war, leather was used to make armor and harnesses. Consequently, powerful military lords forced special status people to work in the tanneries as part of the war effort to ensure a steady supply of leather (Watanabe 1996: 32-33). These special status people were called "hitata" or "kawata," both of which have an implication of "leather." Because many were required to live in designated districts, Buraku scholars believe that these people contributed to the development of the eta class in the Edo period (Harada 1988: 12-14; Watanabe 1996: 51).

3.3 Edo Period (1603 to 1868)

The samurai (warrior) class, led by the Tokugawa clan, ruled Japan during the Edo period. Although the Emperor was no longer the political authority figure, the Japanese people, including the shogun, still worshipped him as a sacred being (Kuuri et al. 1978: 33). The first shogun, Ieyasu Tokugawa, came into power in 1603, and the Tokugawa clan ruled the nation for three hundred years. In order to eliminate outside
influences, the shogunate isolated the nation by closing all but two major ports and prohibited Christianity (Ohnuki-Tierney 1987: 93; Reischauer 1990: 67-68).

In the Edo period, the nucleus of special status people was *eta* (great filth) and *hinin* (non-human). Although special status people continued to be heterogeneous, they were gradually integrated into the lowest socio-economic class: the *eta-hinin* class. Leather workers called *kawata* contributed to the development of the *eta* class while the development of the *hinin* class seemed to be derived from a variety of special status people with different occupations. Accordingly, one major difference between *eta* and *hinin* was that the *eta* class represented those who dealt with dead animals in the leather industry. Among the *hinin*, there were two main types: those who became *hinin* based on historically constructed concepts regarding their occupation, and those who committed a crime or other socially unacceptable act. The latter were called *no-hinin* (wild non-human) and could release themselves from their status by a process called “*ashi-arai*”\(^5\) (Watanabe 1996: 60). Despite the case of *ashi-arai* for no-**hinin**, the status of most *eta* and *hinin* were fixed by a hereditary system.

The hereditary system, enforced by the shogunate, fixed family status and occupation, and considerably reduced movement among socio-economic classes. This resulted in reinforcing the social stratification. The social stratification in the Edo period was elaborately structured to avoid discontent and potential uprising. Rather than looking up to see a better life, the shogunate encouraged its subjects to look down to see people whose life was worse off than theirs. Such strategies were designed to ideologically control the people and to ensure that the shogunate maintained its authority. The social stratification thereby ranked people from the highest class (warrior, farmer, and merchant and craftsman) to the lowest class (special status people now mainly called *eta* and *hinin*), with the shogun as the political figure, displacing the Emperor as a symbolic authority. Most in the warrior class and those who were engaged in agriculture were highly valued. The farmers ranked higher than the merchants and craftsmen since agricultural products, mainly rice, were paid as land tax that served to finance the Edo shogunate. Giving the

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\(^5\) Literally meaning “wash one’s feet,” *ashi-arai* consisted of finding a responsible guarantor in order for the *hinin* to change their status (Harada 1988: 29; De Vos et al. 1983: 4).
farmers a sense of superiority over the other classes suppressed their discontent over the oppressive rule of the shogunate and maintained their productivity. For rice production and the stability of the shogunate, it was essential to satisfy the farmers who comprised the largest population segment. In fact, although the merchant and craftsman class ranked lower than the farmers, their standard of living was generally higher than the farmers' (Harada 1988: 26).

At the bottom of the social hierarchy, the eta-hinin class became a scapegoat or a symbol of misery for the entire society. In order to avoid a potential force to challenge its authority, the shogunate also ideologically controlled people in the eta-hinin class. The eta class was considered higher than the hinin class; however, the hinin were not subject to the degree of stigmatization that was directed at the eta because they were given opportunities to release themselves from "special" status (Watanabe 1996: 59-61). Consequently, the hinin believed that they were not as impure as the eta class. This created some degree of antagonism between the eta and hinin, preventing them from uniting in force against the oppressive rule of the shogunate. To ensure that the eta and hinin adhered to the hereditary system, the shogunate also appointed Danzaemon as the head of the eta-hinin class (Wakita 1967: 120-121).

Thus, some Buraku scholars believe that it was the first time in Japanese history that special status was officially fixed, and so that discrimination against the Buraku was established during the Edo period with the legalization of the class system (Neary 1997: 53, 55; Shimahara 1971: 18). However, others criticize this "regulation origin thesis," emphasizing the fact that the class system in the Edo period was not legalized (Hatanaka 1998: 56; Watanabe 1998: 35-36, 1996: 39-44). In addition to the regulation origin thesis, the occupation/religion origin thesis is also criticized. The occupation/religion thesis argues that special status and Buraku people were engaged in religiously stigmatized occupations; therefore, their status, as well as the discrimination against them, were derived from the religious division of labor (Watanabe 1996: 49-50).

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6 Danzaemon controlled the special status people in several regions beside his own districts in Edo city. He was an eta, but due to his devotion to the shogunate, an exception was made in his case and he was allowed to be a citizen. Although he became a citizen and his wealth was said to be equal to that of a feudal lord, he was still discriminated against by people in the other classes (Ohnuki-Tierney 1987: 95).
Currently, many advocate the need for re-examination of these two theses and the Buraku history. Recent studies have revealed that the eta and hinin in the Edo period were as heterogeneous as the previous periods, and that special status people, including these eta and hinin, had been engaged in various occupations throughout the history.

In order to question the validity of both theses, some scholars point out the following: (1) because there was no legalized class system, each local regime regulated its special status people differently according to the needs of the regime; (2) the name of the special status people, as well as their valuation, varied from one region to another; and (3) a general term was not lawfully established to refer to the special class (Hatanaka 1998: 56; Neary 1997: 52; Watanabe 1996: 61-62). Others reveal that even in the Edo period when the hereditary system was strictly enforced, the eta and hinin were farming as farmers, peddling as merchants, and manufacturing handicrafts as craftsmen (Watanabe 1996: 75). Due to several famines in the Edo period, the government was forced to develop more farmland. Under these circumstances, many special status people obtained farmland, although the land was not as fertile as that held by other farmers. On the other hand, a considerable number of people from other classes, including warriors, entered the eta-hinin districts because of the poverty caused by the famines. These historical facts suggest that, like the previous periods, the eta and hinin in the Edo period continued to be diversified, and that they were engaged in various types of occupations regardless of their societal status.

It may be worth noting, in passing, that during the famines in the Edo period, many in the eta-hinin districts lived better than others (Hatanaka 1998: 56). Despite periodic crop failures, stigmatized occupations such as leather making and the handicraft trade allowed the special status people to sustain themselves more easily because they had access to meat and were more self-sufficient. These benefits can explain why special status people were less likely to restrict family size by neo-natal infanticide (Neary 1997: 54).

Considering the current reviews, it can be assumed that special status people in the Edo period continued to be heterogeneous, with various backgrounds, called by different names, and differently controlled by the local regimes. Nevertheless, as
observed earlier in this section, it is also true that most were gradually integrated into the lowest socio-economic class, the “eta-hinin” class. The eta-hinin class, as well as the class system, were not legally implemented but were conceptually constructed and recognized. Although there has been much debate about the origin of the Buraku, most scholars agree that the Edo shogunate maintained its authority by taking advantage of prevailing ideologies that reinforced the stigma attached to the eta-hinin status. The hereditary system fixed the historically-existing social stratification, resulting in lawfully reinforcing the special status and stigma assigned to the eta-hinin class. Because the shogunate encouraged mainstream society to look down on the eta-hinin class, discrimination against the eta-hinin was maximized by the end of the Edo period (Hatanaka 1998: 56; Watanabe 1998: 36). As a result, it is reasonable to conclude that the basic foundation of discrimination against the Buraku originated in the Edo period.

3.4 Modern Period (Prior to 1945)

Three hundred years of isolation from the rest of the world ended with Commodore Perry’s “visit” to Japan from the United States in 1853. The Japanese realized how vulnerable their country was compared to western civilization. Thus, the collapse of the Edo shogunate marked the beginning of western modernization and capitalism. Under the Meiji government, a new class system consolidated farmers, craftsmen and merchants into a single class called heimin (commoners). The eta and hinin, or Buraku people as they were now called, were not included in the heimin class. However, two social forces played a major role in bringing about change:

1. Japan needed to catch up with the western world, and the western world would never accept the slave-like characteristics of the Buraku people.

2. Buraku areas had to be included in modernization plans, such as updating Japanese maps. Older maps excluded Buraku communities and the areas that they occupied; therefore, actual distance and land areas were not accurately represented (De Vos et al. 1983: 4).
Under the emerging capitalist society, Buraku people were officially freed in 1871. Unfortunately, Buraku elation over their emancipation was short-lived. The heimin class, especially the farmers, strongly opposed the emancipation because they resented sharing the same social status as the Buraku people. A new term, therefore, was used to describe the freed Buraku people - shin-heimin (new commoners). Although this term was not recognized legally, it was recognized ideologically.

Antagonism against the shin-heimin (Buraku people) led to riots. Rioting heimin attacked Buraku communities all over Japan, vandalizing buildings and assaulting, in some instances even killing, the shin-heimin (Harada 1988: 51-54). Because no law or regulation was created to protect the Buraku people or prevent the discrimination against them, the emancipation became meaningless. Malcontent among the heimin resulted in continued discrimination against the shin-heimin. To make matters worse, the new government not only failed to support the Buraku people but also treated them unfairly. For example, although Buraku farmers were allowed to obtain tenant farm land from the Meiji government, the land they received was not suited for cultivation. Moreover, the Buraku farmers had to pay more farm rent, or taxes, than non-Buraku farmers (Harada 1988: 61).

Furthermore, capitalism required the Buraku people to remain at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. To flourish, capitalism promotes social stratification in order to sustain a source of cheap labor. Capitalists used the Buraku community as a source of cheap, hard-working labor since the Buraku were already at the bottom of the social hierarchy and stigmatized by mainstream society. In order to promote capitalism, the government was reluctant to employ policies to protect the Buraku people. Instead, the new ruling class, the government and capitalists, reinforced the historical stigma and status of the Buraku people to accumulate profits. In short, most Buraku people were forced to be on the margins of society and were excluded from benefits provided by the development of the capitalist economy (Neary 1997: 55).

The leather industry during the modern period illustrates how detrimental capitalism has been to the Buraku people. Although occupations dealing with the dead bodies of animals were considered “filthy jobs,” the leather industry was lucrative for the
Buraku people since profits generated by this industry allowed them to own their own businesses. In the process of industrializing Japan, the leather industry developed at an alarming rate due to the new demand for western-style shoes, bags and other leather products. The profitability of this industry led the Japanese government to subsidize large firms to produce leather. Through the power of money, these capitalists displaced Buraku businesses which could not compete with the large leather manufacturers. Competing with the governmentally privileged capitalists was like a tiny ant battling an elephant.

As Japanese society became more industrialized, new “undesirable” occupations were created and assigned to the marginal groups such as the Buraku and the Koreans. In the modern period, Buraku women mainly worked in the silk and match industries, both of which were primarily for export. On the other hand, most Buraku men were engaged in coal-mining as well as railroad and construction work. These occupations consisted of menial and low paying jobs which were often physically demanding and required long work hours. Workplaces for such occupations were unclean and dangerous because no consideration was made to protect workers from accidents. White-collar occupations were, as a matter of course, off-limits to the Buraku people (Harada 1988: 62-63).

In the modern period, the Buraku people continued to live in filthy conditions, suffer due to poverty, and be deprived of education. However, there was a clear change in the form of discrimination against the Buraku people. Institutionalized discrimination pervaded the previous feudal periods as well as the modern period, but during the Meiji period, cases of individual discrimination in marriage, education, and employment dramatically increased since the social stratification was no longer rigidly regulated, compared to the previous periods. Forcing them to be unschooled and unemployed, the new form of discrimination perpetuated the belief in the inferiority of the Buraku people. The capitalist and imperialistic society considered the uneducated and unemployed Buraku people as non-productive; therefore, it labeled them as failures who could not fulfill the duties of a citizen of the Japanese empire. This suggests that a new rationalization for discrimination against the Buraku was developed in the modern period, according to the new form of segregation (Neary 1997: 56).
3.5 Present Period (After 1945)

Chronological observations have shown how the historical-economic and ideological components have affected the formation of Buraku people and the discrimination against them over the years. The development of agriculture, a historical-economic element, contributed to the formation of special status people who eventually evolved into Buraku people. Special status and the stigma associated with it have been reinforced by the maintenance of the ruling class, an ideological element. Notably, this ideological element has been intricately intertwined with historical-economic elements of Japanese society, such as rice production, leather production, and capitalism. Other ideological elements, e.g. religious beliefs, also played a significant role in reinforcing special status and the stigma assigned to it.

During the modern period, capitalism maintained the status of the Buraku people and the discrimination against them. Because capitalism requires cheap labor to prosper, the Buraku people continued to be placed at the bottom of the social hierarchy. In present Japanese society, capitalism still continues to support a social class which hinders a resolution of the Buraku issue; however, capitalist relations of production is no longer considered a major element in reinforcing discrimination against the Buraku.

Current problems faced by the Buraku appear more complicated than ever as the political-societal system continues to modernize (Watanabe 1996: 156-157, 176-177). The Buraku people were once exclusively engaged in “3K jobs” since these occupations were usually “kitanai” (filthy), “kitsui” (tiring), and “kiken” (dangerous). However, illegal foreign workers from the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and other countries have currently infiltrated these occupations. Also, capitalism used to depend heavily upon the Buraku communities for cheap labor, but such labor is now being obtained overseas. Furthermore, the standard of living and education of Buraku people has dramatically improved through the efforts of the BLL.

Despite all the positive changes, discrimination against the Buraku still exists, and misconceptions and prejudice still abound. Dumont, when analyzing the Indian caste system, stated that the caste system flexibly adapts itself to new conditions and further
perpetuates itself (1966: 226). Scholars in the United States also mention that racism responds the same way in order to adjust to new social conditions (Cose 1997: 190; Russell 1992: 83; Yamato 1992: 66). Similarly, some Buraku scholars assume that discrimination against the Buraku people is not fading away but may merely be changing form, although it is not as severe and covert as it once was (Neary 1997: 50, 74). Thus, it is no longer applicable to simply accept that interacting with the religious concepts, the maintenance of the ruling class, induced by capitalism, a historical-economic element, strongly contributes to the Buraku issue at the present time. Then, the following crucial question arises: Which element(s) in the present Japanese society continue to reinforce Buraku discrimination; or in other words, how has the Buraku discrimination transformed itself?
CHAPTER 4
OBSERVATION OF THE IDEOLOGICAL DOMAIN OF THE CURRENT BURAKU ISSUE

4.1 Fundamental Methodology For Both Phases of Research

The concept of culture refers to “the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior” (Spradley 1979: 5). The ethnographic method, a way of describing culture, is concerned with the effect, as well as the meaning, of actions and events on the people we seek to understand. Ethnographers argue that a considerable amount of the meanings behind socio-cultural behaviors is directly expressed in linguistic form (Spradley 1979: 5). In other words, the complex system of both human actions and events can be displayed linguistically. Consequently, ethnographers are able to make inferences about a culture or cultural problem by observing events and listening to the people. This method provides an effective tool in interpretive research and data gathering to determine the ideological elements that have contributed to a socio-cultural phenomenon.

For this thesis, two phases of research were conducted. The first phase (Research I) included participant observations and semi-structured interviews. It was designed to pinpoint the extent of discrimination against the Buraku in Japanese society today. Based on what was found in the first phase of research, the second phase (Research II) used questionnaires with both close-ended and open-ended questions. This second phase of research allowed for a deeper and more precise understanding of the current ideological reinforcement(s) of the Buraku issue, and provided data to either support or disprove findings from Research I.

Both phases of research involved both the Buraku and non-Buraku people. In studying social issues regarding discrimination, it is imperative to see both perspectives: people who discriminate and those who are discriminated against. By analyzing both perspectives, one can better comprehend the situation as a whole in order to find a solution (Okuda 1998: 40-41). However, it was quite difficult to find Buraku subjects
because of the sensitivity issue explained in Chapter 2. Also, due to the same reason, a major limitation in both phases of research was that the Buraku people who hide their identity could not be studied. Consequently, all Buraku subjects in both phases of research were members of the BLL who had declared their Buraku identity.

4.2 Research I

4.2.1 Research Goals, Methods, and Difficulties Encountered

The first phase of research was designed to gain a general overview, as well as an emic understanding, of the problem. Experimental design and subsequent implementation was not determined until after my arrival in Osaka because of the need to first accurately pinpoint the extent of the problem. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Buraku issue is a sensitive subject for both Buraku and non-Buraku people. Many Buraku people, who choose to conceal their identity, wish to be left alone and oppose publicizing the Buraku issue. This attitude protects them from being revealed as Buraku and from subsequent discrimination. Likewise, many non-Buraku tend to avoid any involvement in the Buraku issue so that they will not be accused of discriminatory practices.

Snowball sampling appeared to be the best sampling method in which the Buraku people would not feel their privacy was being invaded, and also the non-Buraku people would not feel forced into becoming involved in the Buraku issue. Snowball sampling consists of step-by-step introductions that expand one's subject base. In other words, a subject introduces other subjects who will provide more subjects through their social circles (Babbie 1992: 292). Although the sample population and demographic diversity were reduced compared to the random method, snowball sampling seemed to be adequate for this study. It was less offensive to Buraku subjects since the researcher needed to obtain their consent before being included in the study.

The questions asked during the interviews were semi-structured to provide some flexibility in tailoring questions according to the individual and situation. As advised by
the BLL officers, the interviews were carried out in the form of focus group interviews. Since the Buraku subjects had never met me, the group setting was designed to reduce nervousness among the subjects and to stimulate active participation. One disadvantage of the group setting is that the researcher has less control during the interview (Morgan 1988: 20-21). Also, possible distortion of the data can occur via peer pressure. Nevertheless, the focus group method was a good starting point to build the necessary bonds of trust between the Buraku subjects and myself. In the group setting, the Buraku subjects appeared to be more comfortable in openly expressing their thoughts and opinions. The group interviews enabled me to develop a more informal relationship with the subjects, providing an opportunity to conduct future individual interviews. Unfortunately, time limitations and financial constraints prevented me from doing so for this thesis.

4.2.1.1 Research Area

From June to September 1993, the first phase of research was conducted in Osaka prefecture. Osaka is well known by Buraku scholars because it has a higher concentration of large Buraku communities compared to other prefectures. As mentioned previously, Buraku communities have historically been affiliated with the ruling classes, including the Emperor. Since the Japanese capital changed several times over the centuries, there are higher populations of Buraku communities in the old capital cities such as Nara, Kyoto, and Osaka. Consequently, the BLL is active and influential in Osaka, and it has implemented many Dowa (assimilation) projects.

Mr. Okuda from the Osaka Branch of the BLL helped me select a research area within easy commute of my place of residence. The “A” district, located in the south of Osaka, was chosen as a research area. This area has been known as one of the largest, self-contained Buraku areas. Accordingly, Buraku people in this district can completely isolate themselves from mainstream society if they choose to do so. In fact, quite a few people do not venture outside the district.
4.2.1.2 Research Plan

Careful planning and re-planning of the research was necessary to avoid situations in which Buraku subjects would be offended or hurt by my actions. By consulting BLL officers, I arrived at the following research plan.

1. Conduct participant observations during the course of three meetings in the district. In each meeting, Buraku parents discussed their children’s educational futures. There were approximately ten parents of which two or three were fathers. These observations were set up in order to understand activities conducted by the BLL and to acquaint the Buraku people with my research.

2. Take part in a field trip around the district with Mr. Hirose in order to see the improved living conditions and the difference between Buraku and non-Buraku communities.

3. Hold three semi-structured interviews with two BLL officers from the Osaka Branch and three BLL officers from the Izumi City Branch in order to understand the Buraku issue and the Buraku liberation activities from their professional perspectives.

4. Hold three semi-structured focus group interviews with young adults, parents, and elders in an effort to understand the Buraku issue from their point of view and to understand their lives as Buraku.

5. Conduct one semi-structured focus group interview with non-Buraku young adults to examine their knowledge and opinions of the Buraku issue.

4.2.1.3 Selection of Subjects

In July 1993, I contacted Mr. Monden, a professor of the Buraku issue at Kansai University of Foreign Studies. Through snowball sampling, Mr. Monden introduced me to Mr. Okuda, an officer of the Osaka Branch of the BLL, who worked directly with the Buraku people. Through Mr. Okuda, I was able to set up a meeting with BLL officers of the Izumi City Branch. At this meeting, the Izumi City Branch officers recommended that I participate in their activities first. In doing so, I would come into contact with active members of their organization. After several participant observations of BLL activities, Mr. Hirose and Mr. Yamano arranged for me to conduct my focus group interviews.
In addition to individual interviews with five BLL officers, there was a total of four focus groups, each containing seven subjects. I decided to have one focus group for non-Buraku young adults and three focus groups for Buraku people: (1) young adults, (2) parents, and (3) elders (Table 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Individual Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BLL Officer</td>
<td>Two officers from Osaka Branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three officers from Izumi City Branch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buraku</td>
<td>(1) Young Adult (15 – 29 years old)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Parent (30 – 55 years old)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Elderly (56 – 80 years old)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Buraku</td>
<td>(4) Young Adult (15 – 29 years old)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Subjects in Research I

Because the future of the Buraku liberation movement depends on what the younger generation learns and hands down to subsequent generations, Buraku and non-Buraku young adults were the main focus groups in this study. The interviews with the three groups of Buraku people went smoothly because of the cooperation of the BLL officers. Most Buraku participants introduced by the officers showed their enthusiasm in helping my research. In order to meet non-Buraku young adults, I contacted a former colleague who teaches at a high school in Osaka. With his help, it was relatively easy to locate non-Buraku subjects for group interviews.

4.2.1.4 Questions for All Subjects

The questions asked during the interviews were semi-structured, incorporating some flexibility according to the person being interviewed and the situation at hand. A fundamental inquiry regarding discrimination and the Buraku issue provided the base of
the questions asked, and included: (1) What is discrimination?; (2) How does experiencing discrimination affect one’s life?; and (3) What is the Buraku issue? From these basic interrogatory points, more specific questions were formulated as follows:

1. Have you witnessed or experienced discrimination, and if so, how did you feel about it?

2. Whether it has been directed against yourself or others, how have you dealt with discrimination?

3. What is the extent of your knowledge of the Buraku issue?

4. Can you suggest possible solutions regarding the Buraku issue?

5. As a parent, how do you explain the Buraku issue to your children? (only for Buraku parents)

6. Do you openly make your identity known to non-Buraku people? If so, what is the reaction? (only for Buraku subjects)

4.2.2 Results and Discussion

4.2.2.1 Perspectives from The Officers

All five officers agree that the fade-away and assimilation theories, which encourage a “leave it alone” approach, do not bring true liberation for the Buraku people. It is essential that the government, as well as people in mainstream society, accept the existence of the Buraku issue and assist the Buraku people. Although many non-Buraku people have claimed that governmental assistance to the Buraku constitutes a preferential treatment, these officers assert that the Buraku communities still need some sort of financial assistance. When Mr. Hirose took me on a field trip in the “A” district, he pointed out an area improved by government assistance and an area that had not been improved. On the unimproved side, the roads were narrower, and the houses were older, smaller and crowded together. Mr. Hirose stated that the unimproved side would be
improved, if the government decided to financially assist Dowa (Buraku) districts in Osaka next year.

During the field trip, we surveyed the entire “A” district and its vicinities from a rooftop. I honestly expressed my thought that the Buraku “A” district was cleaner and more organized than other non-Buraku districts. Mr. Hirose explained a crucial difference between non-Buraku and Buraku communities: “Although a Buraku district is new and well-maintained, there are many apartment complexes built through the government-assisted Dowa projects but few privately owned houses.” In addition, the Japanese Communist Party’s anti-Buraku liberation campaign has perpetuated the notion that the Buraku communities continue to obtain an excess in government assistance. In reality, many Buraku people are still on a long waiting list to move into subsidized housing.

Because most BLL officers believe that the younger generation is an essential group for the future Buraku liberation movement, the Izumi City Branch of the BLL has focused on the education of the Buraku youth. Accordingly, activities at the Izumi City Branch emphasize (1) children’s education, (2) parental guidance to improve their children’s education, and (3) communication with surrounding communities in order to reduce the “jealousy problem.” Regarding Buraku children, an officer stated:

Buraku children are cheerful and active as long as they stay in their districts. In settings with non-Buraku children, they become more quiet and passive than non-Buraku children. Perhaps, they have less confidence in themselves compared to non-Buraku children.

Buraku children may realize from an early age the disadvantages of being Buraku, creating complex feelings within themselves. It may prove to be detrimental to build their self-esteem and then later have society encourage them to conceal their identity. The officers believe that assisting Buraku children to gain more confidence will lead to an improvement in their educational levels (for example, more Buraku children entering prestigious universities). Many Buraku scholars also share the view that it is very important for the Buraku people to have a positive self-image.
The Izumi City Branch makes information available to Buraku parents regarding educational and employment opportunities for their children. This program is based on the belief that encouragement from their parents will help motivate Buraku children. For the Buraku parents, it is often difficult to advise their children on educational or employment matters since quite a few Buraku parents were deprived of even basic education, such as reading and writing, due to severe discrimination over the past decades. Accordingly, this BLL activity seems very useful to Buraku parents.

Substantial financial assistance from the government has improved Buraku communities; however, it has created antagonism from non-Buraku communities. To cope with this situation, the BLL has developed the following strategies:

1. With improved communication, the BLL will provide non-Buraku communities with updates on the current status of Dowa projects.

2. As a recipient of government assistance, the BLL has attempted to make Buraku communities a model of well-implemented social welfare programs.

3. Buraku communities will provide non-Buraku people with free access to the public facilities built with government assistance.

4.2.2.2 Side Effects from The Administrative Struggle

According to the Izumi City Branch officers, a majority of Buraku young adults lack interest in Buraku liberation. Very few single young adults are actively involved in the BLL despite the fact that they are the future of the Buraku liberation movement. BLL activities are mostly attended by parents and young children, which the Izumi City Branch officers cite as a reflection of a current problem in the BLL. Governmental assistance through the BLL administrative struggle has brought an improvement in the standard of living for Buraku communities. The purpose of this struggle is not only to provide social benefits for the Buraku people, but also to further promote the Buraku liberation movement. The central concern expressed by the officers is that the purpose has been distorted. Instead of the Buraku liberation movement as the main focus, the social benefits have become the main motivation for many Buraku people to join or stay in the
BLL. Through BLL membership, the Buraku people are eligible for certain government assistance, e.g. educational scholarships, tax exemption, and housing assistance, obtained by the administration struggle. Although membership provides these benefits, "membership alone" is very different from "active participation" in BLL activities or the Buraku liberation movement. An Izumi City Branch officer remarked that some BLL members not only showed indifference to participating in BLL activities but also refused to receive the BLL newsletter since they did not want to be identified as Buraku. These Buraku people have become BLL members, mainly for the social benefits.

Buraku parents play a major role in providing their family members with social benefits. In order to secure basic social benefits, one adult member of the household registers his or her family in the BLL (this makes all family members eligible for benefits); however, in some cases, being eligible for government assistance alone may not be enough. Occasional attendance in BLL activities may often be needed for further information. It is important to note that many parents, whose initial interest may have been to obtain social benefits, have become active members. Through BLL enlightenment activities mainly designed to combat discrimination, participants can learn how to deal with discrimination and build strong ties with other Buraku members and non-Buraku people who support the Buraku liberation movement. When a Buraku individual actually experiences a discriminatory incident, the contacts developed through the BLL provide substantial protection and support. Thus, it is natural and important that parents try not only to obtain social benefits but also to establish some support system against discrimination, for their family members, especially their children. For additional benefits and support, it is recommended that at least one adult family member occasionally participate in BLL activities. Thus, parental involvement in BLL programs is expected as a matter of course.

The officers from the Izumi City Branch also expressed their concern that BLL activities for Buraku young children have become more like those of a daycare center. Many young children in Buraku communities attend BLL activities whose purpose is to enlighten them on the Buraku issue. It is considered an appropriate starting place for young Buraku children to learn about being Buraku and about handling potential
problems in the future. The hope is that this education will contribute to the Buraku liberation movement. In reality, however, Buraku children participate in these activities as a substitute for Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts. It is not a problem for the Buraku children to have fun through BLL activities; however, it is a problem if BLL activities end up being just fun activities. Although parents seem to encourage their children to join the activities, their motivation for doing so often may not be so much for enlightening their children but rather for seeking a daycare facility. Because the true significance of BLL activities tends to be overlooked, Buraku children start distancing themselves from the BLL as they grow up.

Thus, member participation in BLL activities illustrates the problem that people’s motivation leans too much toward obtaining government assistance or other support (e.g. daycare support for young children), rather than for promoting Buraku liberation. It also partially explains why few Buraku young adults actively participate in the BLL. Unlike young children and parents, Buraku young adults do not need Boy Scout and Girl Scout activities; neither are they responsible for obtaining government assistance. Consequently, they have no incentive to become active participants in the BLL unless they determine to work for Buraku liberation.

A point worth mentioning as another representation of the motivational problem is the role that gender plays in the degree of participation in BLL activities. I attended three parent gatherings: one on current discriminatory cases and the remaining two on successfully raising children. During each meeting, there were only two to three male participants compared to seven to ten female counterparts. These assemblies started from seven or eight o’clock in the evening when it is often possible for male parents to join. Many male parents may sincerely support the Buraku liberation movement, but they find it difficult to participate because, in Japanese society, men are expected as breadwinners to work overtime, committing their lives to their companies. Their under-representation thereby may reflect a culturally-reinforced gender roles.

Gender roles in Japanese society still adhere to the principle that men play a substantial role and women play an auxiliary role in a family. According to Sugiyama (1976: 52-53), a woman’s job is solely domestic—doing the laundry, cooking, cleaning,
and child rearing. On the other hand, men should be protected from such mundane chores since their role in a family is *daikoku-bashira* (central pillar of a house) or breadwinner of the family. Since Buraku men typically provide the BLL membership as heads of households while women fulfill the participation role, it implies that membership is given more weight than participation in BLL activities. Therefore, the demography of adult male and female attendance in BLL activities also seems to suggest the existence of the problem is caused by the administration struggle's success in obtaining governmental financial assistance.

**4.2.2.3 Buraku Young Adults**

Buraku young adults who participated in the interviews were more aware of Buraku discrimination because of their involvement in the BLL. They had studied Buraku history and were up-to-date on current Buraku problems. They openly accepted who they are and were not ashamed to say so; however, they belong in the minority. The following two examples illustrate the courage and determination that are necessary for the Buraku people to disclose their identity.

Case No.1: A female high school student, leader of the Buraku High School Student Group in the A districts, described how she stood up in front of her class and declared her identity. Although there was "no long-term negative reaction" from her classmates after the declaration, there was some awkwardness among some classmates for a short while. She proudly said, "I absolutely do not want to hide where I come from. And to show there is nothing wrong with being Buraku, I also did this when I was in junior high school."

Case No.2: A male college student said, "At first, I concealed my identity from my college friends but I finally let one or two close friends know I am from a Dowa (Buraku) district. There was some initial discomfort; however, after I invited them to discuss the Buraku issue, they wanted to know more about it."

Disclosing one's Buraku identity requires overcoming the fear of experiencing discrimination. Because the Buraku are ethnically Japanese, it is very easy for them to conceal their identity. Accordingly, most Buraku people, including young adults, find it
more convenient to hide their identity until a catalyst, such as marriage or employment, forces them to reveal it. Active participation in the BLL can increase the risk of disclosure and discrimination, which may explain why many Buraku young adults distance themselves from the BLL. Those who participate in BLL activities have to acknowledge and overcome the risks; in other words, their desire for the Buraku liberation has to overcome the fear of discrimination.

The main part of BLL activities is the enlightenment program conducted for both Buraku and non-Buraku people of all ages. The purpose of this program is to teach people to have a better understanding of the Buraku issue. For non-Buraku people, the program provides an opportunity to learn more about the Buraku issue so they may realize and correct their misconceptions or prejudice, and support the human rights movement through Buraku liberation. For Buraku people, it emphasizes education as a way of dealing with the negative aspects of being Buraku, and also motivates them to confront discrimination and to promote the liberation of both Buraku and other oppressed people.

The Izumi City Branch officers believe that it is preferable for Buraku youth to start learning “who they are” in terms of their Buraku identity when they are young. Many young children in Buraku districts join BLL activities called kodomo-kai (children’s gathering) or gakushu-kai (educational gathering). These gatherings are a part of the BLL enlightenment program, through which Buraku children are introduced to the Buraku issue, including Buraku history and past and current discrimination. The unfortunate outcome is that these BLL activities tend to be viewed as simply fun activities for the young children. Some children might have an awakening experience which would help them realize what may happen because of their Buraku identity. However, the majority of children show little comprehension. They are simply too young to deeply understand their potential disadvantages and problems because they are Buraku. The Izumi City Branch officers support the above assumption. They also suggest that a limited social environment may also cause a lack of awareness in Buraku children. Because young children usually do not venture outside the community, most people they
encounter are local Buraku people. Accordingly, it is not necessary for the Buraku children to fear revealing their identity or to anticipate being discriminated against.

Although most Buraku young adults used to participate in the BLL enlightenment program during their childhood, many leave the BLL upon reaching adolescence. Furthermore, as child participants, these young adults learned strategies to combat discrimination and prejudice; however, their reaction to actual discriminatory practices often does not reflect what they have learned from the BLL enlightenment activities. Many of them tend to conceal their identity, or intentionally avoid confronting discrimination, when they witness or experience it. The following example of a female subject in her early 20s, dealing with discrimination at her office, illustrates how many Buraku young adults deal with discrimination:

At my office, two of my *senpai* (senior) colleagues started talking about a Buraku district nearby. One said, 'That place is so dirty and dangerous, you better stay away!' Another started whispering, 'By the way, did you know that so-and-so in the other office is from that Dowa district?' I learned about the Buraku issue and liberation theories at the BLL, but I could not say anything even though I was mad and wanted to tell them they had the wrong image and concept of the Buraku.

Her experience reveals that the Buraku liberation movement is not progressing as well as the BLL had hoped.

Continued participation in the BLL enlightenment program may result in the gradual realization of their Buraku identity and also provide adequate lessons to confront discrimination. Nevertheless, as described above, quite a few Buraku adolescents exhibit indifference toward BLL activities, distancing themselves from the BLL. This phenomenon is attributed to adolescence when social circles and hobbies are of the greatest interest. However, although indifference to the Buraku issue can be partially blamed on adolescence, the fear of discrimination appears to play a significant role in the Buraku youth's avoidance of BLL activities. A notable point is that this avoidance occurs when the Buraku young children become old enough to comprehend their disadvantages as Buraku and when they start socializing outside the communities. Interviews with two young adult subjects are good examples to demonstrate the complex feelings toward their
identity, induced by the fear of discrimination. According to them, they never thought that they would actually face discrimination. At the same time, they were constantly afraid of discrimination resulting from the disclosure of their identity. Their solution was to keep their distance from the BLL until they painfully experienced actual discrimination and returned to BLL activities.

The fear of discrimination among Buraku young adults may worsen as they become more involved with mainstream Japanese society, for example when they attend a higher educational institution or work for a company. Being exposed to mainstream society may make them self-conscious of their identity for the first time. Also, because persistent discriminatory practices mostly exist in the form of marital and occupational discrimination, the Buraku young adults are subject to such discrimination due to their age. Involvement in mainstream society and their age may make Buraku young adults more conscious of disadvantages associated with their identity, intensifying their fear of discrimination.

Interacting with the above elements, distancing themselves from BLL activities in the process of understanding the Buraku situation also seems to foster the fear. Through the BLL enlightenment program during their childhood, Buraku young adults have heard how the Buraku people have been discriminated against and how painful and awful those experiences were. With some of their own experiences to confirm the injustices of mainstream society, they begin to wonder what might happen to them when their identity is revealed. As a result, a substantial number of Buraku young adults distance themselves from the BLL and attempt to blend into mainstream society, hoping no one will discover their secret.

4.2.2.4 Age Difference

Analyzing all the interviews with the Buraku, there are differences in the experience of discrimination among the three generations (elders, parents, and young adults). Because I conclude that age difference does not play a significant role in reinforcing discrimination in the present society, I do not go into a detailed discussion.
However, it may be desirable to briefly mention the fundamental differences. Buraku elders suffered the most overt discrimination. For example, an elderly Buraku woman recalled an incident where she was refused a ride home by a taxi driver when she mentioned where she lived. Buraku parents experienced discrimination mainly when contemplating marriage or seeking employment. On the other hand, young Buraku adults appeared to have had little first-hand experience. How these young adults would deal with actual discrimination in the future is unknown.

4.2.2.5 Non-Buraku Young Adults

Many non-Buraku subjects demonstrated indifference to the Buraku issue. In general, most young adults tend to display little or no interest in issues that are not related to themselves, their friends, or their hobbies. Although indifference probably does not reinforce discrimination, it appears to be problematic in terms of ending discrimination. The attitude: “It’s not my problem; I’m not Buraku, why do I need to learn about the Buraku issue?” reinforces denial and ignorance, and prevents people from gaining a better understanding of the Buraku issue. In fact, most non-Buraku subjects thought that discrimination against the Buraku no longer existed in Japanese society.

All non-Buraku subjects exhibited limited knowledge of the Buraku issue. What they knew about the Buraku issue was based on what they had learned in history classes. As detailed in Chapter 3, Buraku history has developed along with Japanese history. One non-Buraku officer from the BLL Izumi City Branch talked about his uncle who was a prominent historian:

About 30 years ago, most people had a strong prejudice towards the Buraku people. And I am sure that my uncle was also prejudiced; however, my uncle admitted that Japanese history could not be explained without the Buraku people.

His uncle’s statement reveals that as long as people learn Japanese history, they cannot help but be exposed to the Buraku issue. The important question is what kind of information has been taught to people in history classes? All the non-Buraku subjects
seemed to know: (1) the eta and hinin were discriminated against, and (2) the eta and hinin evolved into the Buraku people. It appeared that they only remembered how eta, hinin, and Buraku people have been stigmatized. This limited knowledge among the non-Buraku subjects seems to dwell on the negative aspects of the Buraku. As shown in Chapter 2, there are many cases of discriminatory graffiti and statements referring to how people treated eta and hinin. The concept that the Buraku have been treated badly by others is engraved in people’s minds. Yet, little favorable information about the Buraku, such as the historical contribution of the Buraku to Japanese traditional culture, is available in the society.

School education requires Japanese history as a mandatory subject. Accordingly, most Japanese probably share the same degree of knowledge as the non-Buraku subjects have in this study. Because the limited knowledge emphasizes the unpleasant reality of discrimination toward the Buraku, there is a high risk of reinforcing misconceptions or prejudice. This factor seems to be a key to invalidate the fade-away and assimilation theories. As long as history classes only provide such limited information, “leaving the Buraku issue alone until it goes away” may preserve the misconceptions and prejudice instead of eliminating them.

All the non-Buraku subjects declared that they had no prejudice and would not discriminate against the Buraku. The crucial question is how these non-Buraku young adults will react when they find themselves in a situation where they witness actual discrimination, or encounter misconceptions or prejudice against the Buraku. Because Japanese culture emphasizes agreement and harmony within a group or family (Sato 1983: 29-42; White 1987: 18), the Japanese, especially the youth, are vulnerable to pressure from family and peers. In other words, it is easy for young people to adopt misconceptions and misguided beliefs. A good example is a female subject whose mother advised her to keep her distance from Buraku districts. The subject’s mother, when she was young, was taught by her mother (the subject’s grandmother) to stay away from Buraku communities and people because they were dirty and dangerous. Without adequate information, misconceptions and prejudice regarding the Buraku are easily created, passed on to others, and perpetuated for generations.
4.3 Research II

4.3.1 Research Goals, Methods, and Difficulties Encountered

Research II was designed to verify the findings of Research I. Clarifying the findings of Research I may add depth and breadth, leading to a more profound understanding of the current Buraku situation and possible solutions for the future. In Research II, people from various geographic locations were interviewed to provide a broader database. Research II continued to examine parental influence on young adults; consequently, subjects were categorized into Buraku and non-Buraku young adults and parents with the focus again on young adults. Non-Buraku subjects came from four geographical areas: (1) Hokkaido (no Buraku areas), (2) Tokyo (few Buraku areas), (3) Kanagawa (quite a few Buraku areas), and (4) Osaka (many Buraku areas), while Buraku subjects all came from Osaka (Table 6). Because of time and financial constraints, questionnaires were used in lieu of interviews. Research II focused on four elements common to both Buraku and non-Buraku people: (1) image of the Buraku, (2) knowledge of the Buraku issue, (3) misconceptions and prejudice toward the Buraku, and (4) influence of dominant ideologies such as the belief in homogeneity, the myth of an egalitarian or humanitarian society, and the fade-away and assimilation theories.

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions which were constructed based on the findings in Research I (Table 7). The second part consisted of "what if" questions that placed the subjects in various hypothetical situations (Table 7). The "what if" questions were designed to identify contradictory elements in response to the open-ended questions. The intent was to minimize the possibility that the subjects were answering merely to please the interviewer, or being idealistic rather than realistic. Close-ended questions were asked to determine the degree of knowledge of Buraku history. While there are advantages to conducting a questionnaire (e.g. broader database), there are also disadvantages. For one, I did not meet the subjects in person, so it was impossible to ask further questions. Another disadvantage was that some Buraku parents were unable to read and write because of past educational deprivation through institutional racism. Thus, it was difficult to find Buraku parent subjects.
Five BLL officers helped distribute questionnaires to Buraku subjects. Because many Buraku tend to avoid situations where they risk revealing their identity, accessibility to Buraku subjects was limited. Had it not been for the support of the BLL, finding a substantial number of Buraku subjects would have been impossible. On the other hand, finding non-Buraku subjects was relatively easy since I had access to people in teaching positions who could enlist their students' cooperation. Two high school teachers, a university teacher, and two college students found non-Buraku subjects to answer questionnaires. I sent 20 copies of the questionnaire to be distributed to each subject category (young adults and parents) in Tokyo and Osaka. In Hokkaido and Kanagawa, my cooperators in these two regions were college students, who had more difficulty in distributing and collecting the questionnaires; therefore, I sent only 10 copies to each subject category. Since conducting the research depended heavily on local cooperators, it was difficult to control variables such as the ratio of female and male subjects, the proportion of non-Buraku and Buraku, and equal representation from various geographic locations. Therefore, most non-Buraku and Buraku parents were female. Also, the standard of education of both non-Buraku and Buraku subjects is considered the national average or a little higher than the average, especially the non-Buraku young adults, all of whom were college preparatory or university students.

As discussed in Research I, sensitivity regarding the Buraku issue often interferes with conducting research. During Research II, one particular difficulty was a reminder of how sensitive the Buraku issue is. A high-school teacher who was approached to distribute the questionnaires to non-Buraku young adults was reluctant to do so because of the following:

1. The questionnaires were designed for non-Buraku students; therefore, if there were Buraku students concealing their identity, the delicate questions, especially the what-if questions, may hurt their feelings.

2. It is considered disrespectful to ask about parental occupations and educational levels.

3. The questions dealing with the historical contributions of the Buraku people too strongly conclude that they were responsible for the creation of many traditional arts and crafts. As a result, those who are now engaged in these arts and crafts would be offended by these questions.
Unless corrections were made according to his suggestions, he stated that he would not be able to cooperate in the research. Unfortunately, it was difficult to make the corrections at that time since some questionnaires were already completed. As a result, I could not distribute the questionnaires at his high school.
### Buraku Subjects (Total Number: 71)

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 18</td>
<td>19 - 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
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<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
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</table>

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 39</td>
<td>40 - 49</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
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(Two subjects: no comment)

### Non-Buraku Subjects (Total Number: 85)

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<th>Hokkaido</th>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 18</td>
<td>19 - 22</td>
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<table>
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<th>Geographical Area</th>
<th>Osaka</th>
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<th>Tokyo</th>
<th>Hokkaido</th>
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<th>Age</th>
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<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
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<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>35 - 9</td>
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<td>35</td>
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Table 6 Demography of Buraku and non-Buraku subjects
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Subjects (Buraku and Non-Buraku Parents &amp; Young Adults)</td>
<td>Have you or anyone you know experienced discrimination?</td>
<td>Determine the percentage of the population affected by discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How would you describe your identity?</td>
<td>Determine image of oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do you think about the concealment of Buraku identity?</td>
<td>Determine opinion about the action and the image of Buraku</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| | Do you agree that discrimination against the Buraku people exists?  
| | • If so, what do you think should be done?  
| | • If not, why do you not think so? | Determine how public denial and the fade-away and assimilation theories prevail in the society |
| | Close-ended questions on the history of Buraku were divided into two categories: (1) Origin of Buraku and (2) Historical contribution of Buraku | Determine the degree of knowledge of Buraku history |
| Parents Only (Buraku and Non-Buraku) | What are your plans for your child’s future? | Determine whether parental involvement affects the quality of children’s education |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buraku Parents &amp; Young Adults</td>
<td>How do you feel about your identity?</td>
<td>Determine self-image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do your non-Buraku friends know about your Buraku identity?</td>
<td>Determine the degree of concealment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>What-if Questions</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buraku Young Adults</td>
<td>1. If others at school or in the workplace had prejudice or misconceptions of the Buraku people, what action would you take?</td>
<td>Determine how Buraku people deal with discriminatory practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. If you decided to marry a non-Buraku and encountered discrimination, what action would you take?</td>
<td>Determine how Buraku people deal with discriminatory actions against their identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buraku Parents</td>
<td>1. If your colleague was discovered to be Buraku and subsequently discriminated against, what action would you take?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. If your child expressed a desire to marry a non-Buraku, what action would you take?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>What-if Questions</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Buraku Parents &amp; Young Adults</td>
<td>1. If you were Buraku, how would you feel?</td>
<td>Determine the image of Buraku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. If your boss was Buraku, how would you feel?</td>
<td>To determine how non-Buraku people react to situations involving Buraku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Buraku Young Adults</td>
<td>1. If your friend revealed his/her Buraku identity and was discriminated against, what would you do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. If you discovered your future partner was Buraku, what would you do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Buraku Parents</td>
<td>1. If you discovered your child’s friend was Buraku, what would you do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. If your child’s future husband or wife revealed their Buraku identity, what action would you take?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 Questions in the questionnaires for Research II
4.3.2 Results and Discussion

*Subjects who did not answer a particular question are excluded in the percentages. Those who were undecided are included in the numbers, and their percentages are shown in parentheses when relevant to the content of the question.

4.3.2.1 Limited Knowledge of The Buraku Issue

Results of Research II verified the findings in Research I that most non-Buraku people had little knowledge of the Buraku issue. Geographical location did not appear to largely influence the results. It is also confirmed that knowledge of the Buraku issue among the non-Buraku is limited to what is taught in history classes in school and includes the following:

1. The eta-hinin class system created the Buraku people.

2. Buraku people are descendants of the eta-hinin class and criminals.

3. Buraku people are traditionally engaged in occupations detested by mainstream society.

The above knowledge tends to portray the Buraku in a negative light. Contrary to my expectations, both Buraku and non-Buraku subjects had the same limited degree of knowledge about the positive historical contributions of the Buraku people. This discovery was interesting because I expected the Buraku subjects to know more through BLL activities.

In regard to current Buraku issues, knowledge was extremely limited among the non-Buraku subjects since school education barely covers these issues. In addition, media coverage, which is unable to overcome the sensitivity of the issue, still tends not to touch the Buraku issue. Accordingly, there are not many sources which provide the non-Buraku with sufficient current information about the Buraku. On the other hand, the Buraku have more resources available to obtain the information, because of the BLL and its activities. Furthermore, the Buraku subjects had experienced discriminatory practices themselves, or had heard second-hand of these practices, which the non-Buraku subjects had rarely experienced or heard of. This can be an incentive for the Buraku people to
know the front-line problems regarding the issue. Thus, most Buraku subjects were acquainted with the current issues, which also introduced the positive aspects, e.g. the accomplishments of the Buraku in the human rights movement in Japan. Recognizing such aspects through the current issues seemed to help them build self-esteem.

Fifteen percent of the non-Buraku subjects felt that discrimination against the Buraku was currently non-existent; therefore, no corrective action was required (32% were undecided). Although 15% is by no means a majority, none of the Buraku counterparts shared this view. This opinion gap between the non-Buraku and the Buraku subjects is identical with the discrepancy in racial topics between the majority and the minority in the United States. Because negative factors of minority issues are denied or ignored by the majority, the discrepancy will not be eliminated but rather widened (Blauner 1992: 55; Cose 1997: 95, 183-184). The denial of the 15% of the non-Buraku subjects seems to be induced by a dominant ideology, the fade-away and assimilation theories, since they form the following opinions:

1. Because I have no knowledge of Buraku discrimination, it must not exist.

2. Because they are Japanese, if the Buraku people hide their identity, the problem will go away.

3. Because mass media and school education continue to mention or teach the Buraku issue, discrimination exists.

4. The Buraku issue is a relic of the past and no longer exists.

5. If the Buraku people move away from the Buraku districts, the problem will cease to exist.

Although these opinions provide a quick solution, their simplicity reflects a lack of knowledge of the Buraku issue. Also, the ignorant and indifferent attitudes presented in Research I was seen among 21% of the non-Buraku subjects. Most stated that because they were not Buraku and had never met Buraku or encountered discrimination:

- I have nothing to do with the Buraku issue.

- I am not concerned with the Buraku issue.
Many scholars state that denial, ignorance, and indifference of minority issues largely stems from the fact that the majority of people do not know about it (Cose 1997: 84; Yoshida 1998: 73-74). The fade-way and assimilation theories not only encourage people not to know about the Buraku issue, but also encourage the social structure not to provide information about it. This results in further perpetuating denial, ignorance, and indifference of the Buraku issue, in Japanese society.

Most of non-Buraku subjects assumed that a lack of humanity and traditional concepts (e.g. impurity of the Buraku) among “some people” reinforced discrimination against the Buraku. Many non-Buraku subjects, especially the parents, held overly optimistic views on the future of the Buraku issue by believing in the potential of the youth. These non-Buraku subjects believed that the youth were pure, modernized, and bias-free, so discrimination would gradually fade away generation-by-generation without strenuously dealing with it. Nevertheless, they neglect to see the crucial fact that the youth are susceptible to prejudice and live in a world full of prejudice created by adults (Cose 1997: 70-73). This optimism among the non-Buraku subjects ignores the current Buraku situations in which many discriminatory actions were actually conducted by the supposedly “bias-free” youth. It implies that, like the white majorities, the majority in Japan who has limited knowledge of minority issues tends to believe that they are reasonably egalitarian and humanistic, living in a reasonably democratic society.

An interesting discovery was that the non-Buraku parents appeared to be more influenced by not only the fade away and assimilation theories but also the belief in egalitarianism or humanitarianism. Twenty percent of the non-Buraku parents stated:

- Discrimination continues, because the Buraku communities have obtained too many government benefits, compared to non-Buraku communities.
- Discrimination has warped the mind of the Buraku people, so it is reinforced.
- Buraku people living together reinforces discrimination.

Based on the presupposition that Japan is an egalitarian society, these opinions imply that discrimination is reinforced by something that the Buraku people lack. Accordingly, the fade-away and assimilation theories and the belief in egalitarianism, strengthened by
limited knowledge, seem to lead these non-Buraku parents to the assumption that the "overdone" Buraku policies, or something lacking in the Buraku people, allows discrimination to remain. In short, these dominant ideologies and limited knowledge lead to "victim-blaming."

Although quite a few presented the ignorant and indifferent attitude influenced by the fade-away and assimilation theories, fewer non-Buraku young adults shared the above "victim-blaming" opinions. In responding to the question "why does discrimination still exist?" 26% of the non-Buraku young adults assumed that their limited knowledge of the Buraku issue contributed to discrimination; whereas only a few parents had the same opinion. The non-Buraku young adults expressed a desire for more information to better approach the Buraku issue (42% of non-Buraku young adults vs. 19% of non-Buraku parents). Because the non-Buraku young adults have lived a shorter amount of time, compared to their parent counterparts, they have been exposed less to the dominant ideologies, such as the fade away and assimilation theories. This may have allowed more young adults to have a better understanding and more a realistic view of the Buraku issue despite their limited knowledge.

4.3.2.2 Historical Knowledge

My expectation was that most Buraku subjects would be aware of the historical contributions of special status and Buraku people to Japanese traditional culture; however, this was not the case. Both the Buraku and the non-Buraku subjects displayed equal lack of knowledge about the role of Buraku people in the development of:

- Noh-gaku and Kabuki, two forms of traditional Japanese theater
- Zen rock gardens at famous temples
- Engineering technologies such as the construction of castles and temples

Again, there was no significant regional difference in the degree of historical knowledge among the subjects. One non-Buraku parent had studied medieval Japanese culture in college, so she was aware of the connection between the Buraku and Japanese traditional culture. Yet, not one Buraku subject had this in-depth knowledge.
In response to the questions asking about the historical contributions of the Buraku, both the Buraku and the non-Buraku subjects exhibited surprise and questioned why the schools did not teach them these facts. Both groups also suggested that educating people about such facts may assist in solving the Buraku issue. The statement of one Buraku young adult summarizes the opinions of most subjects:

The educational programs, such as Dowa education, have only taught what created the Buraku people, and how the Buraku people have been discriminated against. However, I never learned that the Buraku people were related to the Japanese traditional culture. I really believe that the historical contributions of the Buraku people should also be taught in the educational system.

In the United States, many scholars are concerned with the feeling of inferiority among the minority youth. Since school curricula rarely include the accomplishments and historical contributions of the minorities, the minority youth cannot see these favorable reflections in themselves, and therefore feel excluded from the society. As a result, they tend to feel inferior and self-blaming (Coleman 1997: 27, 78). The same concern can be expressed about the Buraku youth. It is important to introduce the above information into the Japanese educational system; however, it is also crucial to carefully plan how to do so. It is essential to obtain the understanding and consent of those who are now engaged in the traditional arts and crafts that special status and Buraku people helped to develop. Importantly, if the historical evidence continues to be covered up to protect the present master artists from being associated with the Buraku, this action justifies and perpetuates the myth that the Buraku people are inferior or impure.

4.3.2.3 Image of The Buraku

Most subjects identified themselves as “human beings.” None of the Buraku subjects identified themselves as Buraku. The Buraku response to the question, “How do you feel about being Buraku” showed that all Buraku subjects recognized the disadvantages of being Buraku, but at the same time, they also saw the positive side. One subject stated:
It is true that there was a time when I hated being a Buraku. Also, whenever I think about discrimination, I feel anxious and sad. But because I am Buraku, I have learned to feel the pain of other people, and be considerate and kind. I will never be a discriminator.

Another added:

I feel great to be aware of human rights issues. Also, I am grateful for the friends that I found during the course of learning about the human rights movement.

These comments reflect the thinking of most Buraku subjects. The self-image of the Buraku consists of both negative and positive images. The positive image is based on the warm-hearted nature of the Buraku people. However, many pointed out the following negative traits: the blunt speech style, the tendency to isolate themselves from mainstream society, and the overly-high sensitivity to discriminatory practices. If these opinions are made for self-review in order to overcome these negative traits, then, these Buraku subjects assume that correcting themselves may help change the negative image of the Buraku and reduce discriminatory actions in society. In such a case, these negative images or comments can be considered as realistic, self-correcting attitudes. Conversely, if these images are derived from the feeling of inferiority or shame, they can be a reflection of internalized discrimination or self-perpetuated stereotypes. In either case, these negative self-images are prone to be used by the majority to blame victims and rationalize their discriminatory actions.

As for the non-Buraku, in response to the question “describe the image of the Buraku,” 46% of both the parents and young adults portrayed negative images. Some stated, “poor,” “isolated,” “hiding their identity as Buraku,” and “short-tempered.” Others, especially the parents, constructed their image of the Buraku based on the historical concept of Buraku occupations and impurity; for example, “dirty” or “those who have been engaged in occupations which no one wants to do.” However, the negative image of the Buraku, shared by the majority among those who presented

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7 This majority comprises 42% out of the 46% of both the non-Buraku parents and the young adults who portrayed negative images.
negative images, is based on the concept of isolation and exclusion, or sympathy, because their image of the Buraku is associated with discrimination. For example, “I feel sorry for Buraku people because they are discriminated against” or “I associate the Buraku with discrimination.”

Most non-Buraku did not see an advantage in being Buraku. Twenty-four percent of the non-Buraku subjects stated that they emphasized the importance of humanity, so the Buraku identity did not carry any significance to them. However, half did not see any advantage in being Buraku and stated that they do not want to be Buraku and they would feel sad or inferior if they were Buraku. None of the non-Buraku subjects had favorable knowledge of the Buraku, which the Buraku subjects presented previously. The current educational programs, including Japanese history and Dowa education, do not teach the positive aspects of being Buraku. Consequently, the negative image that the non-Buraku has of the Buraku is never corrected but rather reinforced. An important finding is that the negative image, which the majority of the non-Buraku subjects have, does not completely stem from the traditional concept of impurity or inferiority. The image associating the Buraku with discrimination, isolation, and being a minority, appears to strongly affect the opinions of these non-Buraku subjects.

4.3.2.4 Fear of Discrimination

When discussing sensitive social issues such as racial or minority issues, people do not necessarily tell what they really think and feel but what they think it is acceptable or proper to say (Cose 1997: 184). The what-if questions were set up to draw heartfelt answers as opposed to idealistic ones. Therefore, each individual answer in both the open-ended and what-if questions had to be carefully analyzed to determine which ones were honest opinions. The careful examination of each answer seemed to lead to discoveries, which simple mechanical statistics could not easily obtain. In Research I, Buraku young adults strongly exhibited a fear of discrimination. In Research II, fear of discrimination was seen in not only the Buraku young adults but also in the non-Buraku parents and young adults. The fear appeared in the form of inconsistencies in their
answers. The inconsistencies frequently appeared on two occasions: (1) when the Buraku young adults were asked about concealing their Buraku identity, and (2) when the non-Buraku parents and young adults discussed their involvement in the Buraku issue. However, very few inconsistencies were present in the answers given by the Buraku parents.

(1) Inconsistency among Buraku Young Adults

Although all the Buraku young adults expressed positive feelings toward being Buraku, 39% of the Buraku young adults, compared to 20% of the Buraku parents, showed the tendency to conceal their Buraku identity. Their answers to the open-ended question, “Do your non-Buraku friends know about your identity?” exhibited some hesitation to reveal their identity as follows:

- I am determined to conceal my Buraku identity.
- I do nothing about this matter.
- I do not need to tell that I am Buraku.

If the Buraku young subjects truly have positive feelings toward being Buraku, the hesitation to reveal their identity can be considered contradictory. Reasons for their decision not to tell their Buraku identity are as follows:

- It is not necessary to tell unless I have to.
- I do not need to tell since it doesn’t matter whether I am Buraku or not.
- If I declare without having clear reasons to do so, it means that I, myself, make a distinction between Buraku and non-Buraku. In other words, I am telling people that I am different because I am Buraku; so, I won’t need to tell unless I need to.

It seems that these reasons justify the decision to deal passively with situations in which they could decide whether to reveal the identity or confront discrimination.

Responses of the Buraku young adults to the what-if questions clearly demonstrate their hesitation in revealing their identity. In response to the question asking whether the Buraku subjects confront misconceptions/prejudice, or discrimination against the Buraku, 67% of the young adult subjects (10% for the parents) stated, “I do nothing,”
"I ignore the situation," and "I may or may not try to confront it." Also, their response to marriage with a non-Buraku person showed similar results. Forty percent of the Buraku young adults hesitated to reveal their identity to their future partners, by stating they do not reveal their identity unless they need to do so. On the other hand, 70% of the Buraku parents answered that they would suggest their children reveal their identity to the non-Buraku partner.

Why did fewer Buraku parents show inconsistencies? Most Buraku parents have already experienced discrimination and have witnessed discrimination against other Buraku. Many of them stated that they had fought with discriminatory actions through the BLL. Because they have already experienced discrimination, the fear of discrimination among the Buraku parents is somewhat minimized. On the other hand, as described in Research I, the age of the young adults is related to the intensification of the fear. Contrary to their parents who already went through the beginning stages of marriage and employment, Buraku young adults are entering mainstream society as they apply for jobs and contemplate marriage. They are starting to realize the potential for discrimination, and at the same time have no experience in handling discrimination. Some Buraku young adult subjects revealed their experience with discrimination; for example, a few were rejected by their girlfriends' parents. These young adults feared the "next" discrimination against them. Although others have not experienced discrimination yet, they also admitted their fear by saying, "I started to realize that discrimination is not just somebody else's problem, but it can be mine," or "So far I haven't experienced discrimination, but I absolutely will experience it in the future." Thus, it can be reasonably assumed that the inconsistencies among the Buraku young adults are caused by the fear of experiencing discrimination.

(2) Inconsistency among Non-Buraku Parents and Young Adults

Three what-if questions were asked of both non-Buraku parents and young adults. For the convenience of discussion, these questions are presented below (Table 8):
The degree of involvement that the subjects have with the person in the question increases from questions 1 to 3. The subjects are the least affected by the situation in question 1, while the situation in question 2 brings the Buraku issue to a more personal level. The situation in question 3 directly affects the subjects. Both the non-Buraku parent and young adult subjects gave similar responses to these what-if questions: the closer their relationship to the Buraku person in question, the more the subjects contradicted themselves. This social distance/involvement scale is inspired from a form of a General Social Survey by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC). In this NORC survey form, questions were asked, which concerned equal social interactions between blacks and whites in the United States. These questions were categorized into the level of the interactions: marriage, dinner, neighborhood, and so forth (Case et al. 1989: 474-475).

When answering the open-ended questions, most of the non-Buraku parents and young adults stated that they valued people solely based on their characteristics and abilities. However, once they put themselves in certain hypothetical situations where they “actually” had to involve themselves with the Buraku, their responses started to show inconsistencies. In response to the first what-if question, 92% of the subjects stated that it did not matter whether their boss was Buraku because the quality of an individual mattered more than his or her identity. In the second question, the young adult subjects were placed in a more complicated situation of requiring confrontation against the discriminators to help their Buraku friends. On the other hand, the non-Buraku parents...
were placed in a situation of their children having friends from Buraku districts. That their children simply befriend a Buraku person does not bring serious disadvantages for the children and their family. As a result, while only 12% of the parents exhibited some hesitation to their children's having Buraku friends, 30% of the young adults hesitated to assist their Buraku friend who was being discriminated against. Such hesitation among the non-Buraku subjects can be considered inconsistent with their humanitarian statement.

The main reason for the hesitation among the young adults was the desire to avoid unpleasant situations where they would be shunned by others. Some subjects clearly stated that they wanted to be in the majority and did not want to be excluded by the majority. In other words, those who hesitated feared that by coming to a Buraku person's defense, they might end up being in the "minority" and suffer isolation and exclusion themselves. Although the non-Buraku young adults stated that they would never be discriminators, the results suggest that the fear of being discriminated against may lead quite a few of them to unintentionally carry out discriminatory actions. The hesitation among these non-Buraku young adults is unintentional and unconscious, but it is a discriminatory act. This aversive discriminatory act is prominently demonstrated in marital decision making.

Twenty-seven percent of both non-Buraku parents and young adults expressed reservations about marriage with a Buraku person. It should be remembered again that these subjects previously stated that they were in favor of egalitarianism and humanism. Most of the 27% said:

- I personally do not have any problems; however, because marriage involves the whole family, I have to think about this.
- I do not have any discriminatory feelings toward the Buraku but marriage is different.

Most of the young subjects who hesitated were female subjects. A parent who had a son and a daughter stated:

I might agree to let my son marry a Buraku lady. I feel that the marriage will save one Buraku person by transferring her into
our family. However, for my daughter, I refuse to allow her to appear in the family register of a Buraku person. It will be too hard for my daughter, who has had a normal life, to become Buraku.

In Japan, marriage for a woman entails leaving her family to join her husband's family. Because a non-Buraku woman is listed in her husband's family register, her identity changes from non-Buraku to Buraku. This explains why more female young adult subjects and parents with daughters strongly opposed such marriages. These non-Buraku subjects, who opposed marriage with a Buraku person, seemed to be troubled by the consequences associated with family lineage, but they also appeared to be afraid that they and other family members would face discrimination. Furthermore, there was concern for the future of the children resulting from such marriages. It appears that the fear of isolation and exclusion associated with discrimination determines to what extent the non-Buraku will accept a marriage between a non-Buraku and a Buraku person.

(3) Effectiveness of Outside-Judgment

Analyzing both the open-ended and the what-if questions revealed inconsistencies in answers given by both the Buraku and the non-Buraku subjects. The Buraku subjects stated that they did not care about the Buraku identity; however, many, especially the young adults, hesitated to reveal their identity, which may cause risks of discrimination. On the other hand, many non-Buraku subjects, who believed their own humanitarianism, exhibited the hesitation to be personally involved with the Buraku because of risks that may jeopardize them and their family. Thus, it can be reasonably concluded that these inconsistencies among both the parties stem from the fear of isolation and exclusion from the majority.

According to Yoshida, a desire to belong to the majority is a natural human nature (1998: 73). Nevertheless, this desire can be considered a little stronger in Japanese society than certain other cultures, since the Japanese value social homogeneity highly. The belief in homogeneity acts on the premise that members in a society live in harmony by sharing the same biological traits and value system. Many scholars outside as well as inside Japan assume that the belief in homogeneity is one of the dominant ideologies
which has affected the Japanese and their lives (McCormack 1996; Murphy-Shigematsu 1993; Weiner 1997). In order to maintain a homogeneous and harmonious atmosphere, it is considerably important for the Japanese to be attentive to what the majority and others do and think; therefore, peer pressure strongly influences people. Under such circumstances, the Japanese tend not only to avoid making any possible action which may detract from harmony, but also tend to detest isolation and exclusion by the majority. This Japanese cultural tendency to be very concerned about other's judgment may also intensify the fear of isolation and exclusion among both the Buraku and the non-Buraku people.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 U.S. Minorities and Buraku

Results of this study show many similarities between the minorities in the United States and the Buraku in Japan. In both countries, capitalism has perpetuated unequal distribution of income and wealth. The unequal distribution of power between the majority and minorities is maintained in part by the economic system, and has pervaded other social structures (e.g. the educational and political systems). Under such conditions, both the U.S. minorities and Buraku people have been institutionally excluded from mainstream society.

In the 1960s and 1970s, both societies experienced a civil rights movement. The movements have fought against overt discrimination in order to obtain equal rights. Consequently, the standard of living and education among U.S. minorities and the Buraku people have improved significantly. With more minorities joining the ranks of the middle class, there is a tendency to assume that discrimination is a thing of the past. Such phenomena make Americans and the Japanese believe in egalitarianism and humanitarianism as if they pertained to themselves and their societies. The color-blind concept in the United States, and the Japanese belief in homogeneity, not only promote an illusion of egalitarianism but also lead to denial of minority issues. The worst outcomes from these ideologies are the stagnation of the human rights movement and the birth of a new form of discrimination. The new form of discrimination is unintentional and unconscious; therefore, it is difficult to recognize it as discriminatory conduct. In the case of the Buraku, marital and job discrimination has become common, yet difficult to prove.

Rationalization of discriminatory actions by the majority groups has also impeded progress in the U.S. and Japanese minority issues. The rationalization involves the concept of race which makes it easier to justify one's superiority. In Japan, the emphasis on lineage and religious taboos regarding impurity have been used to justify Buraku
inferiority, whereas some U.S. scholars have tried to scientifically prove that the racial minorities are genetically less intelligent than whites. The belief in minority inferiority has led to victim-blaming in both countries. Because the U.S. and Japanese education systems do not include the historical contributions and achievements of minorities, erroneous thinking within the majority group has been perpetuated. As a result, many minorities are deprived of a sense of self-esteem, and tend to accept incorrect stereotypes of their race.

Furthermore, a "jealousy problem" among the majority occurs in both countries. Some members of the majority group believe that preferential treatment of minorities constitutes reverse discrimination. In the United States, affirmative action has been called into question as a form of reverse discrimination. In Japan, the BLL's administration struggle, which has provided substantial financial assistance from the government, has caused hostility between the Buraku and non-Buraku.

Although the historical formation of the Buraku in Japan is different from that of minorities in the United States, their fundamental causes and effects appear to be identical. Examining the similarities and particularities in each instance enables us to learn from another society's experience, and contributes to designing the current strategy of Buraku liberation. For example, Buraku scholars and leaders can argue against the fade-away and assimilation theories by demonstrating how the same type of theoretical approach has been constructed and criticized in other countries. Accordingly, this comparative method may lead to new approaches in achieving positive changes.

5.2 Improvement of Japanese History Curriculum

The historical-economic observation provides insight into the relationship between the Buraku and special status people, and how the maintenance of authority and other ideologies (e.g. religious beliefs) fixed their status and the discrimination against them. The following information is confirmed:

- Special status people contributed to the development of the Buraku people.
Both special status and Buraku people are derived from people with various backgrounds and occupations. Until the middle of the medieval period, there was no strong stigma attached to being special status people. Also, until the Edo period, there was no rigid fixation of social class/status: some nobles, warriors, and others with high status became special status people, whereas other special status people became successful or authoritative figures.

The religious concepts derived from both Shintoism and Buddhism detested the impurity of death. As a result, special status people whose occupations were affiliated with death were stigmatized. In particular, the stigma worsened in the middle of the medieval period when farmers gained autonomy and become a political force, resulting in the devaluation of non-agricultural, especially death-related, occupations.

Special status and Buraku people have contributed to the development of traditional Japanese art forms such as dance and the arts and crafts, as well as technologies such as castle-building, many of which are now highly valued as national treasures.

Not until the Edo period, were special status people permanently integrated in the eta-hinin class by a hereditary system. The fixation of status and occupation resulted in the strong stigma associated with the eta-hinin class, which later transformed into discrimination against the Buraku people.

Manipulating historically-constructed social status and ideologies to their advantage, the ruling class has played a crucial role in the development of the Buraku people and the discrimination against them.

In present Japanese society, many people still have misconceptions about the Buraku, believing that the Buraku people are simply descendants of stigmatized people with filthy occupations. The historical-economic studies have revealed historical evidence which may correct such misconceptions and also improve the image of the Buraku people. Evidence, such as the fact that the special status and Buraku people contributed to the development of Japanese traditional culture, can help not only to promote the positive image of the Buraku but also to raise their self-esteem—if such knowledge is made widely known. Despite the useful findings by the historical-economic studies, the degree of historical knowledge among most Japanese remains unchanged.

Both phases of research show that the general knowledge of the Buraku is limited to what people learn in history classes. History classes teach simply how the eta-hinin class was created and treated during the Edo period. Surprisingly, Research II
demonstrates that the Buraku subjects also have a similar limited degree of historical knowledge and are not aware of the link between the Buraku and the development of Japanese traditional culture. Because of the limited knowledge, the Japanese, especially the non-Buraku, appear to simply connect the Buraku people with the status and stigma of the eta-hinin class. This results in a negative image of the Buraku. Furthermore, influenced by the belief in homogeneity and anti-Buraku liberation theories, the Japanese social structures (e.g. the educational system) do not provide sufficient information about the Buraku. Due to this limited availability of information, negative images of the Buraku people are not lessened but merely maintained, reinforcing misconceptions, prejudice, and the limited knowledge among the non-Buraku.

As for the Buraku subjects, although they do not know the historical contributions of the Buraku, they are well-informed by the BLL on current Buraku issues, issues which also help teach positive aspects of the Buraku (e.g. the contributions to the human rights movement). Since such knowledge provides a sense of pride and reflects well on themselves, the Buraku subjects acknowledge certain positive aspects of being Buraku in Research II. However, it is still an uphill struggle for the Buraku people to maintain a positive self-image when no positive information is forthcoming in mainstream society. This phenomenon also occurs among the minorities in the United States. Many U.S. scholars advocate the need to introduce to mainstream society the historical contributions and social achievements of the minority groups in order to raise their self-esteem (Coleman 1997: 27; Cose 1997: 188-189).

Importantly, the fade-away and assimilation theories, which encourage people to forget the past instead of dealing with the Buraku issue, cannot work. That is because Japanese history classes will always teach something about Buraku history. Since the formation of the special status and Buraku people is intricately interwoven with Japanese history, their existence cannot be erased as long as Japanese history is taught in school. Besides, it is not possible to eliminate Japanese history in school curricula; therefore, the present history classes continue to provide the Japanese with "limited" information which simply contains the discrimination against the special status and Buraku people and the stigma attached to their status. In other words, people continue to have some knowledge
of the Buraku but it is limited to the negative aspects; this results in the risk of
discrimination. It is unrealistic to assume that by leaving it alone, the Buraku people will
assimilate in mainstream society and the Buraku issue will fade away.

Thus, Buraku scholars and BLL leaders must not only continue to examine the
historical-economic domain of the Buraku but also ensure that the information learned is
communicated to people throughout Japan. In order to do so, the school system, precisely
history education, appears to be the best place to start. Japanese history is a mandatory
subject in elementary, junior-high, and high schools where almost 97% of Japanese
children obtain formal education (Tomonaga 1998: 13). As described above, history of
the Buraku is a substantial part of Japanese history; therefore, the study of Buraku history
should not be just for the Buraku people but for all Japanese (Hatanaka 1998: 58;
Watanabe 1998: 34). Re-organizing the history class curriculum is probably the best way
of providing positive information (e.g. the historical contributions of the Buraku) and
educating the younger generation nationwide. Although establishing a new curriculum of
Japanese history will be difficult and time-consuming, perhaps the most challenging task
is to do so without offending those who are involved in the traditional arts.

During Research II, a high school teacher who teaches Dowa (Buraku) education
pointed out some problems with my questionnaires. His main concern was that non-
Buraku people who are engaged in the traditional arts may be offended by the questions
which introduce the historical contributions of special status and Buraku people. His
intent was to protect the feelings of the non-Buraku artists and maintain good relations
between the Buraku and non-Buraku people. However, the concern implies that
acknowledging the achievement of the Buraku people would devalue the occupation and
status of the master artists. The same psychology which resulted in non-Buraku people
(heimin/commoners) attacking Buraku people (shin-heimin/new commoners) after the
1871 Emancipation Edict may apply in this case as well. The heimin became furious
because they believed that sharing the same status with the shin-heimin devalued their
heimin status (Murakoshi 1991: 6).

Although the feelings of the non-Buraku engaged in traditional art forms need to
be taken into consideration, the truth about special status and Buraku people in Japanese
history should not be suppressed. The BLL can play a role in obtaining the understanding and consent of these non-Buraku master artists. It is essential to involve the Ministry of Education in re-designing the curriculum to integrate the information related to special status and Buraku people. The BLL and Ministry of Education should work with the master artists to introduce this new information. The effort to reveal the truth about Japanese history may not only improve the image of the Buraku people but also lead to the acceptance of other historical facts which the Japanese people and government have been reluctant to acknowledge. For example, many Japanese journalists and educators have argued that history textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education still do not cover the historical contributions of the Korean people nor the atrocities committed by the Japanese military during World War II.

5.3 Increasing Human Rights Awareness

As explained above, the historical contributions of the Buraku have not been introduced in history classes, nor have the social achievements by the Buraku liberation movement been acknowledged. Because there is little information available to demonstrate the positive aspects, most people tend to focus on the disadvantages of being Buraku, resulting in reinforcing the negative image. The image attached to the Buraku people is strongly associated with “discrimination,” and consequently leads to a fear of isolation and exclusion induced by discrimination. In Research II, both the Buraku and the non-Buraku subjects (except for Buraku parents) exhibited inconsistencies in their responses to the questionnaire. These inconsistent answers appear to be caused by the fear of being isolated or excluded from the majority through discrimination.

Most non-Buraku subjects stated that it did not matter whether someone was Buraku because they placed an emphasis on the quality of the person, not their identity. Contrary to this opinion, quite a few hesitated to involve themselves in the Buraku issue, especially when they were asked whether they would marry a Buraku person or not (in the case of the non-Buraku parents, many hesitated to allow their children to marry a Buraku
person). As the degree of personal involvement with a Buraku individual increased, more non-Buraku subjects exhibited hesitation in their responses since they assumed that increased risks jeopardize themselves.

As for the Buraku subjects, age seems to be a crucial determinant in how intensely a Buraku person fears discrimination. Young adults appear to be particularly affected. Not only are they entering mainstream society for the first time, they must also consider their future career and marriage which can be affected by discrimination. Although Buraku young adults are still inexperienced in dealing with discrimination, they are aware how discrimination will damage their lives. In contrast to the young adults, Buraku parents have already experienced and witnessed many discriminatory practices, and have fought against it; therefore, they are less intimidated by discrimination. Accordingly, despite being proud of the positive aspects of their identity, more Buraku young adults hesitated to involve themselves in situations that risked the disclosure of their identity, compared to the Buraku parents.

By involving themselves in the Buraku issue, the non-Buraku subjects fear being isolated or excluded from the majority, whereas the Buraku young adults are afraid of the same consequence by revealing their identity. In other words, both the avoidance of the Buraku issue among non-Buraku and the concealment of identity among the Buraku people are caused and reinforced by the fear stemming from the image associating the Buraku with discrimination. Accordingly, the inconsistent responses among both non-Buraku and Buraku people can be considered the manifestation of this fear.

The historical-economic observation in this thesis discusses how the maintenance of the ruling class and other dominant ideologies have contributed to the development of both special status and Buraku people and the discrimination against them. Although the maintenance of capitalism, to some extent, continues to influence the Buraku issue at the present time, it no longer seems to be a dominant determinant of the discrimination against the Buraku. The standard of living and education among Buraku people has improved, and many are white-collar workers who are no longer engaged in stigmatized occupations. Also, under the ideological observation, some degree of the influence of historically-constructed ideologies, such as the impurity or inferiority of Buraku lineage,
is still seen in the case of marriage between the *non-Buraku* and Buraku; however, it does not seem to play as significant a role as in the past. In fact, many stated that they were hesitant to marry (or allow their children to marry) a Buraku person because such involvement would increase the probability of discrimination against themselves (or their children). Thus, findings through both the historical and the ideological observations lead to a conclusion that an influential force, reinforcing the Buraku discrimination in present Japanese society, is the image that associates the Buraku with discrimination, or the fear of isolation and exclusion induced by discrimination.

The fear of discrimination is closely connected to the psychology of preferring to be in the majority. Valuing homogeneity and harmony in society, the Japanese are very concerned about the opinion of others, which explains the emphasis placed on being in the majority. It can be reasonably assumed that this cultural tendency to go with the majority contributes to intensifying the fear which reinforces the *non-Buraku*'s avoidance of the Buraku issue as well as the Buraku's concealment of their identity. The important question for the future of the Buraku liberation movement is “Under such a strong detestation of isolation from the majority, how can people successfully confront discrimination?” Many *non-Buraku* subjects stated that their hesitation to get involved in the Buraku issue was caused by the fear of being isolated and excluded from the majority. However, quite a few of them also expressed that they wished to face discriminatory conduct if a situation allowed them to do so. As for the Buraku subjects, several mentioned that if there were people who understood and supported them, they could confront discriminatory actions. Taking both the cultural and the psychological aspects into account, it is not too far from the truth to say that the fear can be lessened if more people would confront discriminatory actions. The number does not necessarily require a majority. The most crucial element seems to be the presence of people who are willing to collaborate with a Buraku person in facing discrimination, whether many or a few.

Currently, limited knowledge, denial, and indifference to the Buraku issue discourage people from standing up to discrimination, hindering any improvement in the situation. Interacting with the fade-away and assimilation theories, the belief in homogeneity has contributed to perpetuating these obstacles in Japanese society. The
belief in homogeneity has promoted the notion that there are no differences in society, and has prevented the Japanese from having basic awareness of socio-cultural and racial-ethnic differences both inside and outside Japan. Consequently, most Japanese lack human rights awareness, and they tend to deny issues regarding the Buraku or to stay indifferent toward them. Under such conditions, limited knowledge of the Buraku further pervades society.

In order to get more people to “stand up,” it is essential to challenge limited knowledge, denial, and indifference by increasing an understanding of the Buraku as well as basic human rights awareness. An initial step in achieving the goals would be to provide nationwide human rights and moral education which teaches the Buraku issue as one of the minority issues, to supplement history education. The Buraku issue should be studied nationwide, not only from a historical standpoint but also from the standpoint of human rights and moral issues. In this way, people become conscious about human rights and consequently aware that discrimination against the Buraku still exists. This can further lead to awareness that the Buraku issue is their concern. In reality, when a non-Buraku person discovers his/her future partner is from a Buraku district, the issue becomes a part of his/her life. When people learn more about the Buraku issue from a human rights dimension, indifference and denial can be corrected, and correspondingly, the fear of discrimination can be lessened.

Once people become aware of discriminatory practices and can stand up against them, positive changes can occur for both the Buraku and the non-Buraku. If there were a collective shift that involves the whole society to improve racial or minority issues (Coleman 1997: 298), the Buraku people would be encouraged by the involvement of non-Buraku people. Collective efforts in fighting back against discrimination lead the Buraku people to the improvement of self-esteem and the diminution of fear to reveal their identity. For the non-Buraku people, they can also enhance self-respect by feeling good about their fair treatment of others. One action of fair treatment will encourage more people to confront subsequent discriminatory practices. Also, people who discriminate against others are given an opportunity to be aware of their misconduct and misconceptions or prejudice. Pointing out unfair treatment as it occurs appears to be very
crucial; otherwise, people who discriminate remain discriminators and continue to negatively influence others. As a result, not only human rights educators but all educators have to encourage everybody, including the Buraku people, to identify and confront discrimination. The educators should ensure that they support students who confront such actions.

The BLL can urge the government, especially the Ministry of Education, to mandate a new curriculum of human rights education as the replacement of Dowa (Buraku) education and also to re-design the moral education curriculum in order to focus on the positive aspects of the Buraku. Because the present Dowa and moral education has simply taught students that “the Buraku people have suffered from discrimination” and “discrimination is bad,” it has done more harm than good to the current situation of the Buraku (Okuda 1998: 5). Thus, the new human rights and revised moral education curricula should provide the following information:

1. The Buraku liberation movement has contributed to equal rights and human rights for all Japanese.
2. The Buraku people are aware of social welfare and human rights.
3. The Buraku people are proud of the positive aspects of being Buraku, e.g. the ability to feel other people’s pain.

In addition, it is essential that human rights education teaches which actions can be discriminatory. People should know that their actions can be discriminatory even though they have no intentions to discriminate. Chapter 2 discusses how a new form of discrimination, which is unintentional, unconscious, and self-righteous, has been fostered in the United States. Since people tend to believe that they are egalitarian, humanitarian, and living in a democratic society, most of them are unaware of their discriminatory actions. Research II displays the same tendency and belief among the non-Buraku subjects. Even those who viewed themselves as humanitarians and claimed they would never discriminate against others hesitated to assist a Buraku friend or marry a Buraku person. Their hesitation is a form of discrimination, but the real problem is that they do
not perceive this fact. People have to learn that innocent actions and even hesitation can be regarded as discriminatory conduct.

5.4 **Practical Approaches**

Although the re-designed education system would include the Buraku issue and its positive aspects, the enhancement of knowledge alone does not directly deal with the problems of indifferent attitude among the non-Buraku and the concealment of identity by the Buraku people. The new system may make the non-Buraku people recognize the Buraku issue; however, their attitude of “it’s not my problem because I’m not Buraku and because I do not know any Buraku people,” may not be effectively corrected. Thus, such an attitude among the non-Buraku would continue to create an atmosphere conducive to discriminatory actions and discourage the Buraku from revealing their identity. Many U.S. scholars point out the effectiveness of increasing positive interactions between the majority and minorities to reduce racial tensions and indifference. Developing hands-on experiences between two parties can lead to the acceptance and understanding of each other and consequently to better relations (Cose 1997: 216-217, 226; Coleman 1997: 245). Therefore, it is essential that the new educational plan, as well as the BLL program, provide hands-on experience to increase communication between the Buraku and non-Buraku, and practical training to learn how to identify and deal with discriminatory actions. There are two main approaches to provide people with hands-on experience and practical training: (1) special programs involving both Buraku and non-Buraku and (2) role-playing.

5.4.1 **Communication between Buraku and Non-Buraku**

A basic approach in dealing with indifference is to provide direct contact between the Buraku and the non-Buraku. In order to increase communication between the two parties, the BLL can provide activities involving both Buraku and non-Buraku
communities. For example, by incorporating several Buraku and nearby non-Buraku districts, a local BLL branch can organize study camps, short study-abroad programs, or overseas home stay programs, all of which contain sessions focusing on human rights issues. It appears to be effective that these activities target the young generation. Learning about human rights issues both inside and outside Japan can help reduce the indifference of both the Buraku and non-Buraku youth. Importantly, by providing such programs, the BLL may be able to integrate both the non-Buraku and Buraku youth, especially the young adults, into the Buraku liberation movement, and therefore can further perpetuate human rights awareness.

One of the most beneficial elements in this approach is that, because their identity is already known when participating in the activities, the Buraku people do not need to worry about revealing it. Without the psychological burden of hiding their identity, the Buraku people can start to communicate directly with the non-Buraku people. Through the direct interaction between the two parties, the Buraku participants can assure themselves that they are as capable as their non-Buraku counterparts. This may help these Buraku participants increase self-confidence and correspondingly lessen the feeling of inferiority and shame. As for the non-Buraku people, they can also see for themselves that there are no differences between the Buraku and themselves, and realize how unfair or unjust discrimination against the Buraku people is. This realization would give the non-Buraku a strong reason to confront unfair treatment against the Buraku people. Accordingly, direct communication between the Buraku and non-Buraku people may lessen the fear of discrimination and encourage both of them to confront discrimination.

To achieve a successful program and good results involves detailed planning, which addresses the following points:

1. The BLL would support its local branches by providing ideas and financing. Local branches would then bring Buraku districts into contact with non-Buraku districts, and would also request support from the local government.

2. A committee for “special programs,” consisting of both Buraku and non-Buraku members, would be established in each locality.
3. The committee would be responsible for establishing a careful, fair procedure to select participants.

4. Because the goal is to promote the interaction between the Buraku and non-Buraku, it would be better to have a small number of participants. Limiting the number of participants discourages the natural tendency to form the “Buraku-only” and “non-Buraku-only” groups. To compensate for the small number of participants, the number of programs can be increased to give more people an opportunity to participate.

5. The primary focus of the programs would target young adults so that they are educated for the future. If the participants are too young, it may be difficult to impart a deep understanding of the issues at hand; therefore, the activities merely become fun events for the children. The junior-high school level is probably a good minimum age for this enlightenment-oriented program.

6. Activities should be designed to last one week or at least several days. A single day rarely creates deep involvement and friendships. Spending good and bad times together through daily activities for a period of time may increase an understanding of each other and lead to “real” and “positive” experiences.

7. Without detailed planning, week-long programs could create serious adverse effects. Prior to a long program, it is probably wise to schedule several short activities for the participants. This may help to identify potential problems.

8. Both Buraku and non-Buraku districts share in the expenses for the activities. It is very important for the BLL and Buraku districts to provide more financial outlay for these programs than the non-Buraku districts. By doing so, the financial assistance obtained from the government, sometimes construed as preferential treatment, will be shared with the non-Buraku communities.

5.4.2 Role-Playing Method

Human rights and moral curricula would also include role-playing or simulation classes in order to teach students how to deal with discriminatory practices (Okuda 1998: 57-60). Although the situations are imaginary, students may achieve a degree of “hands-on” experience through role-playing. Each situation should place students in three roles:
Role 1: A person who discriminates against others

Role 2: A witness to a discriminatory incident

Role 3: A victim of discrimination

By playing the role of a discriminator, the students learn how unreasonable discrimination is. The role of the witness prepares students for actual situations involving discriminatory practices. Playing the victim is important since the students experience discrimination. By analyzing the situations, teachers and students attempt to discover appropriate approaches to confront discriminatory actions. For the non-Buraku, the role-playing provides an opportunity to understand discrimination from the Buraku people's perspective.

By incorporating role-playing in its enlightenment program, the BLL would teach Buraku people to confront discriminatory practices rather than ignore them. The role of the witness and victim is especially important to teach the Buraku people how to successfully deal with discriminatory practices. Many Buraku subjects, especially young adults, stated that they do not need to reveal their identity until it is required. In reality, this means “until they experience discrimination.” Declaring their identity requires considerable courage and strong will. Through role-playing, it is important for both the BLL and Buraku students to discover useful strategies to reduce the fear of revealing their Buraku identity.

Instead of revealing their identity when circumstances dictate that their identity be revealed, Buraku people themselves can create situations where they can talk about their Buraku identity and the Buraku issue. The Buraku people do not need to declare their identity publicly in a classroom or workplace. Instead, they can request the support of their close friends before discrimination occurs. The Buraku people can explain to their friends at school or at the workplace that because they are Buraku, they might be the target of discrimination. With these friends, the Buraku people can anticipate discriminatory acts through role-playing, and discuss how to handle discrimination together. This strategy appears to be very effective, because for the Buraku, revealing their identity may lessen their psychological burden. Also, by making others aware of
potential problems stemming from their identity, the Buraku people provide information about the Buraku issue, resulting in an understanding among their friends. As a result, friendships can grow stronger, as some *non-Buraku* subjects have stated that they would feel a stronger bond if their Buraku friends revealed their secret to them. The *non-Buraku* people may be willing to confront discriminatory acts against their Buraku friends, and as they receive support from their friends, the Buraku people can be reassured that they do not have to fight discrimination alone.

Confronting discrimination requires tremendous courage for both the *non-Buraku* and the Buraku people. Because of the cultural tendency to value homogeneity and harmony, the Japanese tend to conform to majority thinking (Hamada 1991: 199). Consequently, the Japanese like to avoid interpersonal confrontation. In implementing the role-playing method, educators in human rights classes and the BLL must ensure that students are learning appropriate ways of handling confrontational situations. According to “what if” questions asked in this research, the following approach to discriminators are considered practical and effective by many Buraku and *non-Buraku* subjects:

- Ask why a person chooses to discriminate, and listen first. Then, explain calmly why you think that his or her action is unfair and inappropriate.
- Take the time to discuss an example of discrimination. Make sure that both sides understand each other.
- Always retain a reasonable and tolerant attitude, never emotional and aggressive.

5.5 Future Buraku Liberation

The BLL has been a major force in raising awareness of the Buraku issue and improving the standard of living and education among Buraku people. However, BLL strategies themselves have been problematic at times. Despite its achievement in eliminating overt discrimination, the denunciation campaign has created a fear, or avoidance, of involvement with the Buraku among the *non-Buraku*. The administration struggle has provided Buraku communities with government assistance; however, it has
ironically led to fewer young adult participants in BLL activities because the motivation to join the BLL has been to obtain the assistance rather than to promote Buraku liberation. Furthermore, the substantial financial assistance from the Japanese government has been construed by the non-Buraku people as preferential treatment, resulting in negative feelings towards the Buraku. Despite its flaws, the BLL is indispensable in combating discrimination on behalf of the Buraku. The problem is that anti-Buraku liberation forces, such as the Japanese Communist Party, have pointed out these weaknesses in the BLL strategies and have promoted the fade-away and assimilation theories, which questions the significance of the BLL. Consequently, the BLL has taken steps to re-examine and improve its strategies for the future of the Buraku liberation movement.

In order to reduce feelings of preferential treatment, the BLL has educated Buraku communities to share what they have obtained through government assistance with the non-Buraku communities. In addition, the assistance is wisely used not only to improve the standard of living but also to make Buraku communities model districts of well-implemented welfare programs. Notably, as a leader of the human rights movement in Japan, the BLL has campaigned to create a law to protect human rights, leading to the establishment of the Five-Year Interim Human Rights Measure which has been in force since 1997. The BLL considers this as a step toward the establishment of a Basic Law for Buraku Liberation, which would prohibit discriminatory practices against the Buraku, as well as a step toward obtaining general government assistance for increasing human rights awareness.

The current focus in the third phase of Buraku liberation is not only to re-evaluate the present and past strategies but also to re-structure the BLL itself. The BLL is trying to integrate the human rights dimension with its Buraku liberation movement and to interact with global organizations. In other words, the BLL is trying to expand its role and liberation movement to address a broader socio-cultural, economic inequality. This is one reason why the BLL decided not to pursue an extension of the Special Measures Law for Dowa Projects (SML). The concept behind this decision is to make the SML a general policy and expand the distribution of social benefits to all oppressed people, not
just to the Buraku. Some Buraku scholars are concerned about this new approach, and that the expansion of the movement will obscure its original focus. Thus, the BLL must maintain its fundamental role and goals. In order to do so, the BLL needs to elucidate why this expansion is necessary and also to re-define and clarify what Buraku liberation is. What kind of social conditions can be considered liberation of the Buraku people? Does Buraku liberation mean total assimilation which eliminates the Buraku identity, or achievement of equality as Buraku? I support the view that “Buraku liberation” is to create a society where Buraku people do not need to hide their identity, where people would not hesitate to confront discriminatory actions (Watanabe 1998: 49).

It is probably important for the BLL to continue its campaign for the establishment of the Basic Law and its struggle to ensure government assistance for the Buraku communities. However, in order to reach the final stage of “Buraku liberation,” the BLL will need to deal with issues discovered in this study: limited knowledge, indifferent attitudes, and inability to confront discrimination because of the fear of discrimination. Suggestions for the future can be summarized in the following categories:

1. Redesign the curriculum of Japanese history.
3. Introduce the role-playing method in human rights education and in the BLL enlightenment program.
4. Increase communication between the Buraku and non-Buraku by providing “special programs” which are planned and sponsored by both parties’ communities.

In order to meet these goals, it is imperative to provide training for all educators, especially those teaching human rights, moral education, and Japanese history. Most importantly, the BLL needs to work with the government, especially the Ministry of Education, because it is impossible to establish a new educational plan nationwide without government support. The need for internationalization is a key for the BLL to urge the government to take action. Internationalization has been an important national
theme in Japan. Although the present Japanese society appears to be steadily internationalizing itself; in terms of human rights, Japan's internationalization is considered to be far behind. In fact, actual discriminatory incidents involving Japanese politicians and businessmen have perpetuated the reputation in the world that the Japanese are racists. This has been leading other nationalities to view the Japanese negatively. Because it is crucial for Japan to successfully interact on a global scale in order to maintain the healthy growth of its economy, human rights awareness can be considered one of the essential elements in internationalization to achieve successful business or political relationships with other nations. It can be considered that confronting the discrimination against the Buraku is a very important step for promoting human rights awareness. Without accepting the existence of the Buraku issue, other minority issues cannot be recognized; in other words, the human rights movement in Japan cannot flourish. As a result, not only the government but also all the Japanese need to recognize that the Buraku issue involves the whole society, and thus they need to make mutual efforts in confronting discrimination against the Buraku people. Only then, can real Buraku liberation, as well as real internationalization, be achieved.
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