

Awareness Context and Social Recognition: Reconsidering a Case Study of “Dialogue” between Different Ethnic Persons in Japan

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Abstract: This study incorporates Honneth's social recognition into awareness context theory by reconsidering a case study of the dialogue between *Zainichi* Korean and Japanese people in Japan. It revitalizes the theoretical significance of Strauss' symbolic interactionism in terms of its focus on power dynamics and conflicts between the majority and minorities that differ in the cultural or ethnic background in modern global society. Incorporating critical theory into symbolic interactionism is a method of enhancing its contemporary significance. However, the discrepancy between them remains unresolved. There are some previous studies on *Zainichi* Koreans' dialogue and the public sphere. Still, this case uniquely fits the aim of this study. As a result, it proposes both a substantive theory as a social justice inquiry in Japanese society and a modified formal theory of awareness context by adopting the theoretical perspective coined in this study and using abductive reasoning in the reconsideration. The substantive theory proposes a joint action characterized by unending mutual recognition and pragmatist dissent as a pragmatist public sphere between different ethnic persons in Japan. It is a method of grassroots communication that realizes liberal democracy as the form of modern society in Japan, liberating people from the Japanese communitarian mindset of *Wa*. The formal theory proposes new awareness contexts focusing on information and social recognition, which applies to the majority-minority relationship that differs in cultural or ethnic backgrounds from a theoretical perspective by focusing on conflicts between traditional cultural communities and modern society. Additionally, as an implication of this study, a pluralistic character of symbolic interactionism united by common frameworks of formal theories is proposed.

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Recently, the sufficiency of symbolic interactionism (SI) to analyze the complexity of interactions in contemporary modern society has been brought into question. In this study, I consider complexity as the struggles or conflicts between majorities and minorities who differ in terms of cultural or ethnic backgrounds in global macro societies. Particularly, after the Second World War, this theme has been examined from a critical perspective in anthropological, post-colonial, Asian, and African studies that aimed for human equality and liberation. These studies mainly analyzed and criticized the concrete macro structures of dominant-subordinate relationships. Thus, they did not focus on the theoretical elaboration of complex interactions in the structures, which is one of the most notable research interests in SI. However, comparing SI with critical theories, some interactionists have focused on the micro-orientation of conventional SI, highlighting its failure to deal with macro-structures (see: Shalin 1992a). Further, it has sought objective and neutral knowledge without any value judgments and has been insufficient in analyzing power relationships (see: Shalin 1992a). These criticisms largely remain unresolved. Indeed, a project that attempts to answer these criticisms, revitalizing the potential of SI by incorporating critical theories, has been developed (see: Jacobsen 2019a). The possibility of a grounded theory with a critical perspective has also been considered (see: Charmaz 2005; Denzin 2007; Gibson 2007). These attempts are in their initial phase. Thus, they neither form a common view nor sufficient accumulation of their knowledge. Moreover, the discrepancy between critical theory and SI has been rarely elaborated (see: Gibson 2007; Jacobsen 2019b), and the fundamental difficulty of theoretical unity lies between them (see: Langman 2019).

This study incorporates social recognition in Honneth’s critical theory into the awareness context

theory in Strauss’ SI through a reconsideration of a case study of “dialogue” between *Zainichi* Korean and Japanese people in Japan. It attempts to revitalize awareness context theory and Strauss’ SI and their contemporary significance by resolving some of the existing criticisms and coining a theoretical perspective that can be used to analyze complex interactions in contemporary modern society. Specifically, it proposes both a substantive theory using a particular case as a social justice inquiry in face-to-face communication between the ethnic minority and majority in Japanese society and a modified formal theory of awareness context with social recognition, which is applicable to majority-minority relationships that differ in cultural or ethnic backgrounds from the perspective of modern society. Additionally, I propose that this attempt widens the scope and plurality of SI.

This study focuses on Honneth’s social recognition¹ for two reasons: (1) his recognition theory is compatible with SI because he reconstructed Hegel’s theory of social recognition with Mead’s social psychology (Fraser and Honneth 2003; Honneth 2005) and (2) he focuses on the conflicts between the majority and minority who differ in the cultural or ethnic background as “the struggle for recognition” (Honneth 2002; 2005; 2012), proposing the affective or emotional mutual recognition of existential persons as a condition for the social integration of modern society (see: Fraser and Honneth 2003). Till now, SI has rarely focused on Honneth’s theory. Furthermore, I found only one book review by Athens (2017) and one empirical study by Eramian and Mallory (2022)

¹ Habermas’ (1985; 1986) communicative critical theory is also compatible with SI (see: Shalin 1992a). However, it does not suit the purpose of this study because it focuses on the rearrangement between macro systems and lifeworld. Further, no studies have been conducted on the comparative analysis between awareness or consensus in SI and recognition or consensus in critical theory.

that applies social recognition. However, the latter does not refer to the difference between critical theory and SI, although its research project is similar to this study.

This study focuses on the awareness context theory in Strauss' SI for three reasons. First, Strauss' theoretical perspective is in a meso domain, which connects micro and macro domains (Maines 1982; Hall 1997), and some interactionists have elaborated and expanded on his perspective for the analysis of power relationships (see: Hall 1997; Wolfe 2002). Thus, it is suitable as a counterpart of SI to Honneth's theory, which analyzes micro-human power relationships in the macro conditions of modern society. Second, the compatibility between the grounded theory proposed by Glaser and Strauss and critical theory has been considered. For instance, Denzin (2007) has incorporated grounded theory into critical theory, and Charmaz (2005) and Gibson (2007) have incorporated critical theory or perspective into grounded theory. Thus, their theories have critical character. In contrast, this study incorporates critical character into a substantive theory of the case of "dialogue" in Japan and also incorporates critical theory, exempting critical character, into a formal theory of awareness context, as mentioned below. Third, awareness context theory can analyze conflicts and their transformations in interactions between the majority and minority because it focuses on the interactions of identity management and the shifts in their contexts. However, the theory's potential in the substantive area has not been considered because it has been mainly used in the areas of medicine, nursing, and care, including Glaser and Strauss (1965). Furthermore, former studies have claimed that the theory proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1964) mainly focuses on information management by rational interactants. Therefore, it un-

derestimates the aspects of both affection or emotion and interpersonal acknowledgment and does not consider the relationship between awareness and acknowledgment because of the ambiguity of the interpretation process by interactants in understanding or acknowledgment (Timmermans 1994; Mamo 1999; Hellström, Nolan, and Lundh 2005). Nevertheless, I insist that the awareness context theory can overcome its limits when we incorporate Strauss' (1993; 1997) theoretical perspective, Scheff's (1967; 1970; 2005a; 2005b) perspective on awareness context, and Honneth's social recognition with it.

This study incorporates only the explanatory parts of Honneth's critical theory into Strauss' SI because one must carefully exempt critical or progressive logical structures that reflect the normative or ideological standpoints of the author to maintain the generic character of theoretical perspectives in SI. The fundamental theoretical difference lies between critical theory and SI. Critical theories largely have the quality of diagnosis or critical assessment to reform society. Thus, the theories have idealistic and normative characters (see: Bohman 1999; Fraser and Honneth 2003). Honneth's critical theory is a grand theory constructed from theories of various academic fields and is intertwined with a critical and progressive perspective and the explanatory theory of humans and society (see: Fraser and Honneth 2003; Honneth 2005). Conversely, SI largely has the quality of perspective and method for empirical studies (see: Blumer 1986), and it has accumulated findings from such studies. Strauss' SI consists of formal analytical theories for empirical studies, grounded theory methodology for empirical studies, and substantive theories for practical solutions to people using them that are interrelated (see: Strauss 1993; Corbin and Strauss 2008).

Additionally, we should verify the incorporated concepts in empirical studies to see whether they fit the practices of people (see also Shalin 1992b) because Honneth’s theory is grand. Thus, this study reconsiders the case study of “dialogue” between *Zainichi* Koreans as an ethnic minority and Japanese as a majority in Japan (Yamaguchi 2008; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2018) to both test their concepts and coin a theoretical perspective that can be used to analyze complex interactions in contemporary modern society. Here, the term *Zainichi* Koreans mainly refers to Korean migrants and their descendants who came to the Japanese islands from the Korean peninsula during Japan’s Great Empire era and includes people who are of different nationalities, such as the Republic of Korea (South Korea), *Chosen* (the Japanese name for undivided Korea used by *Zainichi* Koreans), or Japan. This definition signifies historical differences from Koreans who came to Japan after the Second World War and those who came to Japan in the premodern era (Tonomura 2004). Historically, the percentage of *Zainichi* Koreans in Japan’s population is approximately 1%, although this does not appear in official statistics reported by the Japanese government (Tonomura 2004). There is a vast number of studies on *Zainichi* Koreans and their society. I found several books in English (Fukuoka 2000; Ryang 2005; Chapman 2008; Morris-Suzuki 2007; Lie 2008; Ryang and Lie 2009; Kim-Wachutka 2020; Ropers 2020; Kim 2021), as well as many books and articles in Japanese. However, there are few studies on their dialogues and the public sphere.² Seo (2012) studies a counter-public sphere of *Zainichi* Korean women within the context of *Zainichi* Korean society, Lee (2016) studies dialogues between *Zain-*

² This study exempts Chapman’s (2008) notions regarding *Zainichi* Korean women’s participation in the public sphere in the 1990s from consideration. The book contains neither empirical details based on rich data nor theoretical elaboration on its public sphere.

ichi Koreans with Japanese nationality and people with double ethnicities of *Zainichi* Korean and Japanese in the context of *Zainichi* Korean society, and Lee (2018) studies a transnational public sphere between Japan and South Korea in the context of social movements run by highly motivated activists. Unlike these previous studies, this case of dialogue fits the purpose of this study. It is not part of a collective social movement, but a case of face-to-face interaction as a public sphere, revealing ethnic differences. It is not in the context of only *Zainichi* Korean society, but in the intersectional context of both *Zainichi* Korean and Japanese societies.

It is not sufficient when the theory only fits one case. However, upon reconsideration in this study, Honneth’s social recognition is found to fit the case, and the analytical perspective coined in this study is distinctive and useful. In the following sections, the character of social recognition in Honneth’s limited critical theory,³ the character of awareness context, consensus, and its recursive structure in SI, and the connectivity between them will be examined. These comprise the first step to incorporating the concepts of critical theory into SI.

Social Recognition in the Limited Critical Theory

Limitation and Alteration of Honneth’s Theory

Honneth’s theory has critical and progressive logical structures. For example, his thought that modern society progresses through “the struggle for recognition” in the future, the moderate value realism that trans-historical and universally validated values

³ I also referred to the Japanese translation versions of Honneth (2002; 2005; 2012) and Fraser and Honneth (2003).

exist, the conceptual priority of love to every other form of reciprocal recognition, the acceptance of the independence of others that the recognition form of love releases, normative and idealistic solidarity in modern society, the conceptual priority of recognition over cognition, the primordially of recognition in intersubjective relationships, and reification as the forgetfulness of primordial recognition (Honneth 2002; 2005; 2012). These themes are empirically impossible in a strict sense because of their highly abstract and idealistic character, and the variety and complexity of interactions in the empirical world⁴ are not considered because of their strong normative and ideological orientations. As these are not theoretical but empirical matters in SI, this study appropriates his social recognition concept to enhance theoretical sensitivities on these themes, exempting his critical and progressive logical structures.

Further, the shift in the main analytical focus in Honneth's theory is required for the aim of this study. Honneth's (2002; 2005; 2012) theory analytically focuses on a person's esteem, which consists of social recognitions anchored by primordial recognition. The moment of "the struggle for recognition" can be judged in the affective or emotional attitude of the self against the lack of social or primordial recognition in intersubjective relationships. In other words, its judgment can be measured in the degree of lack of recognition in one's self-esteem. The awareness context theory analytically focuses on interactions in which persons represent identities rather than self-esteem (see: Strauss 1993). Therefore, this study shifts self-esteem to interaction in the main analytical focus of Honneth's theory and

⁴ The variety and complexity here include something other than the intersubjective dimension in focused interactions. People do not always behave carefully, and interaction is not always focused. See: Strauss (1993; 1997) and Goffman (1963).

alters his terminology to suit interactions in various situations—social esteem and self-esteem in one's attitude are replaced with collective evaluation and self-evaluation in interactions, which are compatible with Strauss' (1997) perspective. Thus, the degree of lack of social recognition in the judgment of self-esteem can be replaced by the gradation of these lacks revealed in interactions.

Social Recognition in the Limited Honneth's Theory

Honneth's social recognition is more than mere cognition of an object. It includes more or less a positive, affective or emotional, and existential attitude of the other or the self. A person can socially obtain activeness and autonomy through identification with the groups they belong to and being recognized by others in the groups. It is a mutual recognition when people positively empathize with each other by taking the other's standpoint. A person socially recognizes others, without denying or forgetting each other's existence, even if the person dislikes or hates them. That indicates that the degree of social recognition has gradations from severe to slight (Honneth 2002; 2012).

His social recognition has three forms—love, law, and collective evaluation.⁵ These are the conditions for positive relationships. This suggests people can be identified with their personalities, be mutually autonomous under the law, and identify themselves with collective evaluations if they fulfill the conditions. Additionally, these forms are conditions for creating a life as a subject. They give people opportunities for self-confidence, self-respect, and self-evaluation (Honneth 2005).

⁵ This study adopts love and law in Honneth's terminology to explain interactions.

Love is the recognition of a personality of the self or another, expressed by affective or emotional care. A love relationship is a foundation wherein a person forms self-confidence, which can be retained over interpersonal or physical distance. Examples include friendships, parent-child relationships, and erotic relationships between lovers (Honneth 2005).

Law is the recognition of obeying socially formed norms by controlling one’s actions. People share a standpoint of the “generalized other” that law indicates. They recognize each other as legal persons who know their obligations and rights and understand they are responsible agents. A person in a legal relationship forms an attitude of self-respect, which means that they legally respect themselves and are legally respected by others. Modern laws, which have universalistic principles, are for all people to whom the laws apply, thus implying that exceptions and privileges are not admissible to them, and modern laws assume people to be rational and free beings. For instance, hierarchical ranking is prohibited when people recognize each other as legal persons in modern law. Conversely, tradition-bound laws formed by a community are for people belonging to that community. Their legal recognitions are restricted in their membership because the “generalized others” in the laws are applied only to their community members. Therefore, conflicts of legal recognition arise between a modern society with universalistic principles and traditional communities⁶ (Honneth 2005).

Collective evaluation is the recognition of a person by themselves or others who belong to the same group, evaluating their abilities or outcomes that are significant for the group. The criteria of the evalua-

⁶ According to Honneth (2005), Mead’s concept of the “generalized other” can apply to both traditional communities and post-traditional modern society.

tions are formed and shared by the group members and include stages of evaluations or a scale of more-less or better-worse. A person can achieve the self-realization that their personality is different from the personalities of other members through collective evaluations (Honneth 2005).

A person holds negative affection or emotion, such as humiliation, insult, or shame, when they are disrespected in social recognition. This experience includes moral conflicts and deprivation or withholding of recognition forms. The person’s experience causes an identity crisis in one or more forms of social recognition. The experience can be a moment that begins a social movement as a “struggle for recognition” if it is shared as a social problem. The disrespect in social recognition relates to reification. Reification refers to treating people as depersonalized objects as a result of losing the capacity to empathize with others, and it includes the denial or forgetting of social recognition. Reification is generally engendered as anonymous because it relies on the conventions of specific rigid thoughts or behaviors. That may be caused by the generalization of commodity exchange in capitalism or a social structural condition containing a lack of social recognition engendered by ideology or prejudice. Reification has the following gradations—from the dehumanization characteristic of racism or human trafficking to a slight degree, such that it barely constitutes a violation of the practical condition of human life (Honneth 2005; 2012).

Awareness Context Theory and Its Connectivity to Social Recognition

Awareness Context in Strauss’ SI

The perception or awareness of an object is related to interaction in SI, whereas it is related to the indi-

vidual in psychology. According to Strauss (1997), awareness is a symbolic matter and is defined as a sensitizing concept required to analyze interaction. Glaser and Strauss (1964) define awareness context as the total combination of what specific persons or groups know about a specific issue. Although the combinations are enormous and complex, the total combination of what each interactant in a situation knows about the identity of the other and their identity in the eyes of the other is valid as long as we focus on simplified interactions. Context is a structural unit used to analyze interactions and encompasses orders greater than interactions.

Glaser and Strauss (1964) propose four types of awareness contexts that are empirically useful. However, unawareness context signifies the limitation of awareness contexts. Unawareness context is a combination in which interactants know neither the identity of the other nor their identity in the eyes of the other. That is illustrated by strangers meeting or passing each other on a dark street. Closed awareness context occurs when an interactant does not know either the other's identity or the other's view of their identity. Suspicion awareness context occurs when an interactant suspects the other's identity or the other's view of their identity or both. Mutual pretense awareness context occurs when both interactants know the other's authentic identity and the other's view of their authentic identity, but they pretend not to know.⁷ Open awareness context occurs when both interactants

know the other's authentic identity and the other's view of their authentic identity. None of these definitions are inherently less stable than the others. They shift from one to another through changing situational conditions or interactions and interactants' modifying awareness. It is beneficial to supplement the definitions by adding an assessment of one's "own identity" (Glaser and Strauss 1964:678) to the two assessments of identity. An example can be illustrated through interactions in which an ethnic minority individual passes as a majority member by hiding their ethnic identity from that majority. This awareness context is closed when their passing succeeds. However, it shifts to suspicion when a majority of individuals suspect their ethnic identity. Awareness context is mutually pretentious when the majority person and the ethnic minority person know about the attempt to pass, but do not express it. If one of them expresses it, the awareness context becomes open, as illustrated below.

Consensus and the Recursive Structure in Scheff's SI

Scheff's concept of consensus is closely related to the idea of awareness context. According to Scheff, the agreement is an endorsement of an object or statement, and the consensus is equivalent to the open awareness context. Therefore, consensus occurs when each interactant agrees (assessment of self-identity), each knows that the other agrees (assessment of each other's identity), and each knows that the other knows that they agree (assessment of their identity in the eyes of the other). These are levels of consensus, and dissent arises if one or more of them are inaccurate. As he defines it operationally, the consensus seems to be the infinite reciprocal process of the assessment of interactants

⁷ Glaser and Strauss (1964) use the term "true identity" in their definition. Scheff (1970) claims ambiguity in the use of "true." This study uses the term "authentic/inauthentic" to indicate empirical definition by people, not as true/false concepts accompanied by the philosophical "problem of other minds" (Scheff 2005a:158). See also Muedeking (1992) and Strauss (1982; 1993).

with each other. Although this shows that consensus becomes the infinite regress in assessment, it is empirically up to the third level. Scheff places consensus into the recursive structure of mutual awareness in co-oriented (or intersubjective) interaction. This structure has two aspects—the coordination of interaction in a situation and affective or emotional attunement in an interpersonal relationship of interactants. The former is when interactants coordinate their acts in macro-social structural conditions, and they are aware of its aspect. Therefore, it implies social integration based on consensus. In contrast, the latter occurs when interactants empathize with each other in an interactional order and includes pride, face, shame, or embarrassment. This is invisible in Western culture. Thus, the interactants are rarely aware of its aspect (Scheff 1967; 1970; 2005a; 2005b).

Connectivity of Awareness Context Theory to Social Recognition

Based on the above, we can find connections between awareness and consensus in SI and social recognition in Honneth’s critical theory, limited to the explanatory parts of humans and society—social recognition as an aspect of awareness. However, three points should be carefully confirmed and altered for the aim of this study. The first is the quality of interaction. The limited Honneth’s theory is affinitive to SI because it focuses on linguistically mediated interaction (see: Fraser and Honneth 2003). Using Scheff’s perspective, mutually empathized interpersonal relationships, of which people are typically unaware in interaction, and the negative experience, of which people are aware and react emotionally, can be placed into his social recognition and the experience of the lack of social recognition. The second is the assumption of

interactants. It has been evaluated that awareness context theory assumes rational interactants who manage information (including identities) (Timmermans 1994; Mamo 1999), whereas Honneth’s theory assumes affective or emotional and existential subjects. Nevertheless, we can interpret that Strauss’ (1997) idea of personal actors who have both emotional and rational aspects is equivalent to Honneth’s idea of subjects when considering Strauss’ entire perspective. Thus, we can assume a variety of existential persons with distinctive personalities, who sometimes behave rationally or emotionally in interactions or a mixture of both. That assumption makes the incorporation of the limited Honneth’s theory into awareness context theory possible. Furthermore, this incorporation extends the usefulness of the theory. The third point is the difference between the perspectives of SI. Strauss defines concepts empirically, whereas Scheff defines concepts operationally. It is necessary to place Scheff’s concepts into Strauss’s theoretical perspective by regarding them as sensitizing concepts. Additionally, Scheff’s perspective has two aspects, coordination and attunement, in interaction with the recursive structure of mutual awareness, whereas Strauss’ (1997) perspective has both a social structural process and an affective or emotional interpersonal process in interaction. The consensus and recursive structure in Scheff’s perspective can be placed into the awareness context theory in Strauss’ perspective because both have the same two aspects in interaction. Therefore, we can legitimately place both information management and social recognition processes by existential interactants into Strauss’ perspective of the awareness context theory, which means that the theory can include Timmermans’ (1994) and Mamo’s (1999) modified versions of the open awareness context.

Reconsideration of the “Dialogue” Case

Case and Method

This section reconsiders the case study of “dialogue” that I have researched (Yamaguchi 2008; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2018) as the second step to incorporate the concepts of critical theory into SI. The case *Param-Sendai* refers to a grassroots citizen activity group in the Miyagi prefecture of Japan, established in 1998 and virtually dissolved in 2011. Its purpose was to create a dialogue between *Zainichi* Korean and Japanese people. *Param* was a small group with 10-15 frequently participating members, although the group had approximately 100 registered persons on its mailing list. *Param* did not require formal registration for participation. Membership was very loose and subjective. Anyone who voluntarily joined the dialogue was treated as a member. Therefore, the degrees of their commitment to and motivations for participating in *Param* varied. The group held regular gatherings for dialogue once or twice a month in a meeting space at a public facility of the Sendai city government that supports citizen activities, as well as casual gatherings for dialogue at a roadside, a member’s house, a restaurant, a pub, and so on. The number of Japanese members was greater than that of the *Zainichi* Koreans in most gatherings. In regular gatherings, the dialogue was generally practiced in the format of 4-15 members sitting in a circle, taking time for self-introduction among the members when a new participant joined. The themes of the dialogues concern *Zainichi* Korean issues, such as the recognition of their history, Japanese and Korean names, the experience of discrimination, and conviviality (*kyosei*).⁸ I participated in the group as

⁸ I use the term “conviviality” proposed by Inoue (1986) as a translation of *kyosei* (see also Yamaguchi 2008). *Kyosei* commonly means that various people live together, whereas Inoue

a member, specifically as a dialogue practitioner, with my research interest in face-to-face communication between different ethnic persons. I observed dialogues at 87 gatherings (with handwritten field notes and memos) from May 2003 to March 2008, interviewed 15 members (5 semi-structured interviews⁹ and 44 casual non-structured interviews), and collected documents on the group’s activities. The data included research records of dialogues and gatherings, transcriptions of interviews, memos of personal communications with other members, documents such as newsletters and emails, and my experiences as a member. I analyzed the social world using Strauss’s (1993; 1997) theoretical perspective and his version of the grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2005; 2008; Corbin and Strauss 2008). This methodological procedure largely involves (1) open coding of the data, (2) coding and categorizing of the data based on Strauss’ theoretical perspective and constant comparisons of codes and categories, and (3) theoretical samplings and saturation based on my research interest (however, these steps have been interrelated, sometimes moved back and forth, and partially overlapped chronologically). The reconsideration of the case in this paper also extends to the procedural process. The analytical aim was to construct a substantive theory of the case and verify and modify formal theories by corroborating them in the case study.¹⁰ This is legitimate, even though it is neither the construction of a substantive the-

used it as an academic and normative ideal to criticize homogeneous symbiosis.

⁹ The main questions were: (1) time of and motivation for participating in *Param-Sendai*, (2) impression of *Param*’s activities and members, (3) changes in self-identity after committing to *Param*. These interviews were conducted in 2014. The number of interviewees was limited because *Param* had virtually been dissolved. The analysis in this study was mainly based on field notes, memos, and documents, whereas semi-structured interviews were supplemental.

¹⁰ See also Ragin and Becker (1992) and Schwandt (2007) on the case and its research.

ory from the comparison of specific cases nor the construction of an entirely new formal theory from the comparison of various cases, as sociologists typically assume. The attempt to construct or modify a grounded theory from one or a few cases has previously been carried out (see: Timmermans 1994; Strauss 1995). However, it has not proposed a sufficiently elaborated and warranted grounded theory. A formal theory can be modified by its application and abductive reasoning in a specific and complex case because it has an open-ended character (see: Charmaz 2008; 2017). Thus, this reconsideration of the case study includes both descriptions that express the specificity of the case and explanations as to which theories apply (see: Schwandt and Gates 2018). When directly quoting the data, the following relevant information has been included—the participant (alphabet representing fictitious name), as well as their ethnicity (and generation if known), approximate age, and gender; place and date of data collection.

Social World and Symbolic Universe of the “Dialogue” Case

The relation of “dialogue” to Japanese society in this case, as described below, is equivalent to the social world’s relation to the symbolic universe (or collective symbolization) in Strauss’s (1993) theoretical perspective. The members involved in the case evaluated Japanese society and its people. The people were unaware of the histories and circumstances of the *Zainichi* Koreans, as seen in the narratives: “Japanese do not understand [*Zainichi* Koreans] at all” [Ms. T, *Zainichi* Korean, 40s, Newsletter No. 7, 2000] and “there are many people who did not know they were *Zainichi* Korean until they had grown up” [unknown, Newsletter No. 2, 1999]. They held stereotypes regarding *Zainichi* Koreans, as seen in:

“I had the stereotype that [all *Zainichi* Koreans] have wretched life stories” [Mr. C, Japanese, 40s, gathering, 1/8/2005] and “*Zainichi* Koreans are generally thought to have come to Japan by forced immigration as laborers” [Mr. S, second-generation *Zainichi* Korean, 50s, gathering, 16/9/2006]. They sometimes discriminate against *Zainichi* Koreans, as seen in: “ordinary people may casually use such [discriminatory] words regardless of the generation” [Mr. W, Japanese, 60s, gathering, 20/5/2006]. The *Zainichi* Koreans used Japanese names to hide their ethnic identities to avoid these challenges in this society, as seen in: “there are many *Zainichi* Koreans who use a Japanese name [instead of a Korean name]” [unknown, Newsletter No. 2, 1999] and “otherwise we [*Zainichi* Koreans] will be bullied by Japanese” [Ms. T, *Zainichi* Korean, 40s, Newsletter No. 7, 2000]. I analyzed and concluded that the lack of face-to-face communication channels between people who represent *Zainichi* Korean and Japanese identities was revealed in the society (Yamaguchi 2012).

The members rarely experienced communication channels representing *Zainichi* Korean and Japanese identities in Japanese society. They were either of two types—a friendly cosmetic sociality or communication where people represent ethnic groups based on the knowledge of their stereotypes. The former was seen in the narrative: “a *Zainichi* Korean friend cheerfully behaves to Japanese, but does not talk about worries concerning a *Zainichi* Korean, whereas a [Japanese] friend shows kindness [to them] by supposing the standpoint of the *Zainichi* Korean [even though they know little]” [Ms. D, Japanese who married a *Zainichi* Korean, 40s, Newsletter No. 15, 2005]. The latter was seen in “[an old Japanese said,] not only you [*Zainichi* Koreans] had a very hard time but also we [Japanese] did [in the empire period]” [Ms. A, second-generation *Zainichi*

Korean, 70s, Newsletter No. 1, 1999) and “[a Japanese person said,] we apologize [to the *Zainichi* Koreans] that we had done” [Ms. A, second-generation *Zainichi* Korean, 70s, gathering, 29/10/2005]. However, there were no dialogues among the people (Yamaguchi 2012).

The members evaluated the communication modes (or substantive forms, in other words) of Japanese society. People living in the society could not talk about political issues, as seen in the narratives of “topics are too light when I talk with my friends and I cannot talk about political issues” [Ms. H, Japanese, 40s, gathering, 16/2/2008] and “I have a feeling of being trapped because there are many taboos around me” [Ms. D, Japanese who married a *Zainichi* Korean, 40s, gathering, 22/8/2004]. Therefore, the members participated in their surrounding communication by learning about fashionable topics, as seen in: “I watch TV programs to join surrounding communications” [Ms. D, Japanese who married a *Zainichi* Korean, 40s, gathering, 22/8/2004]. Further, they could not express their personal opinions in this society. That was seen in: “people do not ask for deep reasons...they later hate a person who asks [avoiding an answer when they were asked]” [Ms. A, second-generation *Zainichi* Korean, 70s, gathering, 8/2/2004] and “I got a contradictory opinion when I voiced my opinion in another small group, so I definitely will not express my opinion in the group because it makes for a bad human relationship” [Ms. K, Japanese, 40s, gathering, 19/5/2007]. In other words, the expression of personal opinion underscored people’s differences and communication based on the differences impeded good human relationships in this Japanese society, outside the *Param-Sendai*. The members abided by the communication modes while living in the outer world. I argued that the modes were an embodiment of the

Japanese mindset of harmony termed *Wa*.¹¹ That was a norm and value in everyday life for people in this Japanese society that excluded personal opinions to remove the seeds of confrontation and exerted social pressure on people to obey homogeneous symbiosis. Issues concerning *Zainichi* Korean on which *Param* focused were political and led to a confrontation between *Zainichi* Koreans and Japanese, as seen in: “I can talk about political issues in *Param*, although I can’t talk about them with my friends [in the outer world]” [Ms. H, Japanese, 40s, gathering, 16/2/2008] (Yamaguchi 2012; 2013).

The members could practice dialogue separate from the conditions above through ideal settings of “recognizing differences” and “saying definitely.” The former ideal was seen in “we do not behave in a way that each shares the same opinion, but recognizes different opinions” [Ms. A, second-generation *Zainichi* Korean, 70s, gathering, 2/10/2004] and “recognizing differences means a stance of learning from others” [Ms. A, second-generation *Zainichi* Korean, 70s, interview, 11/8/2006]. The latter was expressed in: “we must not set taboos in dialogue, especially on the issues concerning *Zainichi* Koreans” [Mr. E, Japanese, 70s, gathering, 22/8/2006]. In sum, the dialogue represented a mutual learning practice of personal opinion based on each experience on the issues concerning *Zainichi* Koreans, being independent of the Japanese mindset (*Wa*) (Yamaguchi 2008; 2011).

Form of “Dialogue” and Its Social Bond

The form of its dialogue is illustrated below. Its example is between Ms. A (second-generation *Zainichi*

¹¹ Cultural and ideological characters of Japanese society, such as *Wa*, have been proposed in the literature (for example, see: Komiya 1999; Brown 2007).

Korean, 70s) and Mr. E (Japanese, 70s), who lived during the empire period.

Ms. A: I didn’t want to walk with my grandmother when I was a child because people found that she was [*Zainichi*] Korean when she spoke Japanese with different intonation [from native Japanese intonation]. It was disgusting [said with negative emotion]. [I thought the above because] I was taught that Korea was worthless and Koreans were third-class citizens in Japan...

Mr. E: I grew up learning emperor-centered historiography. [I was taught that] Tea and *Sen no Rikyu* were great cultures that were originally in Japan. I can sing a song I learned at that time with lyrics denoting that Japan is a country with great cultures...However, its cultures have been very influenced by Korean and other cultures. [gathering, 22/8/2006]

The members participating in the dialogue did not represent ethnic groups, but personal identities, including ethnic identities.¹² The dialogue was practiced between “you as *Zainichi* Korean” and “me as Japanese” and vice versa. The difference of opinion was founded on the person rather than on the ethnic group. Further, the dialogue accepted being both rational and emotional, as a *Zainichi* Korean member said, “[replying to the opinion that emotion in dialogue can be expressed in *Param*,] yes, otherwise we cannot treat the issues between Japan and Korea” [Ms. A, second-generation *Zainichi* Korean, 70s, gathering, 20/1/2007]. This practice was accompanied by histories and circumstances, including discrimination and a dominant-subordinate relationship between the *Zainichi* Koreans and Japanese.

¹² I referred to Strauss (1997) for the relation between personal identity and collective identity and Strauss (1993) for the representation of identity.

Furthermore, *Zainichi* Korean members expressed their emotions specifically through their personal opinions (Yamaguchi 2011; 2018).

Additionally, the members formed intimate interpersonal ties with each other to practice dialogues. This is demonstrated in: “the dialogue will not make sense if each does not take a stance to accept others, and if each has, it will become mutual reliance and friendship” [Ms. A, second-generation *Zainichi* Korean, 70s, Newsletter No. 8, 2001] and “it is good that we will become friends as individuals” [Ms. D, Japanese who married a *Zainichi* Korean, 40s, gathering, 17/6/2006]. Thus, learning personal opinions in the dialogue indicated acknowledgment of personal identities. Moreover, the ties were a social bond intended not to collapse the dialogue owing to the formation of challenges, wherein the members living in the Japanese society brought its communication modes into the dialogue. The risk of collapse was seen in the Japanese members’ narratives: “I have felt something like a barrier of *Zainichi* Korean” [Mr. C, Japanese, 40s, gathering, 2/2006] and “I was quiet while I met with new *Zainichi* Korean members” [Mr. Z, Japanese, 20s, gathering, 2/2006] (Yamaguchi 2013; 2018).

Reconsideration of the Practice of “Dialogue”

We can further clarify the character of the practice using the concepts coined in this study. The communication channels of this Japanese society are closed awareness contexts around *Zainichi* Korean identity. Two other conditions behind this are: (1) almost no significant difference in physical appearance between the *Zainichi* Koreans and Japanese because they are both East Asian and (2) almost no explicit ethnic or cultural difference in everyday communication between the groups because the

Zainichi Koreans have gradually assimilated into Japanese culture through a generational transition. The two types of communication channels of open awareness context around *Zainichi* Korean identity rarely revealed in the society can be explained by appropriating the modified version of open awareness context on medicine, nursing, and care (Timmermans 1994; Mamo 1999). They indicated that the two types are (1) a cosmetic open awareness context in which people regard a focused ethnic minority identity, but do not go deep and (2) a stereotyped open awareness context in which people accept the minority identity, but only with stereotyped knowledge of it. By appropriating the modified version to the case, we also observe (3) an active open awareness context¹³ wherein people accept the deeper implications of the minority identity as *Param-Sendai* did. This means that *Zainichi* Koreans' identities are reified in this Japanese society because of stereotypes and discrimination. Thus, *Zainichi* Koreans experience a severe lack of social recognition, causing them to face an identity crisis in this society. Furthermore, people living in the society recognize both forms of law and collective evaluation through the Japanese traditional community mindset known as *Wa*, which excludes personal opinions and political issues, including *Zainichi* Korean issues. In this mindset, we observe the meta-power of communication mode (substantive form), which complements the meta-power of communication channel and its accessibility (Hall 1997), and the indirect power as the way to enhance homogeneity, which complements the power as the way to make a difference (Wolfe 2002). Therefore, we find that the dialogue is a practice to create an active open awareness context around *Zainichi* Korean identities and

issues and a context of mutual recognition by forming intimate interpersonal ties to make the dialogue possible within and against the Japanese society in which their contexts and powers work.

Reconsideration of the Practice of "Dialogue" in Its Difficulty

However, the practice did not imply any attainment of consensus (or mutual understanding in a relatively wide sense) and mutual recognition and faced difficulty. That was particularly exemplified in a series of events. On an issue concerning *Zainichi* Koreans, Ms. A (second-generation *Zainichi* Korean, 70s) expressed her emotions in the dialogue. However, Mr. C (Japanese, 40s) could not express his emotions in a similar manner. According to him, "I found myself being calm even when she emotionally replied with a mixture of both sympathy and antipathy, losing her calm" [Mr. C, Japanese, 40s, Newsletter No. 17, 2007]. She told him several times, "you and I are inevitably divided" [Mr. C, Japanese, 40s, Newsletter No. 17, 2007]. Thus, he became aware of the gap in empathy between them. After becoming aware of this, he made several attempts to understand her opinions and the accompanying emotions (based on my experiences of participant observation in *Param*). However, he could not reach her standpoint. As he explained, "as a member of the majority, I realized that I could not understand *Zainichi* Korean colleague's mindset of *Param-Sendai*, despite her being the closest to *Zainichi* Koreans" [Mr. C, Japanese, 40s, Newsletter No. 17, 2007]. Finally, through the events, he became aware of the gap in understanding. Thereafter, he changed the ideal of conviviality (*kyosei*) into attempting to understand and recognize each other under the impossibility of their attainments, as seen in: "I come to think that we have to live together in the despair that we are

¹³ According to Timmermans (1994), active open awareness is equivalent to open awareness proposed by Glaser and Strauss.

inevitably divided, through my repetitive experiences of awareness of the gap” [Mr. C, Japanese, 40s, Newsletter No. 17, 2007] (Yamaguchi 2008; 2018; original data have been added above).

Experiencing these gaps may be a realization of the impossibility of exchanging personal standpoints in the dialogue because he, “as Japanese,” could understand what she, “as *Zainichi* Korean,” said only by guessing her history and circumstance from his perspective. The members seemed to be aware that their understandings were no more than guesswork from their standpoints, as seen in the dialogue, for example, “I was born after the Second World War, so I do not directly realize the war’s impact, but I have to know what Japan has done [from others’ opinion]” [Ms. K, Japanese, 40s, gathering, 18/1/2004] (Yamaguchi 2018:41). These experiences imply that the members were aware that mutual recognition in the form of love and collective evaluation would never be attained because of the impossibility of attaining understanding and empathy between the *Zainichi* Korean and Japanese members.

Reconsideration of the Character of the “Dialogue” Case

The despairing events make clear the purpose of *Param-Sendai*’s activity. As noted earlier, the dialogue created the contexts of active open awareness and mutual recognition. That implies, in the three forms of recognition, that the group members formed intimate interpersonal ties (love), respected each other as members of the gathering (law), and recognized and learned their ethnic identities and opinions (collective evaluation). However, the dialogue was regarded as the unending process of consensus (or mutual understanding) and mutual recognition because of the impossibility of attaining

understanding and empathy. Thus, its purpose is to practice dialogue.

Having reconsidered the case with the perspective coined in this study, I can now find a path to elaborate and expand my findings of the case (Yamaguchi 2008; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2018)—a social justice inquiry in Japanese society. The awareness of the impossibility of attaining mutual recognition in the forms of love and collective evaluation in the dialogue can compel the members to search for universalization of the form of law in the dialogue. I found new significance in two narratives by Mr. C (Japanese, 40s), who experienced despairing events.

When I face [and understand] others of *Zainichi* [Korean], I have to stand in a position in which I have to come back to the specificity of others inevitably dropped from the universality of others, even if I search for their universality, at the end of their specificity [historicity]. It may be a position to refuse abstract, in other words. That occurred in the [despair] experience. [Mr. C, Japanese, 40s, Newsletter No. 17, 2007]

I have made sure again; it is the first step of conviviality [*kyosei*] that I understand the difference of “loneliness” for the *Zainichi* Korean friend who faced miscommunication with me and then tried to get close to “loneliness” for *Zainichi* Koreans...If it is impossible to love [other], it is important to acknowledge the existence [of the other]...being outside [of the self] and try to care for and coexist with [them] as much as possible.¹⁴ I now think it might be a hint of conviviality. [Mr. C, Japanese, 40s, Newsletter No. 17, 2007]

¹⁴ In this sentence, Mr. C assumed Japanese and *Zainichi* Koreans as teachers and students’ relationships because he was a high school teacher. However, he pointed out that this may apply to human relationships (Newsletter No. 17, 2007).

These narratives signify universalistic ranges superseding the extent of the *Param-Sendai* members—the mutual recognition forms of law between persons at the existential level. The former narrative signifies a legal form of mutual recognition open to the heterogeneity of a person at the existential level under the impossibility of understanding others. The distortion and abstraction of the specificity of the existential *Zainichi* Korean members arose when Mr. C tried to understand the *Zainichi* Korean members in the dialogue. That is when he searched for a common and general part (e.g., names, such as “human” or “person”) the self and others can share. Thereby, the dialogue for conviviality entails a legal form that people mutually respect, not a common and general part as comprehensible, but their existential specificities as incomprehensible. The latter narrative signifies a legal form of mutual recognition with which people form and maintain intimate interpersonal ties under the impossibility of empathizing with others. It entailed a practical ethic that a person can care for others to the extent that the self respects the other, who is not epistemologically but rather ontologically heterogeneous because the existential other is outside of empathy by the existential self. The two legal forms are not teleological, but procedural. They are not for attaining a consensus (or mutual understanding) or mutual recognition, but for proceeding with the dialogue. Therefore, we may say that the universalization of the legal forms of mutual recognition seen in the *Param-Sendai* is one attempt at “the struggle for recognition” as a social justice inquiry, which turns the legal forms of the traditional community of Japan accompanied by homogeneous pressure into universalistic forms open to heterogeneity.

Conclusion

This study attempts to incorporate social recognition from the limited critical theory of Honneth into the awareness context theory in Strauss' SI by reconsidering a case study of “dialogue” between *Zainichi* Korean and Japanese people in Japan. It proposes both a substantive theory of the case as a social justice inquiry in face-to-face communication between the ethnic minority and majority in Japanese society and a formal theory of awareness context with social recognition from the perspective of modern society. In conclusion, I note four points using abductive reasoning related to the reconsideration, in addition to the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research.

The Character of the Case and Its Substantive Theory

The “dialogue” case proposes a channel and mode of face-to-face interaction of active awareness context between *Zainichi* Koreans and Japanese against the power of the channels and modes of communication of the closed awareness context around *Zainichi* Korean identities and issues in the Japanese society accompanied by the homogeneous and harmonizing mindset called *Wa*, which reifies *Zainichi* Korean identities. Generally, the closed awareness context and reification of *Zainichi* Korean identities remain present in contemporary Japanese society. Thus, the interaction mode of dialogue proposed in this study can be useful for dissolving them (contrastingly, Lee's [2016] argument regarding dialogue is oriented to its use for reforming *Zainichi* Korean society). The interaction mode has the universalistic forms of law, that is, it is open to the heterogeneity of existential persons that is practiced by interactants being aware of the

impossibility of attaining consensus (or mutual understanding) and mutual empathy and is practiced for itself. The practice of “dialogue” has a character of reasonable dissent (see: Shalin 1992b; Bohman 1999) in pragmatist thought, which is opposite to the convergence of rational consensus as reported by Habermas (1985; 1986). Further, it is characterized by a joint action open to the heterogeneity of existential persons who have both reason and affection or emotion and are located in different histories and circumstances. The character of the interaction mode both indicated the significance of social justice inquiry in contemporary Japanese society and allowed for the elaboration on and expansion of awareness context theory.

This study’s findings regarding dialogue make clear its significance by connecting it to social justice inquiry. This case study proposes a social justice inquiry (Charmaz 2005; Denzin 2007) from the standpoint of a local actor living in a non-western society—a substantive theory of “the struggle for recognition” that forms an active open awareness context between *Zainichi* Koreans as an ethnic minority and Japanese as a majority, in Japanese society accompanied by the contexts of closed awareness, cosmetic open awareness, and stereotyped open awareness around the *Zainichi* Korean identity reified by the Japanese. However, the theory is not a strategy of the social movement in which the minority collectively resists the majority, as Honneth’s theory (2005) and Seo (2012) focused on, or in which highly motivated activists are involved, as Lee (2018) focused on. It is rather a strategy of the “public sphere” (Bohman 1999:471) in pragmatist thought—an organization of face-to-face interactions open to the ethnic or cultural minority identity and personal opinion on the minority issue against the ethnic or cultural majority’s power

of communication channels and modes (see also Yamaguchi 2013). In other words, it is a grassroots communication strategy that realizes liberal democracy as the form of modern society in Japan, liberating people from the communitarian Japanese mindset of *Wa*.

Extension and Elaboration of Awareness Context Theory

This study extends the awareness context theory. The substantive theory signified in the case opens up new applicability of the awareness context theory that has been used in medicine, nursing, and care—an analysis of conflicts, powers, and creative practices between the majority and minority who differ in cultural or ethnic background. The modified open awareness contexts (cosmetic, stereotyped, and active) can be useful for empirical interaction studies in their relationship because they are formulated around stereotypes, taboos, and discrimination.

This study elaborates on the awareness context theory. The management of both information and affective or emotional social recognition by existential interactants can be analyzed using the formal theory of awareness context coined and verified in this study. Additionally, there are two notable points in this study’s findings: (1) the understanding of information and social recognition that overlap in interaction, but have different processes (this case illustrated a process from the awareness of the gap in empathy to the awareness of the gap in understanding) and (2) the open awareness context does not necessarily mean the attainment of consensus or mutual recognition, unlike the operational definition by Scheff (1967; 1970). The awareness context theory refers not to ends, but contexts. Thus, they

are not inherently stable, including “contingency” (Strauss 1993:36) and “uncertainty” (Mamo 1999), in the course of interaction.

Expansion of the Theoretical Perspective of SI

The incorporation of Honneth’s limited theory into Strauss’ SI can sensitize the conditions of modern society and add an analytical focus on conflicts between traditional cultural communities and modern society. It revitalizes the theoretical significance of Strauss’ SI and expands the scope of SI. The theoretical perspectives in SI, particularly generic formal theories, have not been sufficient for the theorization of contemporary modern societies. For example, Blumer assumed an open and egalitarian modern society with his belief in democratic progress (see: Hall 1997). Strauss (1993) theorized interactions in multiple global worlds. Goffman (1959) theorized interaction order in modern Western society (see also Rawls 2000). However, they do not theorize discernible conditions between traditional cultural community and modern society, as seen in Honneth’s theory, because they took the modern for granted in their theories.

More significantly, Strauss’ theoretical perspective, as coined in this study, facilitates an inquiry into their conflict processes in the empirical studies of a non-western society (see also Joas 2000 on its importance). It overcomes the limitation that Honneth’s theory virtually seems to assume Western societies to be modern (see: Honneth 2014) and expands the scope of SI that has not tackled the cultural specificity of society (see: Jacobsen 2019b). The reconsideration of the case study described and explained some of the cultural specificities of Japanese society—the practice of “dialogue” in which affection and emotions were expressed by its members

who were aware of the empathy process and even tried to achieve it, which is unfamiliar in Western societies (Scheff 2005a), and conflicts between the values and norms of the Japanese mindset (*Wa*) and the forms of “dialogue.”

Implication of the Study

This study highlights that a theory generated from an empirical study includes the interest of a researcher (Charmaz, Thornberg, and Keane 2018) and the cultural specificity of a researched society. Thus, we can suggest the importance of setting the realms of the cultural specificity of society and research interest in addition to the distinction between substantive and formal theories. For example, the interest of a researcher influences whether they search for grounded critical theory (Denzin 2007), critical grounded theory (Charmaz 2005; Gibson 2007), or both a substantive theory with a critical perspective of modern society and a formal theory that has discernible conditions of modern society, as seen in this study. A substantive theory includes the components of society, such as interactant, identity, interaction, social world, and the symbolic universe, along with cultural specificity, as seen in this study. I do partially disagree with the notion of Charmaz and colleagues (2018) that generic sensitizing concepts (i.e., a formal theory) can provide a place not to end inquiries, but to start them. I believe that a formal theory can be a research purpose or interest and has applicability that is not restricted by cultural specificity, differentiating from a substantive theory as a means of solving a problem related to some practical research interest in a substantive situation. Formal theories are significant in their generic usefulness. They make it possible to analyze interactions accompanied by non-western cultures, and interactionists with different research interests

can use them. Thus, this study’s attempt is possible and legitimate. Therefore, formal theories can be common frameworks by which conventional interactionists, interactionists adopting critical theory, and interactionists researching non-western society can interact, discuss, or even be opposed. Thus, the academic field of SI can be a pluralistic arena that embodies the freedom to values rather than “value-free sociology” (Langman 2019:184), which embodies freedom from values.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

As this study proposes a hypothesis to open new prospects rather than warranted knowledge validated by sufficient studies, it leaves scope for further research. The substantive theory proposed in this study tested and fit one case, and its further elaboration, by comparing it with other cases, is open to substantive areas such as the public sphere, the minority-majority relationship, which differs in cultural and ethnic background, and Japanese society.

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Further empirical verifications of social recognition as a sensitizing concept are also required. The relationships between understanding, recognition, and awareness in the awareness context theory require further elaboration through empirical studies.

Nevertheless, this study encourages the research project of SI to meet critical theory in empirical studies. Critical theory tends to be an “ivory tower-based armchair philosophy” (Langman 2019:185). This paper proposes that we do not have to be workers who modify critical theory in empirical studies, following the critical or progressive logical structure proposed by a desk-working philosopher. We can be creators who generate grounded theories from empirical studies based on our respective research interests while learning partially from critical or progressive theories.

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