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## The Experiences and Perceptions of Microaggressions Against American Assistant Language Teachers Living in Japan

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The Experiences and Perceptions of Microaggressions Against American Assistant  
Language Teachers Living in Japan

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Communication

by

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Bachelor of Arts, 2011

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This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis reports the results of a mixed method study investigating the microaggressions that Americans working as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) experience in popular English as a Second Language jobs such as the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET Program) and Interac. Utilizing a survey, this study identifies the types of microaggressions American ALTs experience and at what frequency, in both the general and workplace environment, the emotional valence of these utterances, how ALTs respond verbally and emotionally, how they cope, their job satisfaction, intercultural communication competence, and relational intimacy with Japanese Teachers of English. A series of interviews portrays a deeper look at the specific microaggressions ALTs experience, as well as its uniqueness compared to other studies that focus on microaggressions in America. Ultimately, this study aims to find the differences and similarities in microaggressions through the lens of the American expatriate. Using this, recruiters can see what their employees face while working abroad, and future ALTs can learn strategies when they face similar encounters in their future field of work.

*Key words:* microaggressions, Japan, America, intercultural communication, job satisfaction, high-context culture, low-context culture, communication competence, coping, attribution, facework.

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is primarily dedicated to all the amazing and wonderful people I met and worked with during my time on the JET Program. It is also dedicated to Mrs. Chika Kasuya and Mr. Yuki Mizusawa, two teachers I worked during my time in the JET Program. They took me under their wings to become a skilled and productive teacher while allowing me to bring my own culture to the classroom. I also want to dedicate this to Ms. Chika Furukawa, who gave me many opportunities to become a member of my community, Yurihonjo City, including leading cooking classes and reading books from my childhood to children in the community. This is also dedicated to Sasaki-*Sensei*, my karate teacher. He treated me like a second daughter, and I have many fond memories of spending time with his family and getting to know his bright and cheerful daughter, Yumi.

Most importantly, this is dedicated to anyone who knows what it is like to live as a minority. This thesis would not have been possible if it were not for exposure to this lens, something I had taken granted my whole life. This also goes to every expatriate who deals with the struggles of navigating a new country, learning the language, and wondering, “Did he really just say that?”

*Tell me not in mournful numbers life is but an empty dream! For the soul is dead that slumbers  
and things are not what they seem. Life is real! Life is earnest! And the grave is not the goal;  
dust thou art to dust returnith, was not spoken of the soul—A Psalm of Life, by Henry Wadsworth*

*Longfellow. This is my mother's favorite poem, and words I try to live by.*

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Considering the number of Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) from America living in Japan contracted through both private and governmental organizations, it is important to investigate the lived experiences of these expatriates. Naturally, living in a foreign country regardless of knowledge of the host country's language or culture, can be a daunting experience. The interpersonal experiences one has with members of the host community, including work colleagues, can negatively impact work-life, community involvement, and overall personal well-being (Kim, 1991, 2005a; Nadal, Wong, Griffin, Davidoff, & Sriken, 2014, Pittman, 2012; Redmond, 2000). While it may be easy to label expatriates' negative reactions to host nationals' comments as being due to culture shock (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Redmond, 2000) or as racism (Nadal, 2011; Soloranzo, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000), this study seeks to better understand the nature of microaggressions (i.e., negatively perceived personal comments about an American's background or work ethic) that challenge an American ALT's face while he or she is working in Japan. Here, face is defined as the preservation and image of the part of one's self which is dependent on social rules (in this case, either the host rules or one's own rules) and the specifics of a social situation (Goffman, 1967).

Originally coined by Pierce and his colleagues in the 1970s, they defined microaggressions as "subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are 'put downs' of blacks by offenders" (Pierce, Carew, Piecre-Gonzalez, & Wills, 1978, p. 66). Offenders in this case were predominately, if not exclusively, Caucasian (Pierce et al., 1977). Later definitions shifted the victims to include other minorities and marginalized groups. Sue expands the definition of microaggressions as "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain

individuals because of their group membership” (Sue, 2010, p. 24). Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin (2007) describe microaggressions to generally be covert or ambiguous in nature, and are either unintentional or said in good faith as a means to generate communication. Because of the well-intended nature of the comments, Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, and Torino (2009) describe it as “the new form of racism” considering many Caucasians (i.e., Americans) feel that in making these statements they are further globalizing themselves when the opposite is true. With these definitions in mind, this study defines a microaggression as an act that depicts a minority as inferior to a host culture member through either verbal communication or nonverbal communication in a covert or overt way, usually unintentionally.

This study focuses largely on Americans participating as teachers through The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program but also those working for other organizations such as Interac. The JET Program is the only publicly funded program through the Japanese Ministry of Education (About). As of 2106, there were 2,696 American ALTs living throughout Japan, making Americans the highest participant group compared to other participating countries in the JET Program (Participating Countries). The second program, Interac, is a privately-owned company that sponsors language teachers from English speaking countries to teach English in Japan. Within this program, 47% of their language teachers come from North America (Interac network).

ALTs may work teaching English at multiple schools, depending on their contract through their municipal board of education. For example, the researcher worked at a total of two elementary schools and one junior high school during her time in the program. ALTs who teach at high school typically teach only at the high school level. Those who work at junior high schools may also work at elementary schools. While uncommon, an ALT may change schools

under certain circumstances (e.g., an elementary school may close due to a low number of students, as was the case with the researcher's first elementary school). An ALT can have numerous Japanese Teacher of English (JTE) colleagues, again depending on the school and number of schools at which the ALT teaches. If an ALT stays for multiple years, he or she may periodically work with new JTEs. This is because teachers in Japan do not stay at the same school for an extended period of time. If a JTE changes schools, this usually happens in April, the start of the Japanese fiscal year (Positions).

Microaggressions can be verbal, non-verbal, environmental, or situational interactions which suggest derogatory or negative perspectives about an individual, usually a minority group member (Sue et al., 2007). They are generally rather subtle and covert displays occurring within interpersonal conversations that minorities perceive to be threatening in some way. The perceived threat can be intrapersonal leading one to feel negatively about oneself, interpersonal generating similar feelings towards the speaker, or environmental causing the receiver to perceive the threat as coming from a host environment (Okazaki, 2009; Sue et al., 2007; Ward, Okura, Kennedy, & Kojima, 1998). Both interpersonal traits (i.e., shyness) and situational context (i.e., the workplace versus a restaurant) can leave minorities vulnerable to microaggressions (Ong, Burrow, Fuller-Rowell, Ja, & Sue, 2013). Microaggressions can affect a recipient's mental and physical health, workplace efficiency, and job performance (Nadal, 2011).

To date, most researchers investigating microaggressions have focused on the U.S. (e.g., Gomez, Khurshid, Freitag, & Lachuk, 2011; Green, 2003; Huynh, 2012; Johntson & Nadal, 2010). Two of the most common environments to study microaggressions have been on college campuses and various workplaces (e.g., DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016; Pittman, 2012; Shenoy-Packer, 2015; Solorzano et al, 2000). Caucasian Americans are often, but not always, identified

as the instigators of these microaggressions. For example, Nadal (2011) wrote that many microaggressive utterances from Caucasian Americans directed toward Asian-Americans occur in the form of “You speak English well.” While this could be intended as a compliment (i.e., complementing language skills), the implied assumption is the target was born outside the U.S, suggesting he or she is not American. Other examples are when Asian Americans are asked where they are *really* from (i.e., their heritage country).

There are several factors that could influence an individual’s perception of microaggressions. These could include his or her level of culture shock, interpersonal communication competence (ICC), and relational quality with Japanese people. Culture shock is a common phenomenon for those venturing outside their home country for the first time, often resulting in feelings of isolation. This may lead expatriates to interpret comments as racist and arouse negative emotional valances (Gomez et al., 2011; Samochowiec & Florack, 2010). However, if one can recognize common types of microaggressions and be prepared to better respond, more positive interpersonal relationships are possible. Positive interpersonal relationships are key to the successful assimilation of people living in a host environment as sojourners (Kim, 1991; Kim 2005a). Regardless of how short their stay is (e.g., an ALT typically stays one to five years), some assimilation is important so sojourners can make the most of their time in a host country (Redmond, 2000). In order to build and sustain such relationships, sojourners and expatriates need high communication competence, awareness of cultural differences, and an understanding of how these differences can be addressed and reconciled (Nadal et al., 2014).

One’s level of ICC could be a factor for why an ALT perceives comments and interactions to be microaggressions. ICC partly involves the ability to recognize and accommodate to cultural differences so as to ensure successful interactions in a host environment different from one’s

own national environment (Kim, 2005a). While basic components of ICC include attitude and proficiency in host language, empathy, flexibility, open-mindedness and positive self-image are equally important behavioral characteristics (Öz, 2015). Particularly with attitude, if one enters an interaction with a negative attitude, it is possible she might perceive a statement as being a microaggression rather than a genuine compliment. Similarly, if her flexibility for responding to a situation is high, she may be less likely to consider something to be a microaggression. This study investigates the role of ICC in relationship to microaggressions as well as relational intimacy.

Relational intimacy and closeness might also influence whether or not a statement or action is viewed as a microaggression. According to Burgoon and Le Poire (1999), people often signal to one another indications of where a relationship stands based on the length of the relationship. Also, feelings of closeness/tenseness, informal/formal language, and relational distance all frame the “interpretations of other message content and inevitably impinge on current and subsequent interpersonal judgements” (p. 107). Burgoon and Le Poire (1999) say these judgements can influence rapport and likability. They further say presence or absence of certain indicators (i.e., nonverbal cues such as posture, closeness, gestures, facial expressions, and voice) define one’s relationship and intimacy with more interpersonal relationships, such as an ALT’s relationship with JTEs and other Japanese co-workers. These nonverbal cues become evident through redundancy and complementary information (i.e., vocal utterances).

In terms of how people interpret microaggressions, researchers found they experience various emotional reactions and show multiple ways of responding to a microaggression (e.g., Camara & Orbe, 2010; Mellor, 2004; Nadal et al., 20014; Sue et al., 2007). One common emotional reactions reported was frustration (McCabe, 2009; Sue et al., 2007; Wang, Leu, & Shoda, 2011).

In a study by Torres, Driscoll, and Burrow (2010), they found African students felt frustrated to maintain good academic performance given the pressures of stereotypes stacked against them. For example, many African American students felt they had to defend their academic integrity. In a study by Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) one student was accused of cheating on a math test and had to retake it, while other students reported they had to defend their admission to college was based on equal credentials as their peers and not due to affirmative action. Since these students felt put down by teachers and other students because of their minority status, they felt frustrated trying to do well while facing these prejudices (Solorzano et al., 2000). Other research showed that Asian Americans tend to feel strong negative feelings with frustration being near the top of the list (e.g., Huynh, 2012; Wang et al., 2011). In some cases, avoiding talking about race (microinvalidations) also caused feelings of frustration (Constantine, 2007). Sue et al. (2007) argue that microaggressions can cause more frustration than more explicit forms of racism cause. Part of this frustration comes from not wanting to face the exhaustion of explaining why certain comments are degrading to ethnic identity, while the other part comes from feeling that speaking out is futile in disbanding ethnic stereotypes. So rather than go through this process, victims internalize this frustration.

A second common emotional reaction is isolation. According to McCabe (2009), Latino and African American students on predominantly white campuses felt increased amounts of isolation when they felt their minority status was more obvious than their previous education settings. The move from being the majority to the minority was isolating in and of itself. A second part of this isolation came when students felt they had to carry the burden of representing an entire race based on their own ethnicity, especially when discussing topics of race or racism in the classroom. Peltokorpi and Clausen (2009) state that feelings of isolation is also common for

expatriates navigating their host country using a foreign language, sometimes despite one's fluency and understanding of the language (e.g., someone assumes a word in her native language carries identical meaning in a second which may not be true). Nadal et al. (2011) says that those with multi-racial identities are more likely to experience forms of isolation because of the duality of their identity. This this in mind, this study wants to investigate how ALTs emotionally respond to microaggressions.

Previous researchers have focused on how people verbally (internally or externally) or physically respond to microaggressions. For example, Camara and Orbe (2010) broke down types of microaggressions by the severity of the aggression, how the victim reacted, and the environment in which a microaggression was likely to occur. Based on a microaggression's severity, an individual might respond by assimilating (i.e., self-censoring), accommodating (i.e., mirroring), or separating (i.e., sabotage). However, these categories are not mutually exclusive. So, this study investigates how ALTs respond verbally to microaggressions.

In terms of where microaggressions are likely to occur, businesses (i.e., a restaurant) had the highest frequency, followed by the workplace, school, public (i.e., walking on the sidewalk), and home (Camara & Orbe, 2010). This study specifically focuses on workplace microaggressions. Workplace microaggressions have led to numerous lawsuits (Significant EEOC). Camara and Orbe (2010) found that workplace microaggressions (in their case at a university) often resulted in assimilation behaviors where people pretended to be unaffected in order to keep their jobs or maintain working relationships. This lead to reactions including anxiety, fear of repercussions, and thoughts about reporting the microaggressions to human resources.

Researchers also have investigated how minority status can influence one's job satisfaction and job performance. Green (2003) looked at two minority groups (African American men and

African American women) in the workplace and found that both of them, when surrounded by Caucasian workers, felt their group participation was overlooked because of race, and that they were not given due credit. Green (2003) concluded that when overall job satisfaction is low, a person is more likely to be passive (“ride it out”) rather than take action. Museus, Sariñana, and Ryan (2015) also found that people who have more passive coping tendencies tend to have lower job satisfaction within a university setting. Finally, Leung and Lee (2006) found that Asian Americans in particular experienced low levels of job satisfaction when they had highly stressful jobs and felt they did not meet the expectations set for them by family and co-workers. This study investigates the relationships between the workplace microaggressions ALTs experiences, their emotional reactions, and their job satisfaction. The researcher anticipates that lower job satisfaction will be present when ALTs experience more workplace microaggressions.

### **Research Questions**

This study investigates if Americans working in Japan, as a minority group, experience the same kind of microaggressions minorities do in America. If those microaggressions occur, it is important to investigate ALTs emotional and verbal responses. Since many of these microaggressions occur in the workplace, how they influence an ALT’s job satisfaction is investigated. From these, this study has four research questions:

RQ1: What are the most common types of microaggressions American ALTs experience in Japan and at what frequency?

RQ2: How do message recipients respond emotionally to these microaggressions?

RQ3: How do message recipients respond to these microaggressions nonverbally or verbally in terms of coping mechanisms?

RQ:4 Is there a correlation between ALTs’ job satisfaction and the frequency and

emotional valence of workplace microaggressions?

Two additional concepts are investigated in relation to microaggressions. The first concept is ICC. Since living and working abroad does require some level of ICC, it is important investigate the potential relationship between an ALT's ICC and his or her perceptions regarding microaggressions. The second concept involves relational intimacy. Gudykunst, Yang, and Nishida (1985) explain that over time, intimacy in relationships helps people name and cope with their anxieties. With this in mind, relational intimacy (or lack thereof) is another issue worth investigating in relation to workplace microaggressions. Therefore:

RQ5: Is there a relationship between ALTs' intercultural communication competence (i.e., successful interactions with people from a different culture) and the frequency and emotional valence of experienced microaggressions?

RQ6: Is there a relationship between the frequency of workplace microaggressions and ALTs' level of intimacy with their JTEs?

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of the Literature**

This literature review covers the literature, theories, and definitions important to this study. The section begins by discussing microaggressions directed at minority groups (especially Asian Americans and Asian immigrants), then defining and listing the types of microaggressions one might experience. Next, information is provided showing how cultural differences (e.g., context, in-group and out-group membership) and facework challenges might influence whether or not an ALT perceives an utterance to be a microaggression. Individual differences such as anxiety-uncertainty management ability and ICC might also influence whether or not ALTs perceive an utterance to be a microaggression. Literature discussing various responses and coping mechanisms (emotional and behavioral) in the face of microaggressions is reviewed. Relational framing theory and convergence/divergence theory are discussed especially as they relate to the workplace relationships between ALTs and JTEs, perceived microaggressions, emotional responses, and job satisfaction.

#### **The Asian American and Asian Immigrant Experience**

This study investigates the microaggressions American ALTs experience while working in Japan. Although multiple researchers have investigated microaggressions directed toward Asian Americans or Asian immigrants in America, no research has investigated the microaggressions facing American ALTs. Researchers have investigated the Asian American experiences as being the recipient of microaggressions coming from Caucasian Americans (e.g., Nadal et al., 2011; Okazaki, 2009; Ong et al., 2013). Often times, Asian Americans experience microaggressions based on their high work ethic, high test scores, or perceived overall intelligence. For example, Okazaki (2009) found that Asian Americans often felt they were being put on a pedestal as a

model minority. She said these microaggressions were so severe that the Asian Americans experienced “threats to their own opportunities and resources” because of the pressure to be model citizens (p. 106). The media also portray microaggressions, such as characterizing an Asian minority member as having a heavy accent or speaking very broken English. As a result, this group feels invisible, ignored, or highly misrepresented (Okazaki, 2009; Ong et al., 2013). In romantic relationships, Nadal et al. (2011) found that white Americans dating Asian Americans often joked that the two were only dating because of their different ethnicities. Ong et al. (2013) listed specific microaggressions against Asians including that all Asian food tastes similar and/or is bland, all Asians look the same, or that Asian Americans are less likely to face discrimination in comparison to other minorities. Asian Americans are asked of their country of origin (i.e., Korea, Japan) based on the premise they are non-white (Sue et al., 2007).

Asian immigrants are not exempt from experiencing microaggressions in the U.S. Other microaggressions express linguistic stereotypes as opposed to superficial characteristics (i.e., “looking” like a specific ethnicity). Tran and Lee (2014) said many immigrants’ colleagues praised their English skills assuming they had only been in the U.S for a limited amount of time. Lindemann (2002) found that native English speakers who participated in direction giving exercises for Korean students purposely used problematic language (e.g., used simple English) assuming they were doing the non-native speakers a favor by using simple English. These are only a few examples of the types of microaggressions an Asian American or Asian immigrant might experience. The next section defines microaggressions and discusses the various types.

### **Microaggressions: Definitions and Types**

Microaggressions have been defined differently through the years, most with an emphasis on racism or racial superiority (Camara & Orbe, 2010; Minikel-Lacocque, 2012; Nadal, Davidoff,

Davis, Wong, Marshall, & McKenzie, 2015). Following Pierce et al's (1997) definition as the research continued, the focus included other minorities (i.e., Asian Americans), as well as environmental instigators (i.e., magazines or TV shows).

Scholars (e.g., Camara & Orbe, 2010; Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Ong et al., 2013; Sue et al., 2007) have sought to identify various types of microaggressions. Microaggressions fall into three distinct categories—microinsults, microinvalidations, and microassaults (Ong et al., 2013; Sue et al., 2007). The first two categories are often unconsciously communicated, while microassaults are both conscious and intentional (Sue et al., 2007). Microinsults are comments that marginalize a person based on her heritage. Often this comes in the form of mocking, such as mimicking an Asian accent. Another example is an Asian American being told that all Asians are good at math. These microaggressions do not have to be expressed during face-to-face contact (e.g., you may see them in movies), and can set a model for how minorities are supposed to act (Ong et al., 2013; Sue et al., 2007). Microinvalidations are utterances that exclude the thoughts or feelings of a minority. Two extreme comments indicate that race either plays no factor (i.e., the speaker doesn't see color) or that a person's job and success is the direct result of his or her race (i.e., an Asian American being a CEO). These categories are generally systematic and understood by the majority as being stereotypes (Ong et al., 2013). In one study, Ong et al. (2013) found that over the course of two weeks, 78% of their participants experienced microaggressions, the average rate was once per week, and the most common type was a microinvalidation. Microassaults, on the other hand, are explicit and are used to purposively hurt or demean the other. These often come in the form of racial slurs.

Furthermore, microassaults are what could be considered older forms of racism including charged language, slurs, and other hurtful tactics to put down a minority. Unlike

microinvalidations and microinsults, these are much more deliberate. Microassaults often come when perpetrators feel they can say with both some level of anonymity or in semi-private sphere, such as a hallway or relatively empty room (Sue et al., 2007). Sue et al., (2007) also state that microassaults can be in the form of threats that are transparent in the message's intent (i.e., "get out of my country") and are lined with "intentional racial hatred and bigotry" (Sue & Constantine, 2007, p. 139).

The breakdown of microaggressions into further categories is seen in both Johnston and Nadal's (2010) and Sue et al.'s (2007) work. Drawing on their work, the following categories were chosen due to their relevance to this study: exclusion/isolation, exoticization/assumptions of similarity, alien in own land, denial of individual racism, workplace and school microaggressions, and pathologizing. For a more complete list, see Nadal (2011) and Sue et al. (2007).

**Exclusion/Isolation.** The first category is exclusion or isolation. These are examples of microinsults. These microaggressions include comments that either question authenticity (i.e., you aren't really Asian), place the burden of representation for an entire ethnic group on one individual (i.e., ask what Americans think about a specific subject), or reduce someone to second-class citizenship (i.e., being avoided on public transportation). They can also refer to minorities receiving substandard service compared to the majority race (Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Sue et al., 2007).

**Exoticization/Assumptions of Similarity.** A second category is exoticization and assumptions of similarity. They are types of microinvalidations or microinsults depending on how the message is delivered. Comments in this category either explicitly display race, objectify people sexually, or label multiracial people as ideal (e.g., someone saying he thinks all Asian

women are sexy). One example could be when an ALT is sexualized for her different skin or hair color. Another could be the assumption that all Americans are the same (i.e., all Americans love pizza). A third might involve someone's language ability or articulation. In regards to language, an example of this type of microaggression would be assuming Americans only speak English. An example for articulation would be an African American who speaks well considering his race (Nadal, 2011; Sue et al., 2009; Sue et al., 2007)

**Alien in Own Land.** This is another name for mistaken identity and is a type of microinvalidation. This happens when someone is presumed to be monoracial or is mislabeled as belonging to a different group (e.g., a Korean-Hispanic is labeled as either one or the other). This can also happen when people are complimented on their English when they are actually citizens or permanent residents. In the case of ALTs, a similar microaggression occurs when they are complimented on their Japanese despite their cumulative time in Japan, fluency, or study of the Japanese language. Another example could be a co-worker asking someone when she plans to move back to America when the ALT may have no such plans (Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Nadal, 2011; Sue et al. 2007).

**Denial of Individual Racism.** The fourth category is the denial of negative racial experiences, another type of microinvalidation. This is when people are denied the chance to choose their own identity or multiracial people are told their experiences aren't real (e.g., telling an Asian American friend not to be offended by a joke because of her whiteness or Americanness). This type of microaggression also ignores the fact that race does play a prominent role in multiple societies (Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Nadal, 2011; Sue et al., 2007).

**Workplace and School Microaggression.** This category of workplace microaggression is a specific type of environmental microaggression (Nadal, 2011), meaning that all types of

microaggressions can occur here. This category distinguishes the environment in which the microaggressions are likely to occur. Such microaggressions can include suggesting that an ALT is inferior by referencing his/her lower ranked position at a school. Another example would be all persons in superior positions are the dominate race, and minorities play very few, if any, leadership roles. Researchers have investigated microaggressions occurring in a work environment (e.g., Offerman, Basford, Graebner, Basu DeGraaf, & Jaffer 2013). In this study, the researcher investigates the microaggressions occurring within the working relationship between an ALT and her JTE.

**Pathologizing.** The fifth category is pathologizing experiences and identity. This category is considered to be a microinsult. These comments can display psychopathology (i.e., not understanding how one can have an ethnic surname while identifying as a different ethnicity) or family pathology (i.e., stereotypes such as all Asian mothers are unruly). Other examples can include comments that portray that one's eating habits or ways of talking are in some way abnormal compared to the host environment (e.g., commenting that American breakfast food is unhealthy because it doesn't include vegetables) or when one does not meet expectations based on their race (e.g., not wearing clothes or hair styles indicative of an ethnic group) (Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Sue et al., 2007).

Considering the variety of types and categories of microaggressions identified in previous research with different minority groups, it is important to investigate the types of microaggressions that American ALTs experience in Japan given the stereotypes they face. According to a Pew Research Center poll (Stokes, 2015), some Japanese believe that Americans are less honest. Only 25% of the Japanese surveyed found Americans to be hardworking, and 50% thought them to be aggressive. In a separate study, non-European Americans (including

Japanese), attributed negative characteristics to Americans such as being prejudiced, spoiled, greedy, and complaining (Madon, Guyll, Aboufadel, Montiel, Smith, Palumbo, & Jussim, 2001; Stokes, 2016). Given such stereotypes, we cannot assume that the most common types of microaggressions American ALTs face as the minority will be the same as those identified in previous studies with other ethnic groups (e.g., Asians, Blacks). For RQ1 this study asks, “What are the most common types of microaggressions American ALTs experience in Japan and at what frequency?”

Multiple cultural differences (i.e., high and low-context, collectivism and individualism, in-group and out-group status, and newcomer role) between Americans and Japanese help explain why conditions might be right for an American ALT to perceive a comment as being a microaggression. Differences due to high and low context cultures and concerns over face and facework will be discussed next.

## **Context, Culture, and Face**

### **Context and Culture**

**High and low-context cultures.** Considering this research investigates microaggressions occurring between members of two cultures, it is important to discuss relevant communication and cultural differences previously identified as existing between Japan and the U.S. The U.S. is considered a low context culture (Leung & Lee, 2006; Ting-Toomey, 2005). Low-context cultures rely more fully on verbal communication, meaning word choice must be direct and concise, and words generally are taken at face value. Verbal expression is based on individual (self) experiences. On the other hand, Japan is considered a high-context culture. In a high-context culture, because direct and explicit messages are often absent, a receiver must use his or her own internal references to interpret the message. Instead of individual experiences, listeners

rely more on previous group experiences and nonverbal cues than on specific verbal cues. When crafting and interpreting messages, high-context culture members do not use similarity, attraction, or self-monitoring like low-context culture members do (Gudykunst et al., 1985). Instead, the physical context of an utterance is more important than the utterance itself when predicting and interpreting the behavior of others. It is often difficult for many Americans, who come from a low-context culture, to understand the ambiguity of a perceived indirect message conveyed by someone from a high-context culture (Leung & Lee, 2006).

**Individual and collectivistic cultures.** Hofstede's (1983) dimensions of individualistic and collectivistic cultures have been linked to low- and high-context cultures. Low-context cultures are often congruent with individualistic cultures. The welfare of the individual or other tightly-knit group members are most important than that of the group as a whole. Members of individualistic cultures think of themselves as autonomous and will go against other's expectations to achieve their goals; these individuals tend to be more self-serving. For example, someone may make an executive decision for a group, even if the group has the opposite opinion (Hofstede, 1980; Maddux & Yuki, 2006; Ting-Toomey, 2005). High-context cultures are often collectivistic cultures. Members put the needs of the group before the needs of the individual. They are often emotionally integrated and loyal to other group members. For example, a person may speak on another member's behalf in order to save the second person's face (Hofstede, 1980; Leung & Lee, 2006; Triandis, Brislin, & Hui, 1988). Japanese are willing to adapt their behaviors to better the group instead of only themselves (Gelfand, Higgins, Nishii, Raver, Dominguez, Murakami, Yamaguchi, & Toyama, 2002; Liu & Wilson, 2011).

**In-group and out-group membership, and newcomer status.** In-group and out-group membership can lead to discrimination. If an individual is not part of one's in-group, she may not

be given needed information because she does not have the same credibility do the in-group members (Fisher & Derham, 2016). Even within the context of the collectivistic Japanese workplace, there are in-groups and out-groups that mark social rankings and dictate types of communication with others (Muir, Joinson, Cotterill, & Dewdney, 2016; Peltokorpi & Clausen, 2011). Americans who come from individualistic low-context cultures face challenges when working in collectivistic, high-context cultures such as Japan. Zhiqing (2015) states that for information to be properly relayed to a new person, in this case the American ALT, she must gain the attention of her host environment and adapt to the demands of the group environment. A newcomer must absorb “foreign expressions and concepts” (Wang, 2008, p. 44). The host environment (e.g., Japan) largely determines how newer, in-group members (e.g., the ALT) communicate with one another making ALTs hyper-aware of both their surroundings, actions, and language (Clément, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003). Bearing the newcomer identity, people develop self-coping strategies or experience negative valences as a reaction to their identity as being an out-group member (Green, 2003).

Such things (i.e., high and low-context, collectivism and individualism, and in-group, out-group and newcomer status) help explain why an American ALT working in Japan might think a microaggression has occurred and feel that his or her face has been threatened.

### **Face and Facework**

Goffman (1967) says face is one’s self image based on rules and values of a society (e.g., one’s native values and the host’s values) and the context of a situation or interaction. Multiple components are associated with the term ‘face.’ There is negative and positive face. Negative face involves wanting to preserve autonomy while positive face deals with seeking to protect a positive image and gain the approval of valued others. Members of collectivistic countries (e.g.,

Japan) focus more on preserving negative face while members of individualistic countries (e.g., the U.S.) focus on gaining positive face (Cai & Wilson, 2000). There are three types of face--self, other, and mutual. Self-face involves protecting or reinforcing one's own preferred image, other-face involves protecting or reinforcing another's preferred image, and mutual-face involves protecting or reinforcing the preferred image of both parties (Goffman, 1967; Ting-Toomey, 2005). In general, Japanese tend to place more regard on protecting other-face and mutual-face than self-face (Cai & Wilson, 2000). Americans are largely focused on protecting self-face.

Ting-Toomey (2005) distinguished other types of face concern to individuals when they communicate. In terms of wanting to gain or maintain intimacy with others, fellowship (inclusion) face is the desire that others recognize us as worthy or likable. Status face involves our desire that others recognize our individual skills or resources. Reliability face is our desire to be seen as reliable. Autonomy face involves our desire that others acknowledge our independence and privacy/boundary. Lastly, competence face relates to our desire that others recognize our team-building and networking skills. Competence face might be particularly important for ALTs because they are working as assistant teachers and want to be seen as both reliable and resourceful. According to Cocroft and Ting-Toomey (1994), individualistic cultures have autonomy, fellowship, and competence face needs. In the context of this study, concern might arise when an ALT interprets a comment or action as a microaggression because it threatens his or her self-face, positive face, or needs for autonomy, fellowship, and competence. Hearing statements which threaten any of these face types or needs might be viewed as a microaggression by an ALT.

It is important to note that individualistic cultures define face through personal achievements and psychological states while collectivist cultures define self through relationships (either social

or personal) (Cocroft & Ting-Toomey, 1994). When members of an individualistic culture feel a loss of face, how they approach the individual or situation is based on the level of intimacy with the other person. Moreover, if a member from an individualist culture feels an emptiness or lack of connection, they might act in a way to achieve approval from someone by balancing autonomy and reciprocal approval. When a member from a collectivist cultures feels a loss of face, they focus more on balancing humility and dignity. Japanese in particular focus on obligation, dependency, and belonging. They work to maintain face through where they belong (i.e., in-group) and where they stand (i.e., their position in the group). They use these two conjointly to maintain face (Arundale, 2006; Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, Masumoto, Yokochi, Pan, Takai, Wilcox, 2001)

According to Ting-Toomey (2005) facework is how people verbally or nonverbally maintain face, restore face, or regain face. We maintain face to uphold a positive identity we give to ourselves. We lose face when our perceived identity in a situation is challenged. We honor or try to regain face by attempting to restore our identity or repair a relationship. All cultures try to maintain face. However, how we maintain face has key cultural components. These components include one's culture (either individualistic or collectivist), power distance, variability (i.e., individual, relational, or situational), and cultural competence. Power distance refers to "the way a culture deals with status differences and social hierarchies" (Ting-Toomey, p. 75).

Although cultural differences can explain why microaggressions might occur and/or be misinterpreted, different ALTs may be better able to respond to microaggressions depending on their personal ability to manage uncertainty and their ICC competence.

## **Individual Level Differences in How ALTs Interpret Microaggressions**

### **Ability to Manage Anxiety and Uncertainty**

Anxiety and uncertainty management theory is an important theory when discussing intercultural communication. It is an evolution of uncertainty management theory first explored by Berger and Calabrese (1975). Gudykunst et al., (1985) adapted the theory to include anxiety. Anxiety in this context refers to potential negative emotional consequences one might expect to face in a host environment (e.g., an American in Japan). Uncertainty refers to the difficulty in predicting the “attitudes, feelings, beliefs, values, and behavior” of a host culture (Samochowiec & Florack, 2010, p. 508). Management refers to how individuals deal with anxiety and uncertainty (Samochowiec & Florack, 2010). There are a large number of factors that influence anxiety reduction including cultural similarity, intimacy, nonverbal communication, and information gathering strategies (Gudykunst, Sodehara, & Sonoda, 1987; Gudykunst et al., 1985; Neuliep, 2012).

There are three key situations influencing how an individual will cycle through the AUM process. These situations are reward/punishment (i.e., inclusion/exclusion in a staffroom), behavior contrary to predicted belief (i.e., a soft spoken JTE suddenly using a booming voice), and the expectation of future interaction (i.e., getting along well with a JTE at first sets the precedent for all future interactions with that teacher) (Dawkins, 2010). Ambiguity after these situations occur can be problematic. An individual’s level of tolerance for ambiguity is negatively correlated with the amount of uncertainty he or she can experience comfortably (Kramar, 1999).

AUM describes how individuals use dual cognitive and affective processes to deconstruct cultural differences. Individuals use information to both predict and explain behavior (Hammer,

Wiseman, Rasmussen, and Brusckhe, 1998). Knowledge of class or rank, often based on general stereotypes, is used to reduce uncertainty as is social identity, perceived motivation, length or intimacy of relationship, and categorization as an in-group or out-group member (Neuliep, 2012). Japanese gather background information on a person to reduce their uncertainty, while Americans focus more on beliefs, values, and feelings (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1984).

Current research suggests that individuals can have varying levels of uncertainty and tolerance for uncertainty. The higher the uncertainty, the more likely an ALT is to avoid contact, or when contact cannot be avoided, avoid conversation. What conversation that might occur is usually tense or forced. For those that do try to respond and resolve uncertainty, they will try to consult with others who can provide that needed certainty (i.e., a more familiar JTE or an ALT with more experience). Moreover, individuals can respond to the same uncertainty in different ways. Some may find it interesting and attempt to investigate further meaning or might find it somewhat of a welcome challenge while others perceive it to be threatening (Samochoweic & Florack, 2010).

### **Intercultural Communication Competence**

Intercultural communication competence (ICC) is defined as one's ability to interact with people of different cultural backgrounds in order to create fluid and mutually understandable communication (Kim, 1991, 2005b). Among the most important components of one's ICC are "social decentering (empathy), knowledge of the host culture, language competence, adaptation, communication effectiveness, and social integration" (Redmond, 2000, p. 153). ICC can increase over time as individuals grow to understand, accept and appreciate cultural differences. ICC has been linked to how well one can adapt to high levels of unfamiliarity and minimize psychological distance with others (Kim, 2005a), to intercultural effectiveness, increased

intercultural skills, effective communication accommodations, the ability to understand differences (Cui, 2016; Kim, 2005a; Spitzberg & Hecht, 1984), languaculture (culture within the language), cross-cultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and regional competence (Shiri, 2015).

ICC is key to the negotiation of one's identity within a host culture. A person's ability to reconcile or recognize cultural differences, and the success of that recognition, is crucial (Kim, 2005b). Those with high ICC recognize the differences between two cultures and can use their understanding of such nuances to their advantage. If necessary, they are willing to suspend what they consider to be cultural norms to comply with those of the host environment. Kim (2005b) says that this is called host communication competence. Conversely, those with low ICC do not or cannot recognize these differences (Earley, Murnieks, & Mosakowski, 2007). Synchrony is an important element in the nonverbal elements of ICC (Kim, 2015), especially in a high context culture. Synchrony occurs when a person's nonverbal, kinesthetic, and paralinguistic behaviors work intricately together. When two individuals from vastly different cultures interact, instances like over-eagerness may lead to dyssynchrony which can result in negative feelings and prevent a relationship from further developing (Chapple, 1970).

The literature reviewed above suggests a person's level of ICC may influence whether or not he or she believes a particular statement represents a microaggression and how he or she responds to the interaction. In this study, intercultural competence is investigated in terms of perceived effectiveness which is defined as how effectively one can use her knowledge, skills, and personal attributes to successfully work with people from cultures different from her own (Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006). Portalla and Chen (2010) found six components to intercultural effectiveness including behavior flexibility, interaction relaxation, interactant

respect, messaging skills, identity, and management. Perhaps ALTs who have higher levels of ICC are better able to identify and respond emotionally to microaggressions. In this study we ask, “Is there a relationship between an ALTs’ intercultural competence (i.e., perceived effectiveness) and the frequency and emotional valence of experienced microaggressions?” In the next section we focus on how people might respond to microaggressions.

### **Reactions to Microaggressions**

#### **Emotional and Physical**

AUM theory (Gudykunst, et al., 1985) reminds us that people must manage emotions such as anxiety when they face uncertainty during intercultural encounters. Research on microaggressions also focuses us on emotions in terms of the emotional toll microaggressions can have on an individual. Sue et al. (2007) suggest such effects are subtle but over time can lead to avoidance behaviors so as to prevent future encounters, which only perpetuate the message recipient’s feelings of isolation or alienation. These effects can have physical manifestations such as high levels of stress and possibly lead to the development of mental disorders. For example, if one is made to feel inferior based on work ethic or intellect, it could lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy, exacerbating the issue (Okazaki, 2009; Nadal et al., 2014).

The first effect a microaggression might have on an individual is a strong negative affect. Rarely are emotional responses to microaggressions positive, except a few instances of curiosity or excitement, or when seen as a chance to educate others. The negative emotions are often labeled as external or internal. Common examples of external emotional valences were anger, frustration, resentment, and scorn. Internal emotions included anxiety, embarrassment, sadness, and shame. The most common of the two categories are anger and anxiety, especially among Asian Americans (Wang et al., 1998). These emotions were heightened after repeated instances

of receiving microaggressive comments. Adding to this list of emotions are instances of being upset, wanting revenge, and feeling excluded (Huynh, 2012; Nadal et al., 2014)

Several studies show microaggressions can affect the recipient's mental health. In particular, Nadal et al. (2014) found that as microaggressions increased, so did depressive symptoms such as sadness and general anxiety. They also found that the type of microaggression received could contribute to depression. Microaggressions about African Americans being second class citizens were particularly harmful. Microaggressions falling into the isolation category were also likely to lead to mental health problems. Strain, lack of resources, or inadequate coping skills after prolonged exposure lead to mental health problems, especially for African American adolescents (Nadal et al., 2014; Torres et al., 2010). Huynh (2012) identified the somatic symptoms Latino/a and Asian American students experienced after exposure to microaggressions to include headaches and nausea. While she found that some somatic symptoms were likely, they were even more likely depending on the type of microaggression (i.e., emphasizing differences) and how much the recipient was bothered by the statement. This leads us to RQ2 “How do message recipients respond emotionally to these microaggressions?” In addition to emotional responses this research looks at how ALTs respond behaviorally to microaggressions.

### **Behavioral Responses**

Hearing and dealing with microaggressions, no matter the instigator and his or her intention, is straining (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Victims can attempt to cope, reassess, and overcome a microaggression in multiple ways. Camara and Orbe (2010) created an in-depth taxonomy for the types and levels of coping mechanisms and responses to microaggressions. The three main categories are assimilation, accommodation, and separation. Within each of those three categories are nonassertive, assertive, and aggressive types of responses.

**Assimilation.** Facing microaggressions is taxing, so assimilating may be the easiest way to cope. (Sue et al., 2007). Assimilation refers to one's attempt to fit in with the dominate group by eliminating perceived differences of the minority group (Camara & Orbe, 2010). Common nonassertive approaches include ignoring the comment altogether, accepting it, censoring oneself, or changing the topic to avoid triggering conversations. They could include thinking about an imagined response with the imaginary conversation being both cathartic and free from repercussions (Camara & Orbe, 2010; Gomez et al., 2011; Mellor, 2010). For a more assertive approach, some individuals or groups use solidarity as a defense mechanism (McCabe, 2009). One study found that black students at a mostly white university found solidarity with other minorities by coming up with chants about their academic success and future careers (McCabe, 2009). More aggressive forms as assimilation include dissociating or mirroring to avoid being placed in a particular group. Ting-Toomey (2005) says that this style of coping is common when one loses face. While these instances are uncommon, one example would be if an African American woman straightens her hair to avoid being exoticized.

**Accommodation.** Camara and Orbe (2010) define accommodation as when a minority group member purposively shifts existing structures or develops new appreciations for the dominate culture to observe and hopefully accept. Two nonassertive examples include increasing visibility and dissolving stereotypes through "being one's self" (Camara & Orbe, 2010, p. 89). For example, when one student felt he was discredited because of his race, he told himself, "I'll prove them wrong and I'll prove to them that I can do it" (Nadal et al., 2015, p. 154). However, the most common type of assertive accommodation is seeking supportive groups. This validates the minority members experience and could lead to advice and solace from a third, sometimes unbiased party. Seeking third-party help is also a way to help both preserve, upgrade, honor, and

save face (Camara & Orbe, 2010; Gomez et al., 2011; McCabe, 2009; Mellor, 2010; Ting-Toomey, 2005).

As an aggressive measure, someone might confront someone about the comments. In one study, a participant asked her assailant how he came to that assumption (Camara & Orbe, 2010; Mellor, 2004). In another example, a Filipina woman used this strategy as a preventative manner, saying “What you’ve heard... get that out of your head” to men she was dating (Camara & Orbe, 2010, p. 153). In another case, a graduate teaching assistant of color purposively wore casual clothes to dismantle stereotypes and used it as a teaching method. His rationale was to create dialogue and have students think about the assumptions they had about him. This more confrontational tactic is common in negotiating face as a form of justification, humor, or physical remediation (i.e., a purposeful change in clothing) (Gomez et al., 2011; Ting-Toomey, 2005).

**Separation.** As a coping mechanism, separation occurs when a minority group creates and maintains distance from the dominating culture (Camara & Orbe, 2010). Similarly, an individual may choose to separate entirely. The most common type of nonassertive separation is avoiding the provoking person or situation. This could come in the form of no longer talking to an individual or refusing to patronize a restaurant because of microaggressions. These responses come usually after prolonged exposure and not necessarily singular incidents (Camara & Orbe, 2010; Mellor, 2004). In the Gomez et al. (2011) study, the microaggressions were so severe for one graduate student that he planned to return to his home country (Chile) after graduation instead of pursuing a job in the U.S. as he originally intended. From an assertive perspective, some people highlight achievements of similar minorities to exemplify strength. Aggressive measures can escalate to verbal or physical responses, retaliating with racial epithets or physical

violence. One example of the latter resulted in the hospitalization of a policeman because of his treatment toward a minority in the community (Camara & Orbe, 2010; Mellor, 2004).

Multiple researchers have investigated how people respond to microaggressions. Ting-Toomey (2005) states that members from individualistic cultures tend to use more restorative strategies when facing a conflict such as a perceived microaggression. An overarching theme in Gomez et al.'s (2011) findings was using education as a way to create dialog when confronting microaggressions. DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby (2016) emphasize that when one, especially one in a higher position, hears a microaggression she should be cognizant of both how it might affect the perpetrator, the social situation, or herself before responding. They side more with internal reflection on racial identity as way to emotionally overcome instances of microaggressions.

However, Sue et al. (2007) warn that many minorities, especially African Americans, are hesitant to verbally respond because they fear they will not be believed, or they have to rationalize whether the experience both happened and would be considered a microaggression. With these types of behavioral reactions in mind, in this study we ask, "How do message recipients verbally respond to perceived microaggressions?"

## **Workplace Relationships and Job Satisfaction**

### **Workplace Microaggressions**

Most microaggression research has focused on two prominent settings—educational and the workplace. In this study we focus on ALTs working within Japanese schools. The educational research is two-fold. Researchers have studied the microaggressions students face and the microaggressions teachers experience as black instructors at predominantly white colleges (e.g., being told they are unfair graders in comparison to their white colleagues) (e.g., Gomez et al., 2010; McCabe, 2009; Nadal et al., 2015). In a study on the frequency of microaggressions at

smaller community colleges (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015) observed 60 classrooms across three community colleges in New York City. They found approximately 23% of the class lectures included a microaggression. Of the 45 instructor-initiated microaggressions, 41 were targeted specifically at a minority student. The six student-initiated microaggressions were directed towards other students and never an instructor

A common microaggression minority students face is isolation (Sue et al., 2007). Research (e.g., Gomez et al., 2010; McCabe, 2009; Nadal et al., 2015) suggests minority students feel they have little representation on campus and often feel ignored. This is especially true for students who either came from a high school where they were the majority or were already isolated in the community. Others feel exoticized (e.g., Latina women were ) or like aliens in their own land particularly due to their language skills (Gomez et al., 2010; McCabe, 2009; Nadal et al., 2015).

Pittman (2012) investigated the microaggressions African American instructors face from their students and from fellow colleagues. The instructors said their students did not take their credibility seriously. One shared an example where a student asked the teacher to make copies, assuming she was a secretary. Another student asked her teacher why she did not wear traditional African clothing, pathologizing her choice of clothing. Many participants felt they had to go above and beyond what white colleagues did to prove their worth. They often felt unwelcomed in their work environment indicating that their white colleagues hinted they did not deserve to be there. Some instructors felt they were a token and were only hired to promote the appearance of diversity. The instructors experienced microinvalidations which highlighted their ethnic background and insinuated their background was judged as more important than their academic integrity and contributions at work.

Researchers have identified the types of microaggressions minority employees face in nonacademic workplaces (e.g., Camara & Orbe, 2010; Shenoy-Packer, 2015). Rosette Rosette, Carton, Bowes-Sperry, & Hewlin, (2013) preface their study by stating 25% of racial discrimination cases brought to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission were based on racial slurs. Shenoy-Packer (2015) found many experienced microinsults. For example, a co-worker asked a Latina woman if she and her other Latino/a colleagues were going to break a pinata or drink beer at a retreat. When a Zimbabwean woman accidentally typed data into a wrong column on a spreadsheet, a colleague jokingly asked if it was because Zimbabweans drive on the other side of the road. She felt his comment was silly but felt “irritation at not being acknowledged as an immigrant worker” (p. 263). Microinvalidations were directed toward workers with accents, and those workers felt they lost credibility due to their accents. Co-workers often started a “where are you from?” conversation rather than a conversation that pertained to work.

Camara and Orbe (2010) found common themes in the insults devaluing individuals work. For example, a Latino worker recalled the relationship with his supervisor. He told researchers, “We got along, but he always made fun of me and my accent” and he did not address me by my real name (p. 92). One black women was told that black’s comments didn’t matter. When she approached the woman on the topic, the woman stood by her comments. Other workers were sexually harassed, both verbally and physically. Camara and Orbe’s (2010) study on the frequency of microaggressions showed that in terms of the aggressor, strangers were the most likely perpetrator, followed by an acquaintance. This study focuses on workplace relationship between an ALT and his or her JTE(s).

### **The JTE-ALT Relationship**

Once a microaggression has occurred, an ALT will attempt to reduce uncertainty by trying to identify why an instigator (i.e., JTE) said what he or she did. Attribution theory, as first described by Heider (1958), describes how people interpret the cause of someone's behavior based on their past knowledge, behavior, and experience. Attributions are how we reason why something occurred. They are somewhat difficult to make due to the cultural differences. Tam, Sharma, and Kim (2014) argue that during intercultural interactions misunderstandings are often environmental (i.e., due to cultural differences). Attributions are either internal (i.e., ability, effort or personality) or external (i.e., task, luck, or intimacy) (Chattopadhyay, 2007). According to Ting-Toomey (2005), members from individualistic cultures often use situational accounts to make external attributions. They tell stories or anecdotes that “attribute the reasons of the conflict problems to external sources” (p. 80).

ALTs living in Japan experience hierarchical relationship dynamics as they work as subordinates to JTEs. They may attribute the interpersonal comments the JTE makes within the hierarchical relationship as appropriate given the (external) work culture or as a microaggression. McLaren, Dillard, Tusing, and Solomon (2014) say relational framing theory (RFT) describes how interpersonal communication occurs along two relational dimensions—dominance-submissiveness and affiliation-disaffiliation. The former refers to messages which show who has control, influence, and power over the other, while the latter refers to the esteem and solidarity communicated between two parties (McLaren et al., 2014). Relationship assessment along these two dimensions helps people deconstruct ambiguities and make sense of cues and references (Dillard & Solomon, 2005, as cited in McLaren et al., 2014). Ting-Toomey (2005) states that power distance is a related factor. Power distance refers to the way a culture deals with

differences in status and hierarchy. The U.S. has a small power distance and values equal distance and symmetrical relationships. Japan has a large power distance and accepts unequal distance and rewards based on status and/or rank (Oetzel et al., 2001; Ting-Toomey, 2005).

In terms of dominance-submissiveness, dominance in the U.S. has been negatively correlated with politeness, and the assertion of dominance is often seen as intrusive and intentional (Knobloch, Satterlee, & Di Domenico, 2010; Solomon, Dillard, & Anderson, 2002). Dominance-submissiveness is particularly important in Japan because Japan is collectivistic and relies on group hierarchy (Peltokorpi & Clausen, 2011). In Japan, power dynamics dictate exactly how one talks to another based on his or her social status (Engebretson & Fullmer, 1970; Leung & Lee, 2006; Tsujimura, 1987). This aspect of RFT might explain why a dominance-related comment made by a Japanese person to an American may be seen as a microaggression, as it asserts power, comes across as impolite, and can induce stress. People look for cues related to both dominance-submissiveness and affiliation-disaffiliation so as to shift roles appropriately within a given context (Tetlock & McGraw, 2005). However, given the high context nature of the Japanese culture, the American expatriate may be unable to recognize or interpret a message correctly which can lead to incorrectly labeling a comment as being microaggressive.

Burgoon and Hale (1984) argue that there are three crucial elements to measure when evaluating a dominance-submissive relationship. These are inclusion (i.e., establishing and maintaining relationships), affection (i.e., maintaining more intimate relationships), and control (i.e., comfortable degree of influence that one can use or incorporate in a relationship). They also state that these are often bonding behaviors. Without these bonding behaviors, there is little to no room for relational intimacy, and relationships cannot persist or continue to grow. Trust is a foundation for a relationship to flourish if the people involved want it to be successful. If an ALT

feels that his JTE wants to understand him and build a more intimate relationship, then the ALT may perceive receiving fewer microaggressions. In essence he will be less likely to attribute negative reasons for an ambiguous statement that others might label as a microaggression. These attributions may be influenced by how much the ALT feels the JTE has attempted to bridge the cultural and interpersonal distance between them.

### **Convergence and Divergence Efforts.**

Dillard, Solomon and Samp (1996) states that while dominance-submissiveness and affiliation-disaffiliation are bi-polar, the latter is more applicable because it has more variations with situations and relationships, especially with work relationships. Solomon et al. (2002) further state that affiliation-disaffiliation is strongly correlated with affinity (liking) and involvement. Moreover, affiliation-disaffiliation “helps people grapple with the ambiguity of social interaction” (p. 150). Discerning this affiliation-disaffiliation may come through communication accommodation (Muir et al., 2016).

Communication accommodation is defined as the process of understand and reducing communication differences between people in an interaction (Muir et al., 2016). Communication accommodation theory (CAT) explains how people seek to close the distance between two communicators representing different backgrounds (e.g., cultures) (Giles & Soliz, 2015). In this study we focus on whether ALTs perceive that their JTEs are seeking to improve their communication relationship by displaying convergence or divergence efforts.

In discussing CAT, Giles and Soliz (2015) describe four levels, or distinctions, to help identify when someone will seek to accommodate one’s listener. In terms of levels, level one says that a speaker will increase accommodation to strengthen relationships (i.e., highlight commonalities). Level two says if the attribution has positive intentions, it will enhance the

relationship (i.e., increase job satisfaction). Level three says if the attribution has negative intentions, it will divide the relationship (i.e., feelings of disrespect). Level four says (non) attribution with harmful intentions will possibly destroy a relationship (i.e., feelings of untrustworthiness).

Speakers may use communication to unintentionally converge with or diverge from their listeners. There are two types of convergence, upward and downward. Upward convergence involves adapting to another person's speech *style* (i.e., speaking in a regional Japanese dialect) and downward convergence is adapting to match speech *patterns* (i.e., speaking formal Japanese versus informal Japanese) (Giles & Soliz, 2015). Divergence accentuates cultural identity differences (e.g., a JTE asserting a conversation be exclusively conducted in Japanese or English). The decision to either converge or diverge can influence perceived social distance, highlight distinctiveness, or convey approval. However, convergence and divergence are not mutually exclusive, as you can both converge and diverge within a conversation (Muir et al., 2016; Shepard, Giles, & Le Poire, 2001).

Gallois, Ogay, and Giles (2005) state that both convergence and divergence can have benevolent or malevolent intent, or they can face social constraints. More importantly, if a speaker (e.g., JTE or Japanese co-worker) uses convergent or divergent methods is based on the ALT's perspective. For example, convergence with a benevolent intent might make the ALT feel the JTE is converging in order to become friends while malevolent intent might be an ALT feels a JTE or Japanese co-worker is quickly judging his or her language ability (e.g., using very simple English or very simple Japanese). On a situational level, an ALT might feel a coworker is converging because social roles. Yet at the same time, benevolent divergence would be when the ALT feels a co-worker is reminding him or her Japanese is not his or her first language (e.g.,

choosing to use English or Japanese depending on both speakers' language competence to create clear understanding). More malevolent divergence would be when an ALT feels the JTE is showing disinterest or unwillingness to further communicate. For situational constraints, an ALT might feel a coworker is diverging because an ALT has not yet learned about a particular aspect about Japanese culture (i.e., etiquette at a staff meeting).

Sometimes convergence involves linguistic accommodation and is influenced by ethnolinguistic orientation. Linguistic accommodation refers to *how* something is said, which can be as important as the message itself (Muir et. al, 2016; Peltokorpi & Clausen, 2011). Your group membership often determines the language you use and what language is viewed as acceptable (Camara & Obre, 2011; Kim, 2015). Those with a high ethnolinguistic perspective are close to their group, conform to the group's understandings and ideas, and are less likely to linguistically accommodate to outsiders. People with a low ethnolinguistic perception often feel they do not quite belong, and may not receive necessary information within a group (Gudykunst, et al., 1987).

A JTE may attempt to converge or diverge in an attempt to create mutual understanding, but an ALT might still interpret the message as condescending or insulting, leaving the impression of a microaggression. Gallois et al. (2005) state that collectivist members may use more divergence if they feel a convergent method oversteps cultural boundaries (i.e., in-group versus out-group).

In this study, we investigate the extent to which an ALT perceives their JTE is making the necessary accommodations to help maintain a successful relationship with him or her. Specifically, we will evaluate the ALTs perceptions of intimacy with JTEs. Intimacy is broken into five separate conceptualizations based on behaviors related to similarity/depth, receptivity/trust, composure, formality and equality (Burgoon & Hale, 1984).

Similarity refers to the shared attitudes and beliefs between two people while depth refers to show the relationship has surpassed the superficial level and reached more intimate interpersonal closeness. Receptivity refers to willingness to engage in conversation while trust refers to both one's willingness to confess vulnerabilities and not to exploit said vulnerabilities. Composure refers to self-control. Formality refers to personalism or decorum. Equality refers to expressed symmetry or differences (Burgoon & Hale, 1984).

This study investigates the relationship between levels of intimacy and the frequency and emotional valence of workplace microaggressions an ALT perceives to occur within their workplace relationships. We ask, "Is there a relationship between the frequency of workplace microaggressions and an ALT's relational intimacy with JTE's? Workplace microaggression may negatively influence an ALT's job satisfaction.

### **Job Satisfaction/Performance and Emotional Regulation**

Job satisfaction is defined as a cognitive process that incorporates attitude and evaluative judgement towards one's job (Gin, Kwon, & Kim, 2013). It has an affective component, meaning it is related to the emotions we experience at work. Our job satisfaction is influenced by both microlevel and macrolevel factors such as work conditions, relationships with coworkers and managers, income, and level of interest in the job (Nakata, Takahashi, Tapas, & Swanson, 2011). Job performance is a related concept. It is defined as having three components including task performance (i.e., activities that are part of one's job), organizational citizenship behavior (i.e., interpersonal relationships that drive effectiveness), and workplace deviance (i.e., purposeful behavior that is in violation of established norms) (Kluemper, DeGroot, & Choi, 2013).

An ALT will either work with the same JTE over an extended period of time, several JTEs over that same time, or a combination of the two. His or her job satisfaction can be influenced by the quality of the relationship between the ALT and the JTE(s). Okoe, Boateng, and Mensah (2016) state that “there is a positive correlation between friendship, job satisfaction, and performance” (p. 716). A positive relationship with a JTE might increase ALT retention (i.e., ALT recontracts for another year) and productivity (i.e., ALT creates more lesson plans). Conversely, a negative relationship may lead to poorer performance and overall negative feelings toward coworkers.

An employee’s emotional response to those with whom he or she works is important. Klumper et al. (2013) discuss emotional regulation defining it as how individuals process their emotions or attempt to regulate others’ emotions based on when and why they have them and how they are expressed. The researchers found that those with high emotional regulation had better work performance. If one can effectively regulate emotions, her or she can use appropriate positive or negative behaviors as coping strategies. Those who cope better are more likely to have positive social relationships and be more prosocial at work, which will lead to “smoother interactions with team members” (p. 884). Ineffectively regulating emotions can lead to poorer task performance and fewer citizenship behaviors. In terms of workplace deviance, while releasing some negative feelings might be cathartic, those with higher emotional regulation are less likely to do so lest they damage a relationship at work. Therefore, in this study we ask, “Is there a correlation between an ALTs job satisfaction and the frequency and emotional valence of workplace microaggressions?”

This study begins by investigating the main types of microaggressions an ALT could experience during his or her time teaching in Japan. These microaggression categories include

second-class citizenship, exoticization, environmental microaggressions, workplace microaggressions, and pathologizing (Nadal, 2011). From this, the research will investigate how an ALT responds emotionally to these perceived microaggressions. Common emotional valences seen in studies on microaggressions have been frustration, invalidation, and anger (e.g., Constantine, 2007; Huynh, 2012; Wang et al., 2011). Outside of these emotional responses, research has also shown that those who experience microaggressions are more likely to react more passively than actively. In this study ALTs will be asked how they nonverbally and verbally reacted to microaggressions and what coping mechanisms they used when faced with a microaggression. Using the concept of ICC, an ALT will need to understand a different culture (Japan) to have successful communication with his or her Japanese counterparts. This study investigates the relationship between one's level of ICC in terms of perceived effectiveness and his or her reactions to microaggressions. One's level of ICC influences how well she can both recognize and reconcile cultural differences that arise. This ability can determine the distance (psychological or literal) between a speaker and an aggressor (Kim, 2005a). Next, the study investigates job satisfaction and how it might relate to relational intimacy with one's JTE and the emotions experienced during a perceived microaggression. In terms of relationships, the focus is on exploring linkages between the frequency of workplace microaggressions, an ALT's perceived relational intimacy with JTEs, and an ALT's feeling of being understood by their JTE. The following research questions are investigated:

RQ1: What are the most common types of microaggressions American ALTs experience in Japan and at what frequency?

RQ2: How do message recipients respond emotionally to these microaggressions?

RQ3: How do message recipients respond to these microaggressions nonverbally or verbally in terms of coping mechanisms?

RQ4: Is there a correlation between ALTs' job satisfaction and the frequency and emotional valence of workplace microaggressions?

RQ5: Is there a relationship between ALTs' intercultural communication competence (i.e., successful interactions with people from a different culture) and the frequency and emotional valence of experienced microaggressions?

RQ6: Is there a relationship between the frequency of workplace microaggressions and ALTs' level of intimacy with JTEs?

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

This study displayed a mixed method approach by using an online survey given through Qualtrics and recorded interviews using Skype. Before administering the survey and collecting interview data, this study first received approval from the institutional review board (IRB). After gaining permission, the researcher began with the quantitative portion of the study. During step 1, a survey was used to determine factors including the types of general microaggressions ALTs could encounter and the emotional valence experienced following microaggressions, ALTs ICC (effectiveness), ALTs perceptions of similarity and depth in terms of their relationship with JTEs, and ALTs overall job satisfaction. The survey asked about workplace microaggressions and the emotional valences attached to them in addition to the initial set of general microaggressions. Survey respondents were asked if they were willing to be contacted for a Skype interview. During step 2, a Skype interview allowed the researcher find out how ALTs respond either verbally or nonverbally to perceived microaggressions and identify the coping mechanisms they use. Some interview questions explored possible items to add to current scales measuring the types of microaggressions.

### **Participant Characteristics**

All participants in this study were American. This was to create a purposeful sample of participants that have lived the experience of teaching English as an ALT in Japan as an American cultural ambassador. Only these participants were considered since this study wanted to look at the microaggressions Americans face while they work in Japan as an ALT. While a majority of them were ALTs in the JET Program, others were in programs including Interac. The main difference between these programs is JET is a part of the Japanese Ministry of Education

while the others are dispatch companies with satellites in the U.S, Japan, and Canada.

Participants' time working in Japan lasted between one and five years based on a yearly contract (however, there were a few exceptions as found in the interviews). Participants worked at either elementary schools, junior high schools, high schools, or some combination of these levels.

Participants came from various prefectures in Japan. Specific characteristics of the respondents to both methods (i.e., survey and interview) follow.

### **Procedure**

**Survey.** This study used nonprobability snowball sampling. The researcher began by contacting current or previous ALTs that she worked with during her time on JET in Akita Prefecture from 2011-2015. The participants contacted were a mixed group of current and previous ALTs. From there, the researcher investigated organizations such as JETAA (Jet Exchange and Teaching Program Alumni Association) and found 13 different chapters in the U.S. She e-mailed each a request letter (see Appendix A) along with a reusable link to the survey. A reusable link was used so that the survey could easily be distributed to multiple interested parties. The researcher sent the same e-mail to the 12 Japanese Consulates in the U.S. (U.S. consulates). The researcher also contacted Prefectural Advisors (an elected or appointed position within the JET program, specifically) in Kumamoto, Fukuoka, Hokkaidō, Aomori, and Fukushima, with the same e-mail asking them to send the survey to ALTs on the researcher's behalf in order to avoid problems with anonymity. Some of the correspondents asked if the survey could be distributed via newsletter or Facebook page. Therefore, the researcher made those distribution methods available. The survey was open for participants to take for two weeks.

**Interviews.** At the end of the survey, one question allowed participants to answer whether or not they were interested in participating in an interview. In response, 35 respondents said they

were interested and provided their e-mail for later correspondence. Every e-mail had a random number attached to it. From that list, a random numbers generator chose 20 of those numbers to select as interview candidates. This was to ensure that those chosen for an interview were completely at random and not selected based on demographics or the timeline of completion. For those 20 who received an email invitation, 10 responded but one participant withdrew. Therefore, 11 more e-mails were sent to participants who expressed interest and were also chosen randomly. Only 10 more responded but personal contact with one other person resulted in a total of 20 interviews. From the final interviewees, four were chosen at random to receive a \$25 gift card to Amazon as incentive.

All interviews were conducted through Skype and recorded with a Microsoft program (Free Video Call for Skype) that recorded audio only. The researcher disclosed to the participants that the interview would be recorded before starting, and all participants gave consent. The audio was later transcribed using an extension for Google Chrome called Transcribe. This allowed the researcher to transcribe and dictate all audio files and convert them into a word document. The interviews averaged one hour and included seven questions. Some follow up questions were asked based on an ALT's answer (see Appendix B for complete list of questions).

### **Final Samples**

Initially, 171 people responded to the survey. After downloading the data, responses that were incomplete were deleted yielding a total of 97. After further investigation, two more respondents were deleted since they said they were from Canada. The final number of participants was 95. Looking at the demographics, 18.9% ( $n = 18$ ) of ALTs were from the Midwest (i.e., Illinois), 16.8% ( $n = 16$ ) of ALTs were from the Northwest (i.e., New York), 15.7% ( $n = 15$ ) of ALTs were from the South (i.e., Texas), and 43.1% ( $n = 41$ ) of ALTs were from the West (i.e.,

California). Five ALTs did not report this data.

As for their location in Japan, 29.4% ( $n = 28$ ) of ALTs said Hokkaidō or Tōhoku (i.e., Fukushima), 6.3% ( $n = 6$ ) said Kantō (i.e., Tokyo), 7.4 % ( $n = 7$ ) said Chūbu (i.e., Ishikawa), 16.8% ( $n = 16$ ) said Kansai (i.e., Kyoto), 4.2% ( $n = 4$ ) said Chūgoku (i.e., Hiroshima), 3.1% ( $n = 3$ ) said Shikoku (i.e., Kōchi), and 27.3% ( $n = 26$ ) said Kyūshū (i.e., Fukuoka). Table 1 shows the breakdown of ALTs and their places of employment while in Japan. Seven ALTs did not report this demographic data.

Table 1

*ALTs Divided by Level of Schools, Number, Range, Mean, and Standard Deviation*

Level of School	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Elementary school only	1	8	3.67	3.78
Junior high school only	1	5	1.8	1.47
Senior high school only	1	8	1.81	1.47
Two levels of school				
Elementary School	1	15	3.61	3.06
Junior high school	1	8	1.79	1.36
Two levels of school				
Junior high school	1	1	1.00	0
Senior high School	1	3	2.00	1.66
All levels of school				
Elementary School	1	4	2.50	2.12
Junior high school	2	8	5.0	4.24
Senior high School	1	5	3.0	2.82

Since ALTs may work at multiple schools, they can have a wide range of JTEs they work with on a regular basis. According to the survey, 20% ( $n = 19$ ) of participants worked with less than 3 JTEs, 22.1% ( $n = 21$ ) worked with 4 to 6 JTEs, 21.1% ( $n = 20$ ) worked with 7 to 10 JTEs,

and 16.8% ( $n = 16$ ) worked with 11 or more JTEs. 19 participants did not report how many JTEs they worked with.

Looking at the gender demographics of the study, 32.2% ( $n = 29$ ) participants reported as male, 67.8% ( $n = 61$ ) reported as female, and five reported no gender at all. Participants were between 22 and 58 years old, with the average age being 27.67 ( $SD = 5.41$ ). Five participants did not report their age. Under ethnicity, 7.8% ( $n = 7$ ) identified as only Latino/a while 4.4% ( $n = 4$ ) identified as both Latino/a and Caucasian. For Asian Americans, 10.1% ( $n = 9$ ) identified only as Asian American, 4.4% ( $n = 4$ ) identified as both Asian American and Caucasian, and 1.1% ( $n = 1$ ) as Asian American and Pacific Islander. For Native Americans, 2.2% ( $n = 2$ ) identified as both Native American and Caucasian. For Pacific Islanders, 1.1% ( $n = 1$ ) identified only as Pacific Islander while 2.2% ( $n = 2$ ) identified as both Pacific Islander and Caucasian. For Caucasian, 65.6% ( $n = 59$ ) identified as only Caucasian while 1.1% ( $n = 1$ ) identified as both Caucasian and other. Five ALTs did not report their ethnicity. Most (63.3%,  $n = 57$ ) had been to Japan more than once, but 33 (36.7%) said this was their first time to Japan. Most (87.8%,  $n = 79$ ) ALTs reported studying Japanese between 1 and 14 years with the average being 4.44 years ( $SD = 2.93$ ). Of the 11 (12.2%) who did not previously study Japanese, they averaged studying about 4.03 months at the time of the survey completion ( $SD = 3.33$ ). Five ALTs did not report the number of years they studied, if at all.

For the interviews, there were a total of 20 participants. Only two of the interviewees no longer lived in Japan having moved back in the U.S. Fifteen still worked for the JET Program, and two now work for Inteac after leaving the JET Program. There was one ALT who worked on JET for five years and then worked through a direct hire program. However, she is now on maternity leave. Only six of the interviewees were male, and the rest were female. For regions in

Japan, nine were in Kyūshū, six were in Tōhoku, three were in Kansai, one was in Shikoku, and one was in Chūbū. Two ALTs mentioned that they have TESOL certification (Teaching English as a Second Official Language), and over half of the participants have taken the Japanese Language Proficiency Test and have that certification as well.

### **Data Collection Instruments and Analysis**

**Racial and ethnic microaggression scale.** Respondents answered a series of questions drawn from a modified version of Nadal's (2011) Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Scale (REMS) (see Appendix C) to investigate both the types of microaggressions that occur and how often they occur. The second component of the original scale was not used (i.e., assumptions of inferiority) because those questions did not seem to apply to this study. Several other questions were removed to shorten the time needed to complete the survey. Other questions used alternative wording suited for living in Japan. For example, the original question "Someone assumed I spoke a language other than English" was changed to "Someone assumed that I only spoke English." Four original questions were added based on definitions and categorizations given by Nadal (2011). For example, the question "I was given an English menu without my asking" was added because it relates to similar questions under the category second-class citizenship and assumptions of criminality as seen in the original REMS scale. The 19 questions investigated categories related to second-class citizen, assumptions of criminality, microinvalidations, and exoticization/assumptions of similarity. Participants could not see the distinct microaggression categories on the survey. These 19 questions were asked to answer RQ1 and RQ5.

The last category of microaggressions, workplace and school microaggressions, was taken from the original REMS scale (Nadal, 2011) and was given to survey respondents on a separate

page to help distinguish these types of microaggressions from the general microaggressions (see Appendix D). This study kept three of the four original questions but changed the wording to be more precise about working in Japan. For example, “An employer or co-worker treated me differently than White co-workers” was changed to “An employer or co-worker treated me differently than a Japanese co-worker.” Four questions were added. For example, “I was told I am not a real teacher” was added. There were 8 questions in total. The workplace and school microaggression questions were used to investigate research questions RQ4 and RQ6.

To measure frequency, participants were asked how often they experienced each of the general and workplace specific microaggression based on a six-month time period. This was to replicate the study Nadal (2011) conducted. The answer choices were: (1) I did not experience this in the past six months, (2) I experienced this one to three times in the past six months, (3) I experienced this four to six times in the past six months, (4) I experienced this seven to nine times in the past six months and (5) I experienced this more than 10 times in the past six months.

Nadal’s (2011) study using the REMS scale yielded a coefficient alpha of .93. Nadal (2011) broke down the validity of each category: second-class citizen and assumptions of criminality (alpha = .88), microinvalidations (alpha = .89), exoticization/assumptions of similarity (alpha = .85), and workplace microaggressions (alpha = .85). For this study, the alpha for second-class citizen and assumptions was .64, microinvalidations was .50, and exoticization/assumptions were .85. Because of the poor reliability of two of the categories, all questions were used to create the concept of general microaggressions, which produced an alpha of .85. Workplace microaggressions produced an alpha of .77.

**Feelings of understanding/misunderstanding scale (FUM).** Participants were asked how much they felt a range of emotions (or would feel in a hypothetical situation) based on the

statements given in the REMS scale. These same questions were asked a second time about workplace microaggressions. These questions came from Cahn and Shulman's (1984) Feelings of Understanding/Misunderstanding Scale. This scale measures 24 different feelings (see Appendix E). There are three different general categories of emotions with eight questions each. The categories include feelings of being understood (i.e., satisfaction), feelings of being misunderstood (i.e., insecurity), and distractor feelings (i.e., enviousness). A 5 point Likert response scale was used with 1 being very little and 5 being very great amounts of that emotion. The creators found a reliability of .90 and a Cronbach's alpha of .89 (Ruben et al., 2010). This study used the scale twice; once after the general microaggression scale and once after the workplace microaggression scale. In this study, the alpha for the general microaggression scale was .85 and the workplace microaggression scale alpha was .85. No items were removed from the scale. These questions helped answer RQ2, RQ4, RQ5, and RQ6.

**Intercultural effectiveness (ICE).** Participants answered 18 questions from Portalla and Chen's (2010) scale measuring Intercultural Effectiveness. Several questions were removed to shorten the length of the survey because of time concerns. The questions chosen were used to measure intercultural communication competence and investigate RQ5. Sample questions included "I find it easy to get along with people from different cultures" (see Appendix F for a complete list of questions). This scale used a 5 point Likert scale, (1) being strongly disagree and (5) being strongly agree. Portalla and Chen (2010) found an alpha of .85. This study found an alpha of .78.

The designers of the intercultural effectiveness scale said the scale tapped 5 dimensions (i.e., message skills, interaction management, behavioral flexibility, identity management, and relationship cultivation). However, in this study principal components factor analysis with

varimax rotation showed six dimensions which explained 67.92% of the variance. The dimension with the highest loading was dimension 1 with 7 items loading at .531 or greater. These items made up 22.75% of the variance explained. The seven items that loaded were finding it easy to talk to people from other cultures, being afraid to express oneself, finding it easy to get along with people of different cultures, being able to express oneself clearly, being able to answer questions effectively, feeling relaxed around people from different cultures, and finding the best way to interact is to be oneself. This was used to create a new concept called intercultural communication interaction. The intercultural communication interaction alpha was .85. Since this alpha was higher than that of the overall scale (alpha = .78), only this dimension was used when using further correlation and relationship tests.

**Relational communication scale (RCS).** Participants answered 18 questions from the Relational Communication Scale (Burgoon & Hale, 1984). As with the previous scale, some questions were removed to help shorten the survey. In this case, only three questions were removed. No questions were reworded. This was used to investigate RQ6 about a possible relationship between relational satisfaction and workplace microaggressions. Question categories investigated similarity/depth, receptivity/trust, composure, formality, and equality (see Appendix G). This scale used a seven point Likert scale, (1) strongly disagree through (7) strongly agree. One example regarding formality states, “He/she made the interaction very formal.” Kim (2001) found the internal validity ranged between .78 and .83 depending on the segment of questions. In this study, the overall scale produced an alpha of .93, similarity/depth produced an alpha of .81, and composure was .87. Because formality and equality each had only two questions, a bivariate correlation test showed that for formality  $r = .515$  and  $p < .001$ , and for equality  $r = .796$  and  $p < .001$ . The scale itself (RCS) was used, as well as all its subcategories.

**Overall job satisfaction.** Participants were asked 18 questions about their overall job satisfaction. This was used to investigate RQ4 regarding a possible relationship between job satisfaction and the frequency and emotional valence of workplace microaggressions experienced. This scale was created in 1951 by Brayfield and Rothe. One sample question was “I am often bored with my job.” This question in particular is a reverse of other questions on the scale (see Appendix H). Likert responses ranged from 1 through 5, (1) strongly disagree and (5) strongly agree. In Schmidt’s (2007) study on overall job satisfaction the overall job satisfaction scale yielded a reliability of .74. This study found an alpha level of .88. All questions from the original scale were used with their original wording in this survey

**Demographics.** Finally, participants answered questions regarding demographics. Respondents were asked to identify their home state, as that information is useful to specific Japanese Consulates because JETs are hired through consulates that oversee specific states. For example, Arkansas is under the Japanese Consulate in Nashville, TN. The demographics asked participants about their age, biological sex, ethnic identity (i.e., Asian American), home state, employee prefecture (i.e., Akita Prefecture), types of schools working at (i.e., elementary school) and how many of that type of school they worked at, the number of JTEs they worked with, and time spent studying Japanese (see Appendix I). A background for the interviewees can be seen on Appendix J.

**Interviews.** There was a total of 20 participants. These interviews helped to answer RQ1 (i.e., what items might be added to the REMS scale) and RQ3. Each interview was transcribed verbatim, including incorrect grammar and vocal fillers, and uploaded into Nvivo, a qualitative software analysis program created by QSR International. The researcher uploaded all transcripts into NVivo before beginning the data analysis.

*Data analysis.* Since the narratives were all told in retrospect of when a participant encountered a possible microaggression, the researcher made sure to investigate “whether something is symbolic or nonsymbolic, or whether his datum is a message about something else or is an event that displays its own structure and existence” (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 23). Each interview was used as part of a sampling unit, which Krippendorff defines as “language expressions that are regarded independent of each other” (p. 57). The researcher used grounded theory to approach overarching themes and possible contributions to previously established theories (i.e., coping mechanisms). She also used thematic analysis based on Owen’s (1984) three principals. The first is reoccurrence, which is when participants use different language but convey the same meaning. The second is repetition, which designates identical words and meaning. The third is forcefulness which describes nonverbal messages such as vocal inflections, pauses, stresses, and volume (Owen, 1984). This researcher employed this tactic by making notes when participants laughed or used tones to indicate imitation, sarcasm, or emphasis. Theoretical saturation was reached after fifteen interviews, but the researcher continued with the remaining five to help strengthen findings and enhance the use of repetition and reoccurrence.

Since RQ3 dealt with identifying how recipients responded to microaggressions nonverbally and verbally in terms of coping mechanisms, the first step in the thematic analysis was to read the transcripts and mark where microaggressions occurred based on the context of the situation the participant was describing. This is crucial (Krippendorff, 1980) since a researcher must be able to distinguish situations. Krippendorff (1980) describes a few ways of describing the units. This researcher used two in her initial analysis—referential units and propositional units, or kernels. Referential units describe “particular objects, events, persons, acts, countries, or ideas to

which an expression refers” (p. 61). Kernels refer to “objects and their attributes” or a participant’s perception (p. 62).

The NVivo program was used during the analysis. The researcher created the first two codes, or nodes as they are called in the NVivo software, as part of a referential unit. She created two types of microaggression nodes: general and workplace. Each node here was a complete thought expressed and uttered by the participant. In the next step to better answer her research question, the researcher again used referential units, this time for reactions, either nonverbal, verbal, or emotional. All were a complete expression of thought. Nonverbal reactions were coded when the participants indicated nonverbal cues such as smiling and nodding or indicating saying nothing. Verbal reactions were coded when the participant indicated he or she gave a response in the situation. Emotional reactions were coded as either a single word (i.e., hurtful) or a complete thought (i.e., “an irresponsible loser”). Coping mechanisms, however, are examples of kernels can also exemplify “the object acted upon (other than an action-target) and incorporated modifier” (p. 62). Coping mechanisms were coded when the participant’s language described both Camara and Orbe’s (2010) or Mellor’s (2004) typology of coping mechanisms. These included examples such as participants describing ways they approached the situation (i.e., being aggressive, being more polite, being educational).

To help answer the research question and find other possible points for discussion, the researcher found 3 other referential units for types of microaggressions—2<sup>nd</sup> hand stories, observed microaggressions and environmental microaggressions. All three were coded using a complete expressed thought for the unit of analysis. For 2<sup>nd</sup> hand stories, these were anecdotes of participants hearing a microaggression directly from another ALT or through multiple sources. Observed microaggressions were situations where a participant witnessed a microaggression.

Environmental microaggressions were situations where a microaggression was in print, such as a flyer at a restaurant.

When looking at the pulled examples of microaggressions from the transcripts, the researcher also used the referential unit of who was the instigator of a perceived microaggression.

Instigators were coded as a few words of thought such as “vice-principal” or “the president of the *taiko*” club. For another kernel unit, the researcher created the code “attribution.” This was found and coded after reading the interview transcripts several times. The research found that as participants were retelling their stories, they expressed internal and external attributions as to why a microaggression occurred (i.e., a person being very straightforward; being in a public setting).

Throughout the coding process and after rereading transcripts numerous times, the researcher also found an example of a thematic unit. Thematic units look at the “deep understanding of the source language with all its shades and nuances of meaning and context” (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 63). This thematic unit was coded as “memorable quotes.” This was to use the participants own words to describe their situation and experiences to enlighten the phenomenon the researcher set out to explore. This included quotes the researcher felt added to the material that would not be found in the existing literature or through a survey.

A final referential unit was coded at potential microaggressions. This was to help answer RQ1 instead of RQ3. These were coded at either single words or complete expressions of thought, depending on the participant’s answer. These were words which asked the question about negative comments a participant has heard about Americans. Examples include “lazy,” “too independent,” or “we put ourselves before the group.” This was to investigate potential microaggressions to add to future research and expand the literature.

Last, using NVivo, the researcher created a mind map feature to see how possible codes are related. The researcher started with utterances as a floating idea. She then used child nodes (codes) to create a flowchart with attributions. This branched off into three further child nodes—verbal, emotional, and nonverbal reactions, which all lead to attribution. From there, attribution branched off into two categories: microaggression, and not a microaggression. This was done to see the connection between the utterance, the reaction, how an ALT attributed the utterance, and whether or not the ALT perceived the statement to be a microaggression. Using NVivo, the researcher also ran a word frequency to see how often specific words came up and how they might be crucial to the investigation.

## Chapter 4

### Results

This study investigated six research questions using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies with a total of 95 survey respondents and 20 interviewees. Five of the research questions relied on survey questions (RQ1, RQ2, RQ4, RQ5, RQ6). One research questions (i.e., RQ3) relied on interview data. Interview questions also helped answer part of RQ1, specifically what is the most common type of microaggressions American ALTs experience. The interviews also helped answer part of RQ2 about ALTs emotional responses to microaggressions.

#### **Types and Frequencies of Microaggressions**

The first research question asked, “What are the most common types of microaggressions American ALTs experience in Japan and at what frequency? This section begins by discussing the microaggressions respondents perceived experiencing in the general environment. Then the focus shifts to the microaggressions they felt they experienced at work. Finally, demographic information reveals who is more likely to experience a particular microaggression. Throughout this discussion, qualitative information from the interviews will follow the numerical data to add and highlight specific and unique microaggressions ALTs experienced.

**General microaggression categories.** Overall, ALTs reported experiencing perceived microaggressions that fit into the exoticization/assumptions of similarity category the most ( $n = 631$ ). The most common were compliments on their Japanese and comments assuming an ALT only spoke English. The former was the highest reported perceived microaggression overall. ALTs were then most likely to experience microaggressions that fit into the second-class citizen and assumption of criminality category ( $n = 242$ ). The most common were being given an English menu without asking and a server hesitating to take an ALTs order. ALTs were least

likely to experience microaggressions that fit under the microinvalidation category ( $n = 64$ ). All microaggressions had at least one perceived occurrence. Table 2 shows a breakdown of the individual microaggressions.

Table 2  
*ALTs' Overall Frequency of Individual Microaggressions*

Item	Occurrence in Times					Sum
	0	1-3	4-6	7-9	10+	
<b>Component 1: Second-Class Citizen and Assumptions of Criminality</b>						<b>242</b>
Avoided sitting next to me in public	18	38	16	6	17	57
Server hesitated to take my order	30	28	21	7	9	<b>65</b>
Gave me an English menu without asking	14	34	24	5	18	<b>81</b>
Received substandard service in a place of business	56	26	8	2	3	39
<b>Component 2: Microinvalidations</b>						<b>64</b>
Told me they "don't see color"	92	3	-	-	-	3
Told me they don't see race	90	2	3	-	-	5
Told me that people should not think about race	86	8	1	-	-	9
Told me that she or he was color-blind	94	1	-	-	-	1
Told me that there is no difference between us	77	15	1	-	2	<b>18</b>
Told I should not complain about race	85	8	2	-	-	10
Told me that all groups of people face the same obstacles	77	16	2	-	-	<b>18</b>
<b>Component 3: Exotization/Assumptions of Similarity</b>						<b>631</b>
Assumed that I only spoke English	11	13	18	14	39	<b>84</b>
Asked me to teach them English outside of school	18	30	22	8	17	<b>77</b>
Assumed that I ate American foods every day	20	28	15	8	24	75
Assumed that all Americans were fat	27	27	23	6	12	68
Assumed that all Americans were loud	30	28	15	10	12	65
Wanted to date me only because of my race	56	20	8	4	7	39

Table 2 Cont.  
*ALTs' Overall Frequency of Individual Microaggressions*

Item	Occurrence in Times					Sum
	0	1-3	4-6	7-9	10+	
Objectified one of my physical features	40	25	13	3	14	55
Complimented my Japanese	2	8	10	13	62	<b>93</b>
Complimented my ability to use chopsticks	2	20	20	5	48	75

*Note. A dash (-) indicates that participants did not experience that microaggression at that frequency.*

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the differences between gender and frequency of general microaggressions. Only 1 relationship emerged. The relationship between females and the microaggression of someone wanting to date them because of their race was significant,  $X^2(4, n = 18) = 11.88, p < .05$ . Females were more likely to experience this kind of microaggression. A chi-square test of independence was also performed to examine the relationship between it being an ALT's first time to Japan and the frequency of experiencing the various microaggressions. Only one emerged as significant: that they were good at speaking Japanese ( $X^2(4, n = 58) = 10.01, p < .05$ .) ALTs who had been to Japan before were more likely to experience this microaggression.

Although not specifically asked in the RQ, a word quarry search in NVivo identified the most common words in the interviews. The following words came up a number of times and helped give the researcher an idea of the contexts surrounding and topic of the microaggressions that ALTs experienced: "hair" came up 62 times, "country" 55 times, "chopsticks" 50 times, "gun" 49 times, "stereotype" 45 times, "food" 44 times, "eyes" 42 times, "office" 29 times, "skin" 19 times, "age" and "blonde" came up 18 times, "menu" 17 times, "hamburger," and "store" came up 16 times, and "restaurant" came up 12 times.

**Narrative support for general microaggression categories.** In this section, the microaggressions identified on the survey using the REMS scale (2011) are illustrated with examples from the interviews so as to better illustrate the ALT experience in Japan. Specifically, examples are provided to illustrate the categories of second-class citizen and assumptions of criminality, objectification/sexualization, and microinvalidations.

*Second-class citizen and assumptions of criminality.* These microaggressions describe where a minority is treated with less status and respect than the majority (Sue et al., 2007) or where one's minority status labels them as being criminal (Nadal, 2011). A common microaggression for this category was being stared at. Four ALTs experienced this. Hannah said, "people will stare at you for the longest time. I've actually been worrying about the drivers. Just move forward please. Don't run over somebody (laughs)."

Three ALTs described being given special menus or documents at shops, hospitals, or restaurants. Chris described an instance where he went out to eat with his girlfriend who is Chinese-American and fluent in Japanese,

The waitress would, would greet us and she's holding two menus, and she'll take us to our seats and....she walks away and she comes back with like another color menu. She hands me that, and then the other menu to my girlfriend. She hands me the English menu. She didn't ask if I wanted the English menu. She has not spoken a word of English. She just gave it to me.

As for more overt discrimination, Hannah described a time where she and her husband were denied an apartment because they were both foreign. She said, "every single one of them said no to us because we're foreigners." Instead, she needed a guarantor. She asked if she could use her other non-Japanese friend but was told the guarantor needed to be a Japanese citizen. She felt discriminated against when trying to get an apartment simply because she was foreign, nor could another foreigner aid her.

Samantha experienced someone avoiding sitting next to her, another microaggression on the

REMS scale (Nadal, 2011). On a bus, some teachers were trying to assign students to sit next to her but “the kids would like look at me and be really, really freaked out...then they'd wait until the teacher looked away and they'd get up and go somewhere else.” The teachers also hesitated to sit next to her.

Moving on to assumptions of criminality, the topic of guns came up several times through ALTs vignettes. Nicole had an elementary school student tell her during an activity that he couldn't go to America because he thought he might get shot. McKayla's *taiko* teacher would ask her questions like, “what did you do...smoke pot and shoot a bunch of guns?” when she would return from holiday. Some of these weren't comments but assumptions like “there are places like America that are really dangerous.” or “there is this big hesitation of going to America because everyone seems to think that everyone has a gun.” A more aggressive account of criminality came from Heather. In one instance, she was accused of stealing school materials while she was working on a lesson plan,

I didn't know that we couldn't use the school's materials, that we had to use only [ones] at the *shiyakusho* [municipal office]. Like, nobody told me right? So instead of them stopping me from doing my project, my lesson plan essentially, and then go and say that and accuse me and like make it a big deal after I already did [it]. They're like, “Heather, you're supposed to be using the material at the *shiyakusho*”....like you need to recognize that.

*Objectification/sexualization.* A handful of ALTs dealt with issues of being sexualized or heard assumptions about the over-sexualization of Americans, particularly American women. Others had their hair or skin objectified. Sarah heard comments like “it was too sexy” and “didn't like that about American culture” when she showed them a Beyoncé music video for class. At an *enaki* [banquet], Virginia mentioned she broke up with her previous boyfriend but had an upcoming date. A coworker jokingly said he hears Americans date a lot of boys and called her “a slut.” At a bar, Nicole was flirting with a guy but quickly stopped after she learned

he had a girlfriend. When she brought this up, he told, “foreigners don't count.”

Four of the Caucasian ALTs were touched without permission. Sarah’s students groped her breasts. For other ALTs, their students would rub their arm hair saying, “wow, it’s so light” or “*kimochii* [it feels nice].” Tommy said at the *onsen* [hot spring] men will try to touch or comment on his tattoos. In a separate instance at a festival, a man groped his genitals to see if the stereotype about American males being “bigger” was true,

This guy was drunk and he was talking to me, using another word for it at that time because we don't study those word in Japanese 101, so he just got kind of fed up with waiting it seems and just kind of grabbed it.

A few ALTs described times where they felt like they were a token. At Ellen’s first *taiko* group, she got the impression the president wanted to use her and other ALTs as “Oh look! It’s our foreign team!” Others explained times where a woman would “try to be really cute and friendly because she wanted to practice English” or be treated differently at a party as “the foreign guest.”

**Narrative support for microaggressions, microinvalidations, and microassaults.** This section starts with the microaggressions identified and categorized by Sue et al. (2007) to identify unique narrative and experiences of ALTs living in Japan. These types of microaggressions include: pathologizing, ascription of intelligence, alien in one’s own land, and denial of (racial) experiences. It then shifts to a different subcategory as described by Johnston and Nadal (2010)--representative of one’s own country. Last, it looks at microassaults as defined by Sue et al.’s (2007) typology.

*Pathologizing.* Most comments about pathologizing ALTs stemmed from two topics: the ability to eat certain Japanese foods and the ability to use chopsticks. When Malorie was offered a seaweed snack, her students were surprised she accepted. She elaborated, “people might go

ahead and assume that maybe I won't like it or it's not something I'm used [to]...just it's something that foreigners don't enjoy.” ALTs said people were fascinated that “we physically can do that” or “couldn’t wrap their heads around” eating or liking certain food because they aren’t from Japan. Five other ALTs said they were continuously told how well they use chopsticks despite the people who made these comments saw them on a regular basis. Brandon heard “you must be the only American that knows how to use chopsticks.”

Two other instances of pathologizing were very specific. Cassandra described one situation where she was out to lunch with her JTEs. One co-worker was about to open the blinds at a restaurant when her JTE said, “Oh no, we can't open up the blinds because Cassandra's eyes are light. Her eyes are light so she can't look into the sun like we can.” Nicole described a time a student accidentally hit her on the head with the zipper of his jacket while he was taking it off,

So I called the school nurse office and she took me to the medical health center room....the kid came down he apologized because he didn't know...it was all good. But then a couple hours later, the nurse came back and she's like “oh I'll talk with the principal about this”....and then she had to tell me that “we both started talking about it and we think that because you're from America you're just not used to being hit like that and so that's probably why you were so surprised and why it hurt so much.”

*Ascriptions of intelligence.* Some ALTs described times they felt patronized. Chris said sometimes people walked him through things unnecessarily. When he would order a *bento* [boxed lunch] from the school cafeteria, his teacher came with him, made sure he put the money in the box, and wrote his name on the paper. One interviewee was asked "if she knew how to use the train" multiple times even though she had been there for at least half a year. Eric made an offhand comment about him being not as good at math as before. His teacher replied, “You’re American, so you're not good at math.” Emily felt patronized by other teachers when she would have to go to her JTE with questions regarding side effects of certain medications.

*Alien in one's own land.* For ALTs and their use of Japanese, as Samantha described it, “the

number one rule of being a foreigner in Japan is your *nihongo* [Japanese] is always *kyōzu* [skilled]." McKayla talked about how she won a speech contest but with her co-workers, "there was the level of surprise that I had won...my Japanese is not perfect...but from some of the other reactions you would think that a baby had just done a fluent speech." Several ALTs said they would get praise on their Japanese after saying only a few words or saying a simple greeting. Other times, people would use too simple English or too simple Japanese. Brandon had a very specific instance of this,

Someone was making announcements about drinking and driving and the teacher...something from a couple tables over, "so Brandon doesn't understand." And I said in Japanese, "You know I don't have a car." And the whole, like everybody, like every other teacher was like, "oh *nihongo kyōzu desu ne?* [You're Japanese is good, isn't you?"]. I'm like there....at an *enkai*, and I have 40 teachers complimenting me on my Japanese that don't talk to me.  
*Denial of experiences.*

Samantha described a time her wallet was stolen from her at a bus station and she asked the staff to help her contact the police,

The woman who was working there was nice enough...to call them for me.... And they showed up and they were looking, and they saw me sitting there. And they're [sic] like immediately started looking around like, "oh God, please let it be somebody else, not that foreigner"....and you just see you see the fear in their eyes when they realize....where you're sitting and you're like "uh crap I've got to go talk to this, I gotta go talk to this foreigner. I don't know what I'm going to do."

When she later contacted her supervisor, her supervisor was convinced it was not stolen, as the "perception is that just doesn't happen" in Japan. She heard comments like "are you sure it was stolen? Are you sure you didn't just drop it somewhere?"

*Representative of one's country.* Johnston and Nadal (2010) say one type of microaggression is where the minority has to act as the leader and representative of his or her entire minority group. They originally lump this type of microaggression with exoticization/isolation. However, in this case, due to Japan's homogenous nature, the insertion of American ALTs, of all ethnicities,

increases this tenfold. From the interview narratives, ALTs now became the spokesperson for their race, had ideas and mentalities projected on to them, or were assumed to hold beliefs based on instigators experiences with other ALTs, other Americans, or Americans in the media. Therefore, this study feels it is worthwhile to create a separate category for these types of microaggressions.

Emily identifies as Filipino-American and said she “always is the representative of like, an entire melting pot of culture...I can't represent everybody, but I still, I still have to.” Nicole felt she is sometimes asked questions “as the representative of all of *gaikoku* [foreign country]” which she explained as “by *gaikoku* I do mean Western.” Several ALTs felt they had to defend their country considering the most recent election. Over half of the ALTs had to defend themselves because they do not support Donald Trump. Many Japanese teachers that disliked Trump called him scary, dangerous, and unqualified. Those supportive of Trump were for militaristic reasons (especially in regions closest to Okinawa). ALTs would explain that although he won the election, the ALT did not vote for him, so he or she was not a representative of that outcome. Sarah said she had to “do a lot of back-peddling” for her country because of the election. Others heard comments like “we are very dumb for voting for a president. That all Americans voted Trump.” In other instances, teachers would ask ALTs uncomfortable questions about their opinion of Pearl Harbor or the atomic bombings.

*Microassaults.* When Cassandra was on the train with her friends, one of whom was Australian-Korean, a woman looked at the friend and said "you're old enough you should make your own *bento*. How are you going to find a husband...what are you doing in our country...why are you here...I was a teacher, you should respect me." The woman was talking to the group as a whole, but looked at the one particular friend who was mostly like to “understand” so she could

“tell her friends.” When Brandon was visiting Hiroshima at the *genbakudōmu* [atomic bomb memorial museum], he declined to sign a petition because he had signed one earlier. A stranger overheard this and said, “Of course he wouldn't sign that. He's an American.” When McKayla was leaving the grocery store with her bags, she noticed an older man sitting on a bench, and she tried to say hello. He only told her, “So, you see this area and see how nice and clean it is? Don't litter and don't junk it up.” Ellen described one time she accidentally hit a man's car when opening her door,

It was a very light, light touch but he looked at me and he was like “what? Don't you know you're not supposed to touch other people's stuff?” and he was so angry about it and he was like, like “I don't think Americans understand the value of someone else's property” and blah blah blah.

**Other types of microaggressions.** There were two themes that did not match any of the previously identified categories. These two new themes were stereotypes about Americanness and unnecessary mediation. The first is extremely specific to Japan since the Japanese have their own stereotypes and preconceived notions of what Americans look and act like. The second may be a result of facework or using a third-party mediator (Ting-Toomey, 2005) when one was not necessary.

*Stereotypes about Americanness.* While true stereotypes aren't inherently malevolent in nature, the stereotypes ALTs encountered during their time on JET were often in the form of microaggressions, usually when ALTs either broke this stereotype or affirmed it, usually in the negative. Moreover, since these stereotypes are both specific to Americans and held by many Japanese people, this study felt it was necessary to give it its own category. To begin, many Japanese people have the perception that all Americans are blonde-haired and have blue eyes. Most ALTs would get comments about their hair color, blonde or otherwise. The questions were if it was natural or dyed. For Tommy, they wanted to know the color of “the underhair” because

he is blonde. When an ALT didn't fit this depiction, some people would make comments. Students would ask Allison if she dyed her hair or wore colored contacts because she was a natural brunette with green eyes. They would sometimes get very close to her face to look at her eye color.

Heather, who is Asian American, said some of her students said, "how can that be because you look like me?" Other comments included "I knew I liked you...you're Asian. You're the *good* Asian." The last comment came from Brandon, who is half-German and half Native American after he taught a lesson about Native Americans. Two ALTs are Japanese-American. In Japanese, "*hafu*" refers to someone who is half Japanese and half another ethnicity. Its connotation depends on the individual, but it is largely negative (Takeshita, 2010). James felt his students and teachers would "scrutinize" his face and "are wondering what my ethnicity is." Louise got a lot of questions about her ethnicity and upbringing because she is half Japanese and has a Japanese surname. Her students wanted to know "how does it work?" or "Wait, you don't come from Japan, how do you eat rice?"

Another stereotype Japanese people have about Americans is that they are bigger, taller, and/or fatter. This theme was found in 17 interviews. Damien found sometimes he would hear passive-aggressive comments like "*Ippai tabeta ne?* [You ate a lot, didn't you?]. Brandon received the most of these comments including "you must be hungry today." During a lesson on adjectives, Malorie showed a cartoon picture of a man asleep with a remote on a large belly. She wanted the students to use "lazy" but instead they "shouted out the word fat, *fatto*"

Similarly, many Japanese people have misperceptions about American cuisine. Several ALTs told stories about how their students or teachers thought Americans only ate hamburgers, corn dogs, pizza, or novelty-size food portions (i.e., "a hamburger the size of a pizza"). Two

ALTs received these kinds of comments when they were introduced to their staff. When Virginia, who is 5'2", was introduced, a teacher used exaggerated gestures and said, "Oh I had this idea of what Americans are, so big and tall, and you're none of those." Ellen described one experience in the staff room, particularly about the *jimuin*<sup>1</sup> [clerk] at her school,

The tea lady would stick her nose up at me or make comments...about my weight. She would gossip about me, in front of me, because she thought I couldn't understand even though I made it clear to her that I understood what she was saying...A teacher that left and came back a few months later...[they] were gossiping about whether I had gained weight or not.

A third stereotype is that Americans are loud or too expressive. Two ALTs heard comments like "Wow, you're a lot quieter than any American I've ever met," and "Americans are like 'hey guys what's up'" or "really loud" with "big voices and stuff." Ellen on the other hand, got comments like "oh, usually we wouldn't...express that we were irritated or upset but you do."

*Unnecessary mediation.* This was a new theme that emerged through the interviews. In some cases, an ALT would ask a staff or clerk a question, but the clerk would directly answer to a 3rd party present that was more Asian looking. When Chris wanted to order takeout at the restaurant, he said the server looked only at his girlfriend, saying "It's almost like she doesn't believe that I'm speaking Japanese...she's constantly looking at my girlfriend... [to] jump in." When McKayla was at an amusement park attraction, a guide saw her and "just stops talking mid-sentence and looks to my friend as if he's my handler and says 'can this person understand Japanese?'" This happen in every subsequent room. Similarly, when Ellen asked where the salt was at a store, the clerk answered her friend, who understood no Japanese.

**Workplace microaggressions.** The most commonly perceived workplace microaggression for ALTs was that ALTs felt they were treated differently than a Japanese co-worker ( $n = 74$ ).

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<sup>1</sup> ALTs colloquially refer to the clerk as "the tea lady."

Following that, ALTs feel coworkers were unfriendly because of their race ( $n = 36$ ), they were told they would not understand the Japanese education system ( $n = 36$ ), or they were told they were not a real teacher ( $n = 34$ ). Table 3 breaks down the individual microaggressions and their reported frequency.

Table 3  
*ALTs' Overall Frequency of Workplace Microaggressions in a Six Month Period.*

Item	Occurrence in Number of Times					Sum
	0	1-3	4-6	7-9	10+	
Unfriendly coworker because of my race	59	24	6	3	3	36
A co-worker complained about my pay	89	9	3	1	-	13
A co-worker said I didn't work as hard	76	12	5	1	1	19
I would not understand teaching in Japan	59	21	10	1	4	36
My opinion was overlooked because of my race	66	20	2	4	3	29
My work was considered inferior	76	10	7	1	1	19
I was treated differently than a Japanese co-worker	21	33	14	8	19	<b>74</b>
I was told I am not a real teacher	61	24	6	1	3	34

*Note.* A dash (-) indicates that no participants reported this item at that frequency.

For those who had studied Japanese versus those who had not, a chi-square test of independence showed statistical significance for a coworker being unfriendly or unwelcoming for those who had studied Japanese previously ( $X^2(4, n = 30) = 12.71, p < .05$ ). This was also true for a co-worker telling an ALT they did not work as hard as their Japanese counterparts ( $X^2(4, n = 76) = 9.73, p < .05$ ), and being told he or she is not a real teacher ( $X^2(4, n = 26) = 9.57, p < .05$ ). In all cases, those who had studied Japanese before were more likely to experience these microaggressions.

**Narrative support for workplace microaggression utterances.** This section highlights the unique experiences of ALTs at school matching the survey portion of the study. One of the latter

statements was an ALT being told he or she was not a real teacher. This was true in two instances. Emily was directly told that she wasn't a real teacher, despite her having previous teaching experience. Virginia also had an instance where her parents were visiting and they came to the classroom to watch her teach a demonstration lesson. Her dad was making conversation, complimenting how good of a teacher his daughter was. The head of the English department turned toward him and said, "She's not a real teacher."

Other ALTs gave examples where they were treated differently than a Japanese co-worker. Most of these examples came when ALTs felt they were the only one not given a job duty, especially during school wide events such as sports days or cultural festivals. Sarah explained, "Everybody's running around like a chicken with their head cut off...I never get to do anything even though I asked...I just get left in the staff room. Just sit around while everyone else is preparing." McKayla said, "I've never been put on a team. They just don't bother to put me on a team." When Hannah wanted to help prepare for the graduation ceremony, she was told, "No, you just relax. You just sit there." Cassandra would hear "some comments like ALTs have shorter working hours" or "oh you're working too hard...you have to leave." For Chris though, one of his JTEs insinuated that "American teachers are very lazy and don't work as hard as Japanese teachers." A few ALTs would hear comments about them being "free" all the time. Emily felt that the teachers used a double standard against her, "[They] think I have lots of free time...I'm not like some ALTs where they sit down and had nothing to do. I actually have a lot to do." At ceremonies, some ALTs were put at the end of the row. This separated them from being with the other teachers, the faculty which they are a part of, to staff members such as the librarians or cafeteria workers.

A third statement was an ALTs opinion being overlooked. This was true for staff or school

meetings. Many ALTs were told not to attend or that they couldn't attend. Allison explained, "all the other real teachers go to the staff meeting in the other room" but she was told to "stay in the staff and teachers room and like, guard it in case any students come by."

**Narrative support of new themes of workplace microaggressions.** The interviews gave several examples of microaggressions that did not match the statements from the survey. These were newer themes as identified and labeled by the researcher. Since Nadal's (2011) only used workplace microaggressions as an umbrella term, this study looked closer at some of the nuances to see what specific themes emerged from the narratives to find more than just a handful of statements from the REMS scale (Nadal, 2011). Moreover, the dissection of these themes further elaborates the types of possible microaggressions that happen within the workplace and not ones that are microaggressions that happen to occur at work. They were addressing the ALT, improper dress code, credibility inside the classroom, credibility outside the classroom, job duties, disrespect, and verbal threats.

*Addressing the ALT.* This theme emerged several times where were ALTs were improperly addressed as teachers. In Japanese, *sensei* is the suffix for teacher. For names in general, the prefixes can be *chan* for females, *kun* for males, and *san* is gender neutral and more formal for job settings or newer relationships. *Chan* and *kun* are for closer interpersonal relationships or children. Cassandra was often referred to with the more casual *chan*. She said, "all the other teachers pretty much will call me Cassandra-Chan...even if we're in class like I'm team-teaching with them." Two other female ALTs experienced this as well. Virginia said when her teacher would write both their names on the board, "I'm just Virginia. And then right next to me is like [Mr.] Hiroki Sato." She received no suffix or her surname.

Nicole had a unique experience with her elementary school wanting to put her name in the

paper. They were debating how to print her name in the paper because she has a Japanese surname. Ultimately, her principal decided to only use her first name as having a Japanese name for the ALT “might confuse the students.” She said she is only addressed as Nicole and never Mrs. Tanaka. Tommy was the only male where this was the case. One student gave him a nickname because his name sounds similar to “cicada” in Japanese. Such nicknames are usually mean spirited.

*Improper dress code.* One theme found was ALTs not following the proper dress code by Japanese standards. Emily had the most encounters with this kind of microaggression. Her principal, who is also an English teacher, told her that her skirt was “too sexy” even though it touched her knees. At one point the principal physically touched her. Emily’s hair is naturally wavy, but she straight-ironed it the first day of school. Emily was told she shouldn’t have her hair wavy. Specifically, “Japanese people usually keep their hair straight. We never curl. It takes too much time.” One ALT was told to wear shoes to prevent her tattoo from showing and another ALT was told to take off her hat even though she was in the staff room.

*Credibility in the classroom.* These were instances where an ALT felt he or she lost credibility in the classroom. Tommy said his junior high school students would ask “invasive questions” or “pull stunts” that “they would never pull with the homeroom teacher around.” Damien said his students would laugh at him if he said something in English and then said the same thing in Japanese, identical to his JTE’s teaching style. Malorie said her JTE “kind of takes over the classes” because “she's [a] very quick quick quick kind of a teacher...so sometimes she will talk over me.”

Two ALTs heard comments discrediting English as a subject. When Sarah, her JTE, and a science teacher were discussing who would use the smart TV for a class period, the science

teacher said, “I don't know why it's such a big deal. Science is way more important than English. [It] isn't even real subject.” Brandon heard a similar comment from his math teacher explaining, “he got drunk and decided to say that the position for ALTs is totally unnecessary, that the ALT doesn't do anything. The kids don't need to learn English.”

*Job duties.* This theme was found when ALTs received comments about how they were (or weren't) doing their job. In some examples, one ALT tried to approach her boss about altering the syllabus but it turned into a conversation about ALTs not doing their job. Grace approached her boss about altering the syllabus because she felt it was too difficult for her students (fifth grade). This conversation also involved a few other ALTs. The conversation “blew up into this bit.” At one point the boss switched from English to Japanese and said she “couldn't understand [why] the other two were having trouble.” about their “responsibilities as teachers.”

Other ALTs felt they were underutilized. Nicole described how at the beginning of working at that school, a teacher would hand her something and tell her to make copies using “flowery language.” Some ALTs said they would go to class without knowing the lesson plan or would not be invited to classes at all. Many also described when they would literally have no work to do because their JTEs would either not let them or they had already finished their work, leaving them to read or do puzzles like cross-word or sudoku. Sometimes, ALTs were worried they were judged for doing these kind of activities at work.

On the other hand, one ALT was told not to let “outside” work influence their school work. Every year, most ALTs attend the “skills development conference” (SDC). It is put on by ALTs for both ALTs and JTEs. ALTs are often recruited to present workshops or teaching demonstrations. When Emily was recruited to present at a SDC, she also had to attend some meetings about the conference. She said, “I was asking for time off work to do that, to do

presentations for SDC in orientation because we had meetings before. And they're like 'oh is this work related?'" She was then told "make sure this doesn't affect your work."

One ALT was confronted on how she should behave and interact with her students before she had even had a chance to formally meet them. Samantha's JTE came to her and told her not to get angry or yell at the students explaining, "they're not very good at English, but they do try...please do your best to be patient with them, and please like, stay calm and don't yell at them."

*Disrespect for the ALT.* There were some instances where ALTs were not shown respect as an assistant language teacher. Grace's boss once told her, "not to eat lunch with the other foreign teacher because one of them was looked upon badly by everyone." The boss disrespected Grace's choice of whom to eat lunch with. MaKayla and Brandon both experienced disrespect for their property. For example, McKayla's English bulletin board would be vandalized such as "people just ripping things off." For Brandon, he said teachers would steal the "better parts of his desk" to replace theirs when rearranging the staffroom at the start of the school year. He also heard comments regarding the attendance book such as "why is he number one?"

*Verbal threats.* Only one ALT described times where she received verbal threats, all of which came from her students. Sarah had a group of students that would scream "fuck you," "die," "shine[die!]" She said, "every time I would turn the corner, like, exactly the moment I was turning the corner he would tell me to 'go to hell.'" For another student, she explained, "for a while [he] just screamed every time I tried to talk. And it's like 'go back to your pigpen', 'die', and 'do you speak Japanese?'" While initially these statements were just aggressions, they were directed at her mostly because of her being American. Later, they turned far more racially charged with some sexist undertones (microaggressions can also be based on sex or gender).

There was one instance that escalated after Sarah gently touched a student's shoulder to get his attention, and a thread on his shirt popped accidentally and made a very loud sound. The kid "freaked out" and the JTE refused to translate what the student said, but the most Sarah got out of it was "it basically meant extreme violence against women." However,

The homeroom teacher and English teacher made him apologize and I kind of like apologized to him to like about your shirt. I was just trying to let him save a little face, and before he apologized though, he said in Japanese to one of the English teachers that I'm a foreigner so it doesn't really matter what he says to me

### **Emotional Responses to Microaggressions**

The second research question asks, "How do message recipients respond emotionally to microaggressions?" This section starts by looking at feelings of understanding and misunderstanding (FUM) for the perceived general microaggressions. Then the focus shifts to FUM for perceived workplace microaggressions. The specific emotions ALTs felt in response to general microaggressions, as well as workplace microaggressions are identified. Then, differences are identified in how an ALT emotionally responds to microaggressions. Last, interviewees share their unique emotions to general and workplace microaggressions.

**Emotional responses to general microaggressions.** ALTs' FUM scores ranged from -32 to 32, with the negative numbers indicating more feelings of being misunderstood and higher numbers indicating more feelings of being understood. Most felt misunderstood (76.8%,  $n = 73$ ) with scoring -21 to 0 while the remaining 23.2% ( $n = 22$ ) scoring between 1-29 indicating stronger feelings of being understood. The most common valence for understanding ( $M = 11.49$ ,  $SD = 5.72$ ) was acceptance ( $M = 1.77$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ). ALTs were least likely to feel the emotion of relaxation ( $M = 1.25$ ,  $SD = .97$ ). The most common feeling of misunderstanding ( $M = 15.83$ ,  $SD = 6.06$ ) was annoyance ( $M = 2.75$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ). Respondants were least likely to feel incompleteness ( $M = 1.48$ ,  $SD = .80$ ). These emotions were measured on a 1 to 5 scale indicating

that respondents reported minimal emotional responses to the specific statements. Table 4 breaks down the feelings of understanding and misunderstanding by their respective emotional valences towards general microaggressions.

Looking at the demographics and the specific emotional valences, females reported more feelings of annoyance ( $M = 3.00, SD = 1.34$ ) than did males ( $M = 2.2, SD = 1.17$ ),  $t(88) = -.274, p < .01$ . Females also reported more feelings of discomfort ( $M = 2.49, SD = 1.28$ ) than males did ( $M = 1.93, SD = 1.03$ ),  $t(88) = -2.05, p < .05$ . However, males reported more feelings of relaxation ( $M = 1.51, SD = .87$ ) than females did ( $M = 1.14, SD = .60$ ),  $t(88) = 2.34, p < .05$ . Males also reported more feelings of happiness ( $M = 1.75, SD = 1.12$ ) than females did ( $M = 1.26, SD = .70$ ),  $t(88) = 2.55, p < .05$ . Females were more likely to report feelings of misunderstanding (negative affect) while males were more likely to report feelings of understanding (positive affect).

Those who had been to Japan before reported more feelings of pleasure ( $M = 1.56, SD = .97$ ) than those who had not been to Japan before ( $M = 1.18, SD = .59$ ),  $t(88) = -2.01, p < .05$ . They also reported more feelings of happiness ( $M = 1.60, SD = .91$ ) than first timers did ( $M = 1.09, SD = .39$ ),  $t(88) = -2.70, p < .01$ .

Table 4  
*Descriptive Statistics on ALTs' FUM, Understanding, and Misunderstanding for General Microaggressions.*

Valence	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
FUM	-4.33	8.83
Understanding	<b>11.49</b>	5.72
Satisfaction	1.56	.974
Relaxation	1.25	.699
Pleasure	1.42	.857
Good	1.42	.819
Acceptance	<b>1.77</b>	1.18

Table 4 Cont.  
*Descriptive Statistics on ALTs' FUM, Understanding, and Misunderstanding for General Microaggressions.*

Valence	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Happiness	1.41	.908
Importance	1.30	.799
Misunderstanding	<b>15.83</b>	6.06
Annoyance	<b>2.75</b>	1.38
Discomfort	2.34	1.25
Dissatisfaction	2.21	1.21
Insecurity	2.29	1.31
Sadness	1.60	.830
Failure	1.58	1.04
Incompleteness	1.48	.797
Uninterestingness	1.54	.931

*Narrative emotional responses to general microaggressions.* This section begins by looking at the words which appeared during the interviews and then shifts to key interview comments. Although the research question did not specify the degree of affect, an auto-coding feature in NVivo looked at the type and severity for sentiment in the interview transcripts. NVivo searched for sentiment based on specific words and placed them into two categories: positive affect and negative affect. They were further divided by severity. The researcher investigated to make sure the context and sentiment were in line. Very negative sentiment was found 380 times. For example, Grace felt one of her bosses was trying to manipulate her from the beginning of their relationship and she didn't "like those sorts of games." Moderately negative sentiment was found 279 times. For example, James said he felt a missed opportunity to connect with his students occurred when he went to their graduation ceremony. Moderately positive sentiment was found

387 times. For example, Damien said he understood he might be at the bottom of the food chain at school, but said he knew that coming in and it's what he "signed-up for." Very positive sentiment was found 237 times. For example, Cassandra said she felt her foreignness and age helped her students interact with her on a more intimate level.

A second word search quarry investigated specific emotions that could provide more insight into how ALTs emotionally respond to microaggressions. The following words were found relevant to this portion of the investigation: "negative" came up 89 times, "great" 82 times, "positive" 79 times, "shocked" 63 times, "weird" 41 times, "bother" 33 times, "frustrating" 28 times, "aggressive" 26 times, "awkward" 22 times, "offended" and "rude" came up 16 times, "fail" 13 times, "uncomfortable," and "hurt" came up 12 times, "rough," "stuck," "sucks," and "upset" came up 11 times, while "afraid" came up 9 times.

There were instances where ALTs did feel some positively valenced emotions. Some examples were humor, finding something "so ridiculous (laughs)" or "funny." Other feelings were sympathy. Malorie described being acknowledged on the street felt "amazing" and walked away "beaming." Cassandra felt the comments about her eyes "weren't malicious" but out of "genuine concern." Other emotions included solidarity. A few ALTs described their JTEs or supervisors also studied or lived abroad, creating a connection. Malorie felt her supervisor took her "under her wing" and felt the JTE's comments were not patronizing, but "comforting" and "helpful." Others were relieved when they were "on the same page" as their Japanese colleagues about the election results.

Other ALTs felt neutral or blasé about the microaggressions they heard. One ALT described it as such comments "just kind of highlighted some kind of misconceptions Japanese people can have." For others, they may have wanted to address the comment but did not since they "have to

be polite and respectful” because they are foreign or “feel obligated to reply to them because I don't want to be the one scary foreigner that shuts them off of English.” For others, they said misconceptions are “not hard to sort of rebuttal [sic],” or “this is all they know. That's understandable.” Other comments include, “[it's] not condescending...kind of like [a] surprise,” “the undertone is not negative” but rather “it's meant as a I really want to talk with you but I don't have anything else to say.” Others neutral emotions included “mixed feelings” or “why bother” since “talking to them [e.g., JTE] isn't going to change anything.” Emily felt the comments were possibly passive-aggressive but knew they “weren't coming from an evil place.”

However, most respondents shared a range of negative emotions. These emotions included confusion, uncomfortable, offended, irritated/annoyed, belittled, and shocked, and others. For example, Samantha described comments about chopsticks and language skill as “the bane of every JETs<sup>2</sup> existence.” One common feeling was confusion. Both McKayla and Ellen were “confused” and “didn't understand” their encounters with strangers. However, McKayla's confusion turned into being “completely taken aback.” For Nicole, she was confused at first since she felt they were trying to apply a cultural difference when there wasn't one. ALTs also reported feeling uncomfortable or that the situations were inappropriate for the context. These comments included feeling “uncomfortable,” “unsure,” “really uncomfortable about the whole thing.”

Offended was another negative emotion that came up frequently in the interviews. These kind of comments included “offended,” “very offensive,” “rude,” “the lamest thing that someone has said,” and it's “not a Japanese thing. [I] think it's a douchebag thing.” For context, many of the offensive comments stemmed from comments about size. For Ellen this when her teachers were

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<sup>2</sup> A colloquial term for an ALT on the JET Program.

gossiping about her weight while for Virginia, she felt offended since she prides herself on her healthy diet.

More common negative emotions were bothered, irritated, and annoyed. Annoyance was one of the emotions listed on the FUM scale. Samantha indicated “it’s more like actions that bother me than necessarily straight up things people say” such as their body language. For example, Ellen was irritated at the store clerk while feeling sympathetic for her friend. Other comments included “tired of hearing” comments about chopsticks, “a little bit annoyed without even thinking,” and “the stares really annoys [sic] the fuck out of me.”

Another common negative valence was feeling belittled or patronized. This was not included on the FUM scale. Many of these comments included “very patronizing,” and “it is patronizing.” It makes me feel like they think I’m stupid and incapable.” For Emily, comments about her ability to do certain tasks felt “belittling...particularly for people who have not really thought about how foreigners live in the *inaka* [countryside].”

Shocked or hurt, also not on the FUM scale, seemed common as well. ALTs described comments as “shocking,” “people will say and ask and talk to a foreigner in ways they would never do with someone from their own country,” feeling like “an irresponsible loser,” a “double whammy [that] kind of like backtracked into shocking” and “floored.” When McKayla won her speech contest, “there were genuine compliments afterwards but...the level of surprised that I had won was a little hurtful.” Samantha described comments about language as “I think they do mean it in a positive way, but just because you’re aware of how like, how menial what you just did was, you kind, of you’re like ‘really like, [that’s] all you expected me?’”

There were several other emotions on the list that did not fall into the above categories. For example, Ellen found the comment about her student wanting to buy a gun “terrifying.” For

others, “it was humiliating,” “didn’t like being put up in the spotlight” and feeling like “a show monkey” A few ALTs expressed people would want to talk to them only to practice their English. One ALT felt someone “didn't give a shit about what I was talking” about so long as it was in English, “all of my willingness to be there just left...I didn't want to be there.” “not annoying just exhausting” when constantly explaining oneself.

For Louise and James, they had mixed feelings on being called *hafu*. Louise’s students knew better than to say it to her face but for her students that are also half Japanese, “they're very sensitive about it. And I'm very not.” James’s feelings on the word *hafu* shifted during his time in Japan,

When I first got here it really like it agitated me....I didn't like being called *hafu* because it makes you think like you’re half something, then what are you half of....they're saying you're not like a full person sort of like, had that connotation negative connotation. But it was one of those things in my first month or two I just got over it, and I just accepted it, and I never called myself a *hafu* before....now I just embrace it is a part of the society....I can't change it

**Emotional responses to workplace microaggressions.** For FUM in response to workplace microaggressions, 87.4% ( $n = 83$ ) of ALTs scored between -32 and 0 while the remaining 12.6% ( $n = 12$ ) scored between 1 and 31. ALTs were far more likely to report feelings of being misunderstood, similar to their emotional responses to general microaggressions.

The findings were similar to those for general microaggressions with the most commonly felt emotion associated with understanding ( $M = 10.86$ ,  $SD = 6.45$ ) being acceptance ( $M = 1.53$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ). The most common feeling associated with misunderstanding ( $M = 17.11$ ,  $SD = 7.79$ ) was annoyance ( $M = 2.85$ ,  $SD = 1.47$ ), followed by insecurity and discomfort, respectfully. Like general microaggressions, ALTs reported lower numbers of feeling these emotions for the specific statements on the survey. Unlike emotional responses to general microaggressions, ALTs reported more feelings of insecurity for workplace microaggressions. Table 5 breaks down

the individual emotional valences felt for workplace microaggressions.

An independent sample t-test looked at the difference between gender and feelings of understanding/misunderstanding. The only specific emotion to show statistical significance was uninterestingness,  $t(88) = 2.41, p < .05$ . Males ( $M = 1.44, SD = .90$ ) were more likely to experience this emotion at work than were females ( $M = 1.29, SD = .78$ ). This was the only instance males experienced more of a negative affect than did females.

No other demographics played any significant role.

Table 5

*Descriptive Statistics of FUM, Understanding, and Misunderstanding for Workplace Microaggressions*

Valence	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
FUM	-6.25	11.30
Understanding	<b>10.86</b>	6.45
Satisfaction	1.38	.948
Relaxation	1.29	.836
Pleasure	1.23	.735
Good	1.36	.979
Acceptance	<b>1.53</b>	1.05
Comfortableness	1.35	.944
Happiness	1.36	.957
Importance	1.34	.822
Misunderstanding	<b>17.11</b>	7.79
Annoyance	<b>2.85</b>	1.47
Discomfort	2.42	1.38
Dissatisfaction	2.40	1.33
Insecurity	2.44	1.47
Sadness	1.98	1.25
Failure	1.58	1.04
Incompleteness	1.63	1.01
Uninterestingness	1.49	.998

Finally, a stepwise linear regression model was created to see what possible variables influenced feelings of misunderstanding. There were three specific microaggressions that could

best predict approximately 28% of the variance in feelings of misunderstanding. Assuming an ALT only spoke English accounted for approximately 17% of feelings of misunderstanding, a server hesitating to take an ALT's order made up approximately 7%, and last being told someone “doesn't see color” made up for 6% of feelings of being misunderstood. Table 6 shows the breakdown of the regression.

Table 6  
*Regression Model of Feelings of Misunderstanding*

Model Variable	Beta*	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>
Misunderstanding ( $F(3, 91) = 13.22, p < .0001, \text{Adj } R^2 = .281$ )				
Assuming I only spoke English	.219	2.08	.05	.174
Told "I don't see color"	.313	3.48	.001	.068
Server hesitated to take order	.298	2.84	.01	.062

\*Standardized betas

*Narrative emotional responses to workplace microaggressions.* Similar to general workplace microaggressions, there were a few instances of positive or neutral emotional valence. For example, Hannah was completely okay with not being allowed in the morning meetings. Sarah said the comments from her rowdy students “got so ridiculous that though it just kind of looped back around to being funny.”

As for credibility, Chris said these comments didn't “really bother him,” but if they happened “repeatedly, or like from multiple sources, it would start to kind of hit a nerve.” Tommy was the only ALT not bothered to not be called *sensei*. He prefers being called by his first name over his last name since it is difficult to say with a Japanese accent. Another comment from Damien included, “yeah, it happens.” When Samantha's JTE asked her not to yell at the students, she felt he didn't “do it intentionally” but rather he thought because her predecessor was often frustrated with the students, “it would kind of be the same sort of situation” for her as the new ALT.

As with general microaggressions, ALTs felt a range of negative emotions including patronizing, shocked, frustrated, and unequal. Many ALTs felt patronized or belittled. Grace felt her boss was “the definition of patronizing the entire time” and is “one of the main reasons why” she probably won’t return after her maternity leave. For Heather, she felt “belittled” and the entire situation (being accused of stealing) was “just really devastating.” After hearing her story, the researcher shared a similar story, Heather agreed with the researcher that it “can make you feel two inches tall” and she replied, “I think it's on purpose, like I really do.” For Emily and her confrontation about her clothing,

There's incidents where I feel like I'm being treated like a child because of it...it's not like this happens everyday.... but it just makes me very uncomfortable working in the environment where I kind of have to be like on my tiptoes. But of course not all teachers are like that.

While not as common as with general microaggressions, shock was another valence that appeared in the interviews. When Cassandra was marked low on her dress code, she first felt “shocked,” “bad” and disappointed “for not following or not respecting the work culture in the school.” This was also true for confusion. Ellen was really confused about the comments on her work clothing. Ultimately, it made her “less likely to make eye contact with them...because I don't want to see them judging me for something that I don't know that I'm doing wrong.” For Virginia’s encounter with her principal and father, she described as “really unnecessary,” “very odd,” and “very unJapanese [sic] as well.” For Sarah’s sexist remarks from her student, it “was probably the worst thing that's ever happened with a student.”

In terms of frustration, others felt comments about working too hard made or not enough as “a little frustrating” because they want to establish themselves. So, hearing these kind of comments made Cassandra “sigh on the inside a little bit.” As Tommy described it,

It's a weird one. It's like, I know they mean it as a compliment, and I think in some way it's a

good thing, but at the same time, like, I know that Japan is also as deeply flawed as America is...I think about some of the things with Japan I have issue with and I'm just like no no no no no I'm not Japanese don't do that to me.

Unlike general microaggressions, many ALTs indicated feelings of inequality. A few others said being improperly addressed “did not make them feel like real teachers” McKayla she felt the use of *chan* from students made her feel they were both on equal footing, which she disagreed with. Other comments included not commanding “the same kind of respect that teacher [have] from students,” and being a “half-teacher.” For Emily felt “these teachers make assumptions of what my class is like without actually being in my class...in her words, with me as my partner.” For Emily, comments about work made her want to “crawl up on the desk (mock crying).” For Hannah, she felt her lack of being given responsibilities was actually due to her sex and not her position as an ALT or an American.

### **Nonverbal and Verbal Responses to Microaggressions via Coping Mechanisms**

Research question three asks, “How do message recipients respond to these microaggressions nonverbally or verbally in terms of coping mechanisms?” This section first talks about nonverbal responses. Then, verbal responses are identified ranging from short and polite to more aggressive answers.

**Nonverbal Reactions.** In this section, reactions ranged from avoidance and minimizing the event (e.g., smiling) to physically removing themselves from the situation. With encounters with strangers, the ALT either did not know how to respond or did not respond at all. ALTs often ignored it by saying nothing. When Chris’s teacher would walk him through the process of buying lunch, he would “try to brush it off” because they only wanted to help him. Laughter was also used to minimize the microaggressions. Sometimes accompanying an uncomfortable verbal response, when Sarah’s female students would grab her breasts, she’d laughed it off. Hannah

also laughed to herself when drivers would stare since she didn't want them to accidentally run over anyone. For Samantha's experience on the train, she and her friends looked at each other until the woman left the cart to go yell at the conductor. Allison, on the other hand, tended to back off from the relationship. She said she became a little less willing to talk to certain people. Many of these ALTs expressed using this tactic because they either described themselves as non-confrontational or did not want to respond because the comments were somewhat frequent. With Tommy's encounter with the man groping him, he turned around and walked away.

**Verbal Responses.** For verbal responses to microaggressions, these ranged from internal (e.g., imaginary conversations) to outward expressions. The outward expressions then ranged from polite to more aggressive. For internal responses, Mellor (2004) describes this a common response. Some ALTs internalized the comments as funny or comical. For the ALTs that were physically touched, they had thoughts of "oh, thank you for touching me (laughs)" or "please stop. You're covered in germs." When Virginia got comments on her smaller size, she wondered if "I was just going to be this tall like fat man, is that what you're trying to say? (laughs)." When a teacher approached Virginia about the election, she thought "wow, I've been here a year and a half...this is the first thing you're saying to me? Come on, at least compliment my outfit or something (laughs)."

Emily and Erin's internal reactions were slightly more hostile. When Emily would hear offhand comments about her not understanding Japanese medical jargon she thought "who understands specific, like, Japanese like that?" When Ellen was at the grocery store but the clerk answered her friend, she walked away thinking to herself, "Y'all are rude. You're not even talking to me." When Emily was frustrated with constant questions about her knowledge of Japanese food, she would "want to tell them sometimes, 'do you know hamburger [sic]?"

(mockingly)”

For verbal responses, many ALTs would take a simple, polite approach. When Malorie had a stranger stare at her on the train, she simply said, “*konnichiwa*” [hello].” For Samantha, when the teachers were talking about who should sit next to her, she chimed in saying she insists someone sit there. McKayla also took a simple approach to the tour guide who asked midway through his speech if she understood Japanese. She simply told him she understood Japanese. When Cassandra was being followed by a guy at a party, she tried to politely get out of the conversation until a friend intervened. With Cassandra’s experience in the restaurant, she addressed the group as a whole saying that she wanted to keep the blinds up because it was nice and sunny outside. For Nicole and her principals and nurse’s comments, she politely thanked them for helping her and apologized for bothering them. When James was complimented on his Japanese, he would say, “yeah, it's because I'm *hafu*”,

Sometimes the ALTs used the opportunity to educate others. When Heather’s students wanted to know why their skin and hair were similar, she took it as “an opportunity to show them that Americans come in all colors all shapes all sizes and there are Japanese Americans.” For Eric, he told his teachers “the word American, it means like a nationality. In America, there's a big difference between one's nationality and one's race.” He could be both Hispanic and American. In terms of being called *hafu* James would elaborate, “I'm half-Japanese. Like, my mom is Japanese, and my dad is American.” When Ellen got comments about Americans being big, she would explain, “people can be big because of their genetics...thyroid disease...because they just eat too much, like people in other countries are big too. It isn't just America.”

Other ALTs took a polite approach with some elaboration. When Malorie’s students shouted “fat!” she politely agreed, “yeah I think this is a picture of an American guy.” When her

students were surprised she accepted a Japanese snack, she told them “You're right. Maybe some, there are some, probably plenty of foreigners, who don't like *nori* [seaweed]...me specifically I happen to like it.” For Emily’s comments about food, she explained that she’s from the Pacific Northwest so she loves seafood. When Eric was told Americans aren’t good at math, he explained he took college credit classes in high school, so his math skills aren’t as good since it’s been a long time.

Some ALTs would “make a joke” or “change the subject.” For example, Louise would try to change the subject to something about “some fluffy music from Japan or this Space Center closing. Something fun.” Damien would say, “yeah I've got a big stomach” or “well, Japanese portions are small.” Brandon knows he’s “a heavysset guy” and if people assumed all American’s are fat, he would pull up pictures of his friends to show that he is the biggest one of the group. When Eric’s teachers told him he was quiet for an American, he joked, “I'm sorry. I guess I'm just a strange American.”

Some ALTs would maintain neutrality and politeness about controversial topics. This was very common about the election. For example, Nicole gave reasons for why Americans might have liked or disliked Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton to maintain a neutral stance. When Allison was in Japan, her home state was attempting to legalize marijuana, civil unions, and gay marriage. When her teachers explained Japan’s zero tolerance policy for drugs, she would commented, “yeah it's a plant. There are worse things out there, and this will be really good for the economy.” She received mixed comments on the varying stances on gay marriage. However, one teacher said, “a man and a man together gives me the creeps. Why do gay people want to get married why can't they just be happy living together as friends?” At that point, she realized it was best to “agree to disagree. When asked questions about Pearl Harbor, Louise answered with

“I think it was a good tactical move.”

Some ALTs took a slightly more aggressive verbal approach. When asked if she knew how to use the trains, one participant replied, “Yeah I’ve lived here for like 7 months of course I know how to use the trains.” With comments on chopsticks, Chris used the simile, it’s “like you going to America and every time you pick up a fork someone is exclaiming that ‘oh you know how to use a fork.’” Louise confronted her teachers, especially since they knew she was Hawaiian, “Why?. You’ve seen me use chopsticks for a year.”

Sometimes ALTs admitted responding aggressively. When Virginia was jokingly called a slut, she told that teacher not to do that again,

I was a little, I was little imbibed because it was late in the night. So, I was more kind of like “What? What the, what do you mean like you call me a slut? Don't ever call me that!” and then I heard somebody, I heard somebody on the side say like "Wow Virginia seems really loud right now"

Sarah’s friends described her as the “least likely to take shit” of the ALTs in her area. When her student would make comments about telling her to go die, she would “start telling him, ‘you first.’” When Louise’s teacher asked her opinion about the atomic bombs, she would “turn it on him” and ask him, “Well, what about Nanking!?”

Other ALTs took more unique approaches. At the restaurant, Chris put on a façade of being French, saying he couldn’t read the English menu and needed a Japanese one. Some of Allison’s students assumed she wore both colored contacts and glasses. She pulled out her contacts and said, “tell me if you see a difference” Louise would do her best “to be the most obnoxious one” while “refusing to speak Japanese” since her “friends get shit for no reason for being foreign.” With Nicole’s quarrel with her phone company, she had to continually explain to them “this is incorrect. This is not my name anywhere...That’s not correct. My name is changed. I don’t do that.” She was very heated when talking about the story.

**Narrative Analysis of Coping Mechanisms.** As part of the effort to answer RQ3, the researcher used a combination of Camara and Orbe's (2010) typology as well as Mellor's (2004) typology. The researcher found that assimilation was the most used coping mechanism, followed by accommodation. Separation was the least used tactic when it came to general microaggressions.

*Assimilation.* Assimilation coping mechanisms include emphasizing commonalities, developing positive face, censoring self, averting controversy, and manipulating stereotypes. (Camara & Orbe, 2010). For emphasizing commonalities, when James heard comments about his Japanese, sometimes people would tell him they can't learn English or they could only ever speak Japanese. He would tell them, "[we're] all the same human beings. We have the same organs and you know neurotransmitters in the brain that stuff so we can all learn languages." Heather reinforced that "differences are great. Differences are good. It makes you strong"

Another example is developing positive face (Camara & Orbe, 2010). Nicole used this tactic with her nurse and principal. She remained calm and polite, even though they assumed her pain and surprise was a cultural difference. McKayla also used this tactic even when her principal continually asked her if she were studying Japanese. She explained he would say this to her literally every day, but she could not say anything because of her social status at the school.

Censoring self is a third nonassertive assimilation (Camara & Orbe, 2010). Sarah would use this tactic on the train if she was stared at for wearing headphones. Allison would use this tactic if people made assumptions about her likes or dislikes based on her being American. Chris used this tactic as he felt he didn't "have the competency to jump in and not come off as like super defensive and confrontational."

Averting controversy is a tactic where someone averts "communication away from

controversial or potentially dangerous subject areas” (Camara & Orbe, 2010, p. 89). As for Louise, she would dodge questions and say, “that's not really interesting let's talk about something that's you know nice.” For Chris, he wouldn't necessarily respond but instead “try to shut that line of thinking out [that] line of conversation down.”

Manipulating stereotypes would be a way of coping by “conforming to commonly accepted beliefs about group members as a strategic means to exploit them for personal gain” (Camara & Orbe, 2010, p. 89). There were two specific examples of this. For Louise, she would be as loud and obnoxious as possible around her more American looking friends so they would look better by comparison. For Hannah, people would ask her specific questions based on her home state. She said, “I get asked that all the time if I ride horses because I'm from Texas and like yeah of course I do. Or if I wear cowboy hats like yeah they start laughing because they know I'm joking.”

*Accommodation.* Dispelling stereotypes is where “generalized group characteristics and behaviors are countered through the process of just being one's self” (Camara & Orbe, 2010, p. 89). This was common for ALTs who did not confirm to the blonde-hair blue eyed stereotype that many Japanese have of Americans. For communicating self, this is interaction “in an authentic, open, and genuine manner” (p. 89). For many ALTs, they would start these kinds of conversations with “in my case” or “for me.” For example, Nicole would “rephrase it like ‘well in my home state’” or something similar. For comments about food, Sarah would “try to tell them like it's not always like that. A lot of the stuff you guys see on TV is the weird stuff or the fancy stuff.”

Utilizing liaisons is when an ALT would identify “members who can be trusted for support, guidance, and assistance” (Camara & Orbe, 2010, p. 89). It was very common for ALTs to go to

their JTEs or supervisor for help. Some ALTs used this when they weren't sure what a comment meant, such as looking "unamerican." This tactic was also more common in terms of general culture shock if an ALT was unsure of how to do something. When Heather worked at the consulate, she offered herself as a liaison since she was a previous ALT and would tell them the resources that are available, such as hotlines specifically for ALTs run by ALTs. Heather also had to use this tactic when she was accused of stealing. She consulted with her JTE about the misunderstanding, and he acted as a mediator when she apologized to her principal.

Educating others is when an ALT would take "the role of teacher in co-cultural interactions; enlightening dominant group members of co-cultural norms, values, etc." (Camara & Orbe, 2010, p. 89). This was the most common form of accommodation. McKayla felt she had a small victory when she would teach about Hanukkah. While her students and teachers wanted her to talk about Christmas, she wanted to show her Jewish heritage. She initially refused to talk about Christmas, but she eventually reached a compromise,

I try to sort of reach a balance. We'll talk about Christmas, talk about New Year's, briefly mention Hanukah, show them a Sesame Street clip about it and then move on. They will not remember it the day after, but it makes me feel a little bit better to expose them.

Brandon used responding to a microaggression as a demographic lesson for his students. He said, "I blew their minds away. [with] how many people are not blonde hair blue-eyed in America...I had my kids vote...maybe only about 80 students guessed the right percentage." This tactic was the most common when talking about the election. Some ALTs would either present lessons or have discussions with their teachers about the American Electoral College and the popular vote to explain how Donald Trump became president.

Confronting was a far less used tactic. Camara and Orbe (2010) describe confronting as "using the necessary aggressive methods...to assert one's voice" (p. 89). Allison used this when

she physically took out her contacts in front of her students. Ellen confronted her *jimun*, telling her “that's none of your business first of all, and we don't talk about other people's weight...it's a rude thing to do.” In terms of her voiced opinion, she explained she would “tell someone if they like, like have done something to upset me, make a note not to do that.”

*Separation.* This was the least mentioned tactic by ALTs and the only example of separation was avoiding, which Camara and Orbe (2010) define as “maintaining a distance from dominant group members; refraining from activities and/or locations where interaction is likely” (p. 89). For example, when Ellen would continuously hear comments from the *taiko* teacher about her weight, she stopped going to that particular group and found a different one. Sarah had to avoid some of her more aggressive boys in the hallway to avoid similar confrontations and keep a professional face.

**Workplace Microaggressions.** This section continue to answer RQ3 regarding the nonverbal and verbal responses to microaggressions. Last, it also evaluates what coping mechanisms ALTs use for these specific microaggressions.

**Nonverbal responses.** For ALTs, they reported far fewer nonverbal reactions to workplace microaggressions than to general microaggressions. When Samantha was bothered by her teacher staring at her, she would say nothing. If his loud chewing or smelling of cigarettes bothered her, she would simply leave the room. For Sarah's encounter with the science teacher, she looked him directly in the eye without saying anything as a way to let him know she understood what he was saying. When McKayla was denied a job duty for a school event, she would “to figure out who's in charge” and just insert herself into it. When Heather was first accused of cheating, her natural reaction was to cry.

**Verbal Responses.** Like in response to general microaggressions, the verbal responses

included internal dialogue, polite responses, and more aggressive responses. For internal responses, ALTs also used humorous internal dialogue, but not to the same extent as general microaggressions. When Hannah wasn't allowed in the room for meetings, she thought, "it's like 'okay I didn't want to listen to it anyways' (laughs)." The internal dialogues showed more confusion or attempts to understand the situation. When Ellen's vice principal told her to remove her hat inside the staffroom, she was confused and thought people can wear hats for many reasons, hers being that her ears were cold. For her clothing, she thought to herself she has worn the same outfit to her junior high with no issue and wondered why it was now a problem. For some of Grace's instances with her boss, she thought to herself, "why are you talking about our responsibilities as a teacher...when you guys like, just cut off two of them on contract and [they] can't go anywhere." This thought occurred after she, and other ALTs, attempted to reach out to the boss about problems with the syllabus that escalated into whether or not ALTs could perform their job duties.

Some ALTs would politely give straightforward responses. Ellen explained she was planning to take it off before going to class. Emily explained that for her, straightening her hair was styling and took too much time. When Emily was told she wasn't a real teacher, she responded with "I'm not a homeroom teacher definitely. I do agree with that." For Emily, she explained to her teachers that while working on SDC conference was not for the school per se, she was an employee of the prefecture, and what she was doing would be beneficial for both ALTs and JTEs that also work in the prefecture. Cassandra said if her students referred to her as *chan*, she would correct them by reminding them she is their teacher (but she has not said anything to her teachers about their use of it).

ALTs were least likely to use more aggressive verbal responses. However, there were three

ALTs that used this frequently, especially Grace. When her boss said she couldn't sit with the other ALT, she first ignored it but later told her she has "an international understanding problem" McKayla said she put an end to the use of *chan* "very quickly." When Hannah was told she wasn't required to help with graduation preparation she said, "I'm like 'no seriously. I'm a hundred percent bored right now. Can I please help.'" When she was still told no, she got out her stapler to emphasize she was happy and ready to help.

**Coping Mechanisms.** For workplace microaggressions, ALTs were actually more likely to use accommodation than assimilation. However, assimilation shortly followed accommodation, followed by separation, the least likely to be used. However, it should be noted that not only did ALTs use more accommodation, they also used a variety of different accommodating tactics.

For workplace microaggressions, no ALTs used the mechanism of emphasizing commonalities. Under other categories of nonassertive assimilation, ALTs used a mix of developing a positive face, avoiding controversy, and censoring self. For developing positive face, James, for example, "adapted to it" and expects it yet it doesn't hurt his motivation. Instead, he draws "energy from the kids." Using this tactic, he finds it "so much easier to be energetic. It's great."

Cassandra had to employ two different tactics when she was incorrectly addressed—approaching and censoring. If her students used *chan* she would politely correct them (developing positive face) but for her teachers she would censor herself because of her ALT status. James said he would also censor himself. While he wanted to ask his JTEs about meeting before class for lesson preparation, he felt it would be disrespectful to do so since this JTE is also his boss. He tried approaching his 12<sup>th</sup> grade teacher to have a meeting about attending class more, but this did not yield any results.

For the female ALTs that had comments on their clothing, they mostly used mirroring, which Camara and Orbe (2010) say is an assertive assimilation tactic to adopt to codes to make their own identity less, or completely, invisible. Maria had to buy a completely new wardrobe while Erin wore shoes to cover her tattoo. Ellen only used this for the instance with her hat, but refused to change the way she dressed.

The two most common types of coping mechanism for workplace microaggressions were bargaining and intragroup networking. Bargaining is either covert or overt agreement to ignore differences (Camara & Orbe, 2010). This was for both teaming-teaching with the JTE or the ability to make lesson plans. For example, Malorie knew she was “just going to have to change tactics” because she recognized the differences in their teaching styles. Nicole would try “to find out what the JTEs prefer and had better luck” (e.g., finding which teachers preferred drilling exercises over games, and vice versa). Sarah was a little more pushy and would directly present activities “that worked in the past” since she knew this particular JTE liked games for activities.

Intragroup networking is “identifying and working” with others to “share common philosophies, convictions, and goals (Camara & Orbe, 2010, p. 89). Grace used this to try and help change the syllabus when she and other ALTs felt it was too difficult for the students’ grade level. In another case Grace and her co-workers wrote goals for the lessons. She suggested they should write the lessons for the year as a whole. While her intentions were good, this did eventually backfire. McKayla was extremely successful in using this tactic, as was Brandon. McKayla began by bringing up her concerns for the speaking test. She said, “I don't even know when the transmission happened but at some point there was like, ‘everything is yours. Just tell us when...and where and we'll take it.” Brandon brought up what he felt was a stigma that students English was getting worse and students were “not learning to comprehend, they’re

learning to test.” He created a Mad Lib game from their elementary textbook. The teacher loved the activity, and Brandon said he felt it gave him “validity in the classroom.”

A form of nonassertive accommodation is to increase visibility which Camara and Orbe (2010) describe as “covertly, yet strategically” creating a presence (p. 89). Allison used this to “get more involved in clubs” or ask if she could take on more duties or responsibilities to help teachers and students. Other ALTs used this when they would insert themselves or try to be more involved in school activities even though they were initially told “don’t worry about it” or “it’s okay.” Brandon had a very unique strategy,

I have a whiteboard where the teachers put magnets when they need me for class and now every other teacher can see what I'm doing and I haven't had a comment since that's been put up there because I average more classes then some of them do every day.  
A few ALTs would use the nonassertive separation tactic of separation.

Ellen would use this by averting eye contact in the staff room for fear of judgment. Louise would use this tactic for certain teachers, but for the teacher that sits next to her she knows this is not possible since “avoiding him, avoiding talking to him will look bad.”

The three least used tactics were maintaining barriers (assertive separation), embracing stereotypes (assertive separation), and extensive preparation (assertive assimilation). Tommy was the only ALT to use the assertive separation tactic of maintaining barriers. Camara and Orbe (2010) describe this as using verbal or nonverbal cues to separate oneself from the dominant group. He explained why he felt he didn’t want to be labeled as Japanese and he “won’t play that game” in terms of passive-aggressive comments.<sup>3</sup> Louise embraced stereotypes by wearing bright colors, dying her hair, and giving an overall “Miss Frizzle” attitude while at school so

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<sup>3</sup> In Japanese culture, it is common to ask a questions as a way to indicate someone is doing something inappropriate. For example, being asked “Aren’t you cold?” may be a way to indirectly say someone’s work attire is showing too much skin, such as short sleeve shirts.

other ALTs might look better by comparison.<sup>4</sup> James was the only one that used extensive preparation due to his background. He described a time when his backpack was moved at school after putting it on a shelf,

In my opinion, a Japanese way of saying please don't put your backpack here and they're not going to tell you directly so if I didn't have my half Japanese upbringing I would have been like what the hell is this passive-aggressive stuff.

### **Job Satisfaction and Feelings of Understanding and Misunderstanding.**

Research question 4 asked, “Is there a correlation between an ALT’s job satisfaction and the frequency and emotional valence of workplace microaggressions?” Before testing for this relationship, this section starts by exploring ALTs overall job satisfaction and finding what parts of their job they are either satisfied with or dissatisfied with. Then, it examines the relationship between job satisfaction and the frequency of workplace microaggressions. Next, the study investigates possible correlations between job satisfaction and FUM. The most common specific emotions are identified. Finally, demographics are investigated.

Overall, ALTs reported an average score of 58.62 ( $SD = 10.56$ ) for job satisfaction. ALTs were mostly likely to report being disappointed in taking the job ( $M = 4.65$ ,  $SD = .86$ ) (see Table 7). Following that was definitely disliking work ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ). Behind these items were feelings of the job being unpleasant, finding enjoyment in work, feelings like days will never end, and feeling satisfied for the time being, respectfully. This suggests that ALTs are somewhat divided on how they feel about their current job. Table 6 breaks down how strongly ALTs disagreed or agreed with the items on the scale.

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<sup>4</sup> Most Japanese female teachers are expected to wear neutral or darker colors, particularly black or navy. Wearing bright colors are far less common.

Table 7  
*Descriptive Statistics on Overall Job Satisfaction by Individual Items*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Overall Job Satisfaction	58.62	10.56
Like a hobby	2.44	1.182
Interesting enough	3.09	1.28
Friends are more interested	3.43	1.71
Unpleasant	3.94	1.00
Enjoy work over leisure	2.17	.919
Often bored	2.99	1.25
Fairly well satisfied	3.27	1.89
Force self to work	3.65	1.15
Satisfied for time-being	3.76	.896
No more interesting than others	3.48	1.11
Definitely dislike	<b>4.15</b>	1.13
Happier than most people	3.37	1.07
Enthusiastic	3.55	.943
Days will never end	3.77	1.07
I like my job over colleagues	3.06	.848
Find enjoyment	3.84	.784
Disappointed in taking job	<b>4.65</b>	.860

A Spearman's rho test showed that a negative relationship between job satisfaction and the total number of workplace microaggressions approached significance ( $r_s = -.192$ ,  $N = 95$ ,  $p = .06$ ). In testing whether or not a significant relationship existed between the frequency of individual microaggressions and job satisfaction, a series of Spearman rho correlations were run. No significant relationships emerged for individual items. Although none were significant, one

approached significance: being treated differently than a Japanese co-worker, ( $r_s = -.177$ ,  $N = 95$ ,  $p = .08$ ).

A bivariate correlation test between job satisfaction and workplace FUM showed a positive correlation ( $r = .237$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The more satisfied an ALT was with his or her job, the more likely he or she would feel the emotion of satisfaction in response to microaggressions ( $r = .222$ ,  $p < .05$ ). There was also a negative correlation between dissatisfaction ( $r = -.213$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and the emotion of incompleteness ( $r = -.206$ ,  $p < .05$ ). ALTs with lower job satisfaction were more likely to report higher amounts of both of these emotions.

### **Intercultural Communication Effectiveness**

Research question 5 asks, “Is there a relationship between an ALT’s intercultural communication competency (i.e., successful interactions with people from a different culture) and the frequency and emotional valence of experienced microaggressions?” This section starts by reporting ALTs’ intercultural communication competency based on ICE and investigating the relationship with ICE and FUM for general microaggressions. Then the focus shifts to workplace microaggressions, and the relationship between the valence associated with workplace microaggressions and ICE. Finally, demographic differences are investigated.

**ICE.** Overall, ALTs reported an average ICE score of 25.58 ( $SD = 3.78$ ). ALTs were most likely to report they found it easy to get along with people from other cultures ( $M = 4.13$ ,  $SD = .747$ ). From there, they also reported finding it easy to talk to people from other cultures ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = 2.31$ ). They were least likely to report being afraid to express themselves ( $M = 2.31$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ). Table 8 shows the breakdown of the individual items.

Table 8  
*Descriptive statistics of ALTs score for ICE*

Item	M	SD
ICE	25.58	3.78
Easy to talk to	4.03	2.31
Afraid to express myself	2.31	1.03
Easy to get along	4.13	.747
Able to express myself clearly	3.28	.975
Able to answer questions effectively	3.49	.966
Relaxed during interactions	3.37	.826
Best way to act is to be myself	3.59	1.01

**ICE and frequency of general microaggressions.** A Spearman's rho showed that overall there was no significance between ICE and the perceived frequency of all the general microaggressions combined,  $r_s = -.121$ ,  $N = 95$ ,  $p = .24$ . The same was true for workplace microaggressions,  $r_s = -.180$ ,  $N = 95$ ,  $p = .08$ . However, looking at the individual microaggressions, only the specific microaggression of being told Americans are loud,  $r_s = -.236$ ,  $N = 95$ ,  $p < .05$ , was significantly related to a person's ICE score.

**ICE and emotional responses to general microaggressions.** A Pearson's correlation found a significant positive relationship between ICE and FUM ( $r = .246$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This tells us that since higher FUM scores are associated with more positive emotions, people who report higher levels of ICE also report more pleasant emotional valence associated with microaggressions. Looking at the specific emotions, there was a negative correlation between dissatisfaction and ICE ( $r = -.221$ ,  $p < .05$ ). ALTs with more ICE were less likely to feel this emotion. However, there was a positive correlation between acceptance and ICE, ( $r = .209$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The more ICE

an ALT has, the more likely he or she is to experience feeling acceptance.

**ICE and frequency of workplace microaggressions.** A Spearman's rho correlation test showed that ICE and the frequency of workplace microaggressions approaches significance,  $r_s = -.180, p = .08$ . Although not statistically significant, this suggests that the more ICE an ALT has, the less likely he or she is to perceive experiencing workplace microaggressions. However, a breakdown of the individual items showed some statistical significance. There was a negative correlation with the microaggression of a co-worker being unfriendly or unwelcoming ( $r_s = -.430, p < .001$ ). The same was true for ALTs being told they did not work as hard as a Japanese colleague ( $r_s = -.322, p < .01$ ), being told they wouldn't understand the Japanese education system or way of teaching ( $r_s = -.312, p < .01$ ), being treated differently than a Japanese co-worker ( $r_s = -.329, p < .01$ ), and being told they are not a real teacher ( $r_s = -.378, p < .01$ ). All instances suggest that ALTs with lower ICE will perceive experiencing these microaggressions more often.

**ICE and emotional responses to workplace microaggressions.** A Pearson's correlation test showed that ICE and FUM for workplace microaggressions approached significance ( $r = .200, p = .052$ ). Although not significant, it suggests that the higher the ALTs ICE, the more positive their emotional reactions may be. A second Pearson's correlation test looked at the individual emotions and found some statistical significance. Discomfort ( $r = -.252, p < .05$ ) and insecurity ( $r = -.252, p < .05$ ) each had a negative correlation with ICE. ALTs with higher levels of ICE were less likely to report feeling these kinds of emotion. These two emotions were not present for general microaggressions. However, there was a positive correlation between ICE scores and feeling good ( $r = .211, p < .05$ ). Those with higher levels of ICE were more likely to report feeling good. This emotion was also not present for general microaggressions. This suggests

there are some differences in the types of emotions an ALT feels based on the nature of the specific microaggression like location (i.e., at work).

### **Intimacy with JTEs and Workplace Microaggressions**

Research question 6 asks, “Is there a relationship between the frequency and emotional valence of workplace microaggressions and an ALT’s level of intimacy with his or her JTEs?” This section starts by reporting ALTs overall RCS with JTEs and breaks it down into its different subcomponents. It then examines the relationship between intimacy and the frequency of perceived workplace microaggressions. The discussion shifts to look at levels of understanding and misunderstanding, as well as the individual emotional reactions. Last, it explores how different demographics can play a role.

**Intimacy with JTEs.** Looking at the individual items on the RCS scale, ALTs were most likely to report higher feelings of receptivity/trust. ALTs were most likely to report their JTE was interested in talking to them ( $M = 5.43$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ), willing to listen ( $M = 5.41$ ,  $SD = 1.30$ ), sincere ( $M = 5.17$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ) and open to the ALT’s ideas ( $M = 5.07$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ). Under similarity/depth, ALTs reported their JTE desired further communication the most ( $M = 5.01$ ,  $SD = 1.54$ ). Table 9 shows the breakdown of each category as well as the individual items in the scale. These items were measured on a 7 point Likert-scale.

Table 9  
*ALTs Report of Agreement in Relational Communication Items*

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Relational Communication Scale	75.97	15.21
Similarity/Depth	22.85	6.36
Made feel similar to me	4.52	1.52
Tried to deepen conversation	3.93	1.84
Acted like we were good friends	<b>4.64</b>	1.48

Table 9 Cont.

*ALTs Report of Agreement in Relational Communication Items*

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Desired further communication	5.01	1.54
Cared if I liked them	4.76	1.48
Receptivity/Trust	25.89	5.93
Was sincere	5.17	1.49
Was interested in talking with me	5.43	1.41
Was willing to listen	5.41	1.30
Open to my ideas	5.07	1.46
Honest in communicating with me	4.91	1.48
Composure	11.43	2.83
Felt very tense talking to me	4.46	1.48
Felt very relaxed talking to me	4.53	1.35
Seemed nervous around me	4.41	1.60
Seemed comfortable with me	4.49	1.20
Formality	8.06	2.03
Made the interaction formal	4.27	1.49
Made the discussion casual	4.69	1.32
Equality	7.73	2.66
Considered us equals	4.13	1.45
Did not treat me as an equal	4.42	1.69

**Frequency of microaggressions and RCS.** A Spearman's rho correlation test showed a negative correlation between RCS and the frequency of workplace microaggressions ( $r_s = -.450$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The less RCS an ALT had with a JTE (or other co-worker), the more likely they were to perceive an utterance as a microaggression. The workplace microaggressions with the highest correlations to RCS were comments from a co-worker being seen as unfriendly or welcoming, as well as assuming an ALT's work to be inferior. Table 10 shows the breakdown of the

components and their respective correlations. Comments towards an ALT as not being hard working or not understanding the Japanese education system were present. The less RCS an ALT has with a co-worker or JTE, the more likely they are to perceive these utterances as microaggressions.

***Similarity/depth.*** A Spearman's rho correlation test showed a negative correlation between similarity/depth and the frequency of workplace microaggressions ( $r_s = -.364, p < .001$ ). Similar to overall RCS, the strongest correlation was that a co-worker was unfriendly or unwelcoming to an ALT (See Table 10). Following that, were assumptions of inferior work and being treated differently. The less an ALT felt similarity/depth to their JTE or co-worker, the more likely they were to perceive these utterances as a microaggression.

***Receptivity/trust.*** A Spearman's correlation test showed a negative correlation between receptivity/trust and workplace microaggressions, ( $r_s = -.488, p < .001$ ). An unfriendly co-worker had the highest correlation, followed by a co-worker assuming an ALT's work is inferior (See Table 10). Microaggressions that an ALT is not as hard working or wouldn't understand the Japanese education system were as significant as being treated differently. The less an ALT felt receptivity/trust with a co-worker, the more likely they were to perceive these utterances as microaggressions.

***Composure.*** A Spearman's rho correlation test showed that relationship between composure and workplace microaggressions was significant, ( $r_s = -.436, p < .001$ ). The microaggression that an ALT wouldn't understand that Japanese education system was the highest (see Table 10). The least significant was an ALT being told he or she is not a real teacher. The less composure an ALT felt with his or her JTE, the more likely he or she was to feel these utterances as microaggressions.

**Formality.** A Spearman's rho correlation test showed that the relationship between formality and the frequency of workplace microaggressions was not significant, ( $r_s = -.131, p = .204$ ). This was also true for the individual items. There is no overall relationship between formality and workplace microaggressions.

**Equality.** A Spearman's correlation test showed a negative correlation between equality and the frequency of workplace microaggressions, ( $r_s = -.546, p < .001$ ). The item with the strongest correlation from this subcomponent was the microaggression that the ALT felt he or she was treated differently. The second highest one matched with the other subcomponents for the microaggression of a co-worker being unfriendly or unwelcoming. The microaggression following was an ALT being told he or she was not as hardworking. The less ALTs felt equal to their co-workers or JTEs, the more likely they were to perceive these statements as microaggressions. Table 10 shows the breakdown of the components and their respective correlations.

Table 10  
*Spearman's Rho for Workplace Microaggressions, RCS and its Subcomponents*

Items	Correlation Coefficients					
	RCS	Similarity/ Depth	Receptivity/ Trust	Composure	Formality	Equality
Unfriendly Co-worker	-.43***	-.35***	-.49***	-.35**	-.08	-.40***
Unequal pay	-.15	-.6	-.18	-.14	-.08	-.20
Not as hard- working	-.32**	-.21*	-.38***	-.33**	-.08	-.40***
Japanese education system	-.31**	-.24*	-.38***	-.44***	-.178	-.35***
Overlooked opinion	-.18	-.13	-.25**	-.19	-.04	-.25*
Inferior work	-.38***	-.32**	-.39***	-.26**	-.20	-.38***
Treated differently	-.33**	-.32**	-.33**	-.32**	-.16	-.43***

Table 10 Cont.

*Spearman's Rho for Workplace Microaggressions, RCS and its Subcomponents*

Items	RCS	Similarity/ Depth	Receptivity/ Trust	Composure	Formalit y	Equality
Not a real teacher	-.23**	-.19	-.32	-.28**	-.03	-.35***

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**RCS and emotional reactions to workplace microaggressions.** A Pearson's correlation test was performed to investigate the relationship between FUM and RCS. Table 11 shows a breakdown of all the specific items. A positive correlation emerged ( $r = .371, p < .001$ ) for FUM. It was ( $r = .275, p < .01$ ) for feelings of understanding. This suggests that the more positive the relationship with one's JET, the more positive the emotions reported. A breakdown of the individual items showed that the higher the RCS, the more likely an ALT was to emotionally express pleasure ( $r = .327, p < .01$ ) and happiness ( $r = .320, p < .01$ ). For feelings of overall misunderstanding it was significant and negative ( $r = -.311, p < .01$ ). In terms of specific emotions, discomfort ( $r = -.354, p < .001$ ) had the highest negative correlation followed by sadness ( $r = -.291, p < .01$ ). The lower the RCS, the more likely ALTs were to respond to utterances with these emotions.

**Similarity/depth.** A Pearson's correlation showed similarity/depth and FUM had a positive correlation ( $r = .332, p < .01$ ). A breakdown of the individual items shows that for understanding ( $r = .248, p < .05$ ), pleasure ( $r = -.294, p < .01$ ) had the highest positive correlation followed by happiness ( $r = -.287, p < .01$ ). ALTs who experienced feeling more similarity/depth in their relationship with their teachers were more likely to emotionally respond to utterances in this way. For feelings of misunderstanding ( $r = -.276, p < .01$ ), discomfort ( $r = -.310, p < .01$ ) showed the highest negative correlation. The less ALTs felt similar to their JTE, the more likely they were to emotionally respond to utterances in this way.

**Receptivity/Trust.** A Pearson's correlation showed that receptivity/trust and FUM had a positively significant relationship ( $r = .313, p < .01$ ). The overall significance with feelings of understanding approached significant ( $r = .178, p = .08$ ). For individual valences, pleasure ( $r = .237, p < .05$ ) had the highest positive correlation followed by happiness ( $r = .213, p < .05$ ). ALTs with higher receptivity/trust were likely to respond to utterances with these emotions. For feelings of misunderstanding ( $r = -.307, p < .01$ ), discomfort ( $r = -.293, p < .001$ ), and sadness ( $r = -.292, p < .001$ ) showed the highest negative correlation, followed by failure ( $r = -.258, p < .01$ ) and insecurity ( $r = -.258, p < .05$ ). The less trust or receptivity ALTs felt with their JTEs, the more likely they were to emotionally respond to utterances in this way.

**Composure.** A Pearson's correlation test showed that FUM and composure had a positive correlation ( $r = .341, p < .01$ ). Feelings of understanding approached significance ( $r = .179, p = .05$ ). For individual valences, pleasure ( $r = .261, p < .05$ ) was the highest followed by good ( $r = .235, p < .05$ ). The more ALTs felt their JTEs had composure, the more they emotionally responded to utterances in this way. For feelings of misunderstanding ( $r = -.331, p < .01$ ), dissatisfaction was the highest ( $r = -.345, p < .001$ ) followed by insecurity ( $r = -.298, p < .001$ ). The less an ALTs felt their JTEs had composure, the more likely they were to emotionally respond to utterances in these ways.

**Formality.** A Pearson's correlation test for FUM and formality was not statistically significant but did approach significance ( $r = .187, p = .06$ ). There is no relationship between formality and how an ALT will respond emotionally to any microaggression.

**Equality.** A Pearson's correlation test showed that equality and FUM had a correlation ( $r = .426, p < .001$ ). For feelings of understanding ( $r = .303, p < .01$ ), pleasure had the highest correlation ( $r = .363, p < .001$ ) followed by happiness ( $r = .331, p < .01$ ) and comfortableness ( $r = .331, p < .01$ ).

= .330  $p < .01$ ). For feelings of misunderstanding ( $r = -.367$   $p < .001$ ), discomfort had the highest negative correlation ( $r = -.404$   $p < .001$ ) followed by annoyance ( $r = .365$   $p < .001$ ).

ALTs who felt less equal to their co-workers were more likely to emotionally respond to utterances in this way. Table 10 shows all of the correlations for each subcomponent of the scale.

In terms of any demographic differences, an independent samples t-test showed a significant difference between formality and if an ALT had studied Japanese, ( $t(88) = 2.35$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Those who had studied Japanese ( $M = 9.51$ ,  $SD = 1.54$ ) were more likely to have feelings of formality than those who had not studied it ( $M = 8.54$ ,  $SD = .934$ ).

Table 11  
*Pearson's Correlation with FUM, RCS and Other Subcomponents*

Items	Correlation Coefficients					
	RCS	Similarity/ Depth	Receptivity/ Trust	Composure	Formality	Equality
Understanding	<b>.26**</b>	.25*	.31**	.20	.19	.30**
Satisfaction	.21*	.22*	.14	.23*	.19	.23**
Relaxation	.22*	.19	.16	.11	.10	.26*
Pleasure	<b>.33**</b>	<b>.29**</b>	<b>.24*</b>	<b>.26*</b>	.21*	<b>.36***</b>
Good	.26**	.23**	.18	<b>.24*</b>	.22	.31**
Acceptance	.25*	.24*	.13	.08	.23*	.24*
Happiness	<b>.32**</b>	.29**	.21*	.21*	<b>.25*</b>	.33**
Importance	.04	.03	-.03	.12	-.026	.10
Comfortable- ness	.31**	.26*	.22*	.17	.21*	.33**
Mis- Understanding	<b>-.31**</b>	<b>-.28**</b>	<b>-.31**</b>	<b>-.33**</b>	-.11	<b>-.37***</b>
Annoyance	-.25*	-.17	-.25*	-.24*	-.09	<b>-.37***</b>
Discomfort	<b>-.35***</b>	<b>-.31**</b>	<b>-.29**</b>	<b>-.28**</b>	<b>-.20<sup>t</sup></b>	<b>-.40***</b>
Dis- satisfaction	-.21*	-.22*	-.22*	<b>-.35**</b>	-.07	<b>-.28**</b>
Insecurity	<b>-.28**</b>	-.23*	-.26*	<b>-.29**</b>	.08	<b>-.33**</b>

Table 11Cont.  
*Pearson's Correlation with FUM, RCS and Other Subcomponents*

Items	Correlation Coefficients					
	RCS	Similarity/ Depth	Receptivity/ Trust	Composur e	Form ality	Equality
Sadness	- .29**	- .24*	- .29**	- .19	- .18	- .24*
Failure	-.20	- .17	- .26*	- .26*	.05	- .24*
In- completeness	- .17	- .19	- .17	- .25	.06	- .19
Uninterest- ingness	- .09	- .15	- .08	- .13	- .09	- .10

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , <sup>t</sup> approaches significance at  $p = .053$

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

To date, a large majority of the literature investigating microaggressions has been focused on minorities in the U.S. (i.e., African-American, Asian-American, Latino/a) that are college students, (e.g., Ong et al., 2013; Soloranzo et al., 2000), instructors at colleges (e.g., Gomez et al., 2011; Pittman, 2012), the workplace (e.g., Green, 2003, Offerman et al., 2014), and more casual settings like family gatherings or places of business (e.g., Camara & Orbe, 2010; Johnston & Nadal, 2010). The literature has largely ignored the microaggressions that expatriate sojourners face when living in another country. With this in mind, this study sought to identify how American expatriates experience and perceive the microaggressions they hear while living in Japan as ALTs. Their nonverbal and verbal reactions, emotional reactions, and coping mechanisms were investigated. Moreover, this study wanted to shed insight into how microaggressions affect job satisfaction and how relational intimacy with JTEs and ICC affects ALTs perception of microaggressions. This section discusses possible reasons why ALTs found an utterance to be a microaggression and how expectancies may be violated. Finally, limitations and possible directions for future research are identified.

#### Discussion of Findings

The first research question asked, “What are the most common types of microaggressions American ALTs experience in Japan and at what frequency?” To investigate this question, three tools were used: Nadal’s (2011) REMS scale, Sue et al.’s (2007) typology, and the subcategories identified by Johnston and Nadal (2010). With these three tools, the researcher identified multiple types of microaggressions.

**General Microaggressions.** The survey revealed a total of 937 microaggressions reported by

the ALTs over a six-month time-period. The frequency of these microaggressions ranged from 1 instance to 10 plus instances. The most common type of microaggression was exotization/assumptions of similarity, which occurred a total of 631 times. Of those, the most common involved being complimented for their Japanese and assuming the ALT only spoke English. Following that was second-class citizens/assumptions of criminality, which occurred a total of 242 times, with the most frequent instances occurring in a restaurant (i.e., receiving an English menu without asking, a server hesitating taking an order). The least likely microaggressions from the REMS scale (2011) were microinvalidations, which only occurred 64 times.

A couple of interviewees provided some insight into why microinvalidations were less likely to occur in countries like Japan. When asked if she had any further questions, Sarah was curious why the microinvalidations (e.g., “someone told me they don’t see color”) were on the survey. She added,

I don't know if Japanese people, if it would ever occur to them to say that because for them, you know, it's kind of either you're clearly Japanese or you're clearly not Japanese. So like, like it's not even a thing that people bring up....you're human. You're obviously human.

Instead of “colorblindness,” non-Caucasian ALTs’ skin and hair color differences were often commented on. For example, Eric asked his teacher why he was told he didn’t look American, and why his darker hair and skin was considered “a good thing.” His teacher explained, “the students see you and they see you have characteristics that are similar to them, and it's easier for them to come and talk to you.” Based on this, it is possible that the Japanese do not need to make clarifications since Japan is such a homogenous country. Similarities or differences are immediately obvious.

The qualitative data allowed more insight into understanding microaggressions as defined by

Sue et al. (2007). The authors describe three main categories of microaggressions: microinsults, microassaults, and microinvalidations. The researcher found 141 instances of microaggressions reported in the 20 interviews. The researcher further classified those microaggressions into the subcomponents defined by Sue et al. (2007).

***Microinsults.*** Subcategories of microinsults, as defined by Sue et al. (2007), are second-class citizen, ascription of intelligence, pathologizing, and assumption of criminal status. The major themes across these involved being treated differently in public, being belittled for not knowing how to live in a foreign country, specifically Japan, finding it weird that Americans can use chopsticks or eat certain Japanese food, and thinking America is a dangerous place to visit. The latter two are highly specific to Japan. As the interviewees described, many of their colleagues or students were shocked the ALTs knew how to use chopsticks, as if using chopsticks was unique only to Japan. The same was true for food; that only Japanese people would like Japanese food, and foreigners might find it weird or inedible. As Grace explained, she felt many people would try to identify cultural differences where there were none. This could explain why the Japanese assumed food likes and dislikes are due to cultural differences and not personal preference. The assumption that America is a dangerous place stemmed largely from the presence of guns. Interviewees indicated that only recently has that perception shifted to include Donald Trump being president and how it might affect the relationship between Japan and America. A few interviewees expressed this was seen as a legitimate concern from their teachers and students.

Using Nadal's (2011) and Johnston and Nadal's (2010) subcategories of microaggressions, the interview data provided more specific cases of sexualization and objectification not addressed on the survey. Examples included Japanese thinking American culture is too sexy or assuming a female ALT was promiscuous. For objectification, most instances were innocent,

such as touching an ALT's arm hair or getting very close to look at someone's eye color. Only a few instances mentioned the groping of one male and one female ALT.

Conducting interviews allowed for the identification of one new type fitting into this category: stereotypes about Americanness. While Johnston and Nadal (2010) say that being the representative of one's ethnicity can be a microaggression, the interviews showed highly specific stereotypes of Americans that lead to this type of microaggression. Particularly, these were comments about Americans being large or only eating a diet of what the Japanese considered American food (i.e., hamburgers). Comments about weight ranged from covert to overt. There were two sides of this spectrum: either a Japanese person knew an ALT was American because of his or her size, or a Japanese person was surprised an ALT was American because he or she did not adhere to this stereotype. The same spectrum was true for the stereotype that Americans are loud. This was especially true for the two interviewees who were half-Japanese. They described feeling they had a double-standard stacked against them to be both American and Japanese, yet at the same time they denied the fact they adhered to Japanese culture (e.g., eating rice and using chopsticks).

***Microinvalidations.*** According to Sue et al. (2007), microinvalidations include alien in one's own land and denial of individual racism. The most commonly expressed by ALTs was alien in one's own land. This was particularly true for Nicole whose husband is Japanese. Her dual identity of being American while married to a Japanese citizen made her experience unique.

Johnston and Nadal (2010) explain that comments on language ability and articulation can also be a microinvalidation. The main type of this microinvalidation was in regards to an ALTs' ability to speak Japanese. Several ALTs explained they would receive praise for saying only a few words, such as a basic greeting. Some ALTs said there was a latent battle about which

language to speak in—English or Japanese. McKayla explained, “way too many times my Japanese level is clearly better than their English level, why can’t we just go in Japanese?” when trying to converse with someone. Largely, this frustration exists because the ALTs know how good their Japanese is, and to be praised on something menial, or their wanting to use Japanese, delegitimizes their skills. Cassandra said, “I think they do mean it (the comments) in a positive way, but just because you're aware of how like how menial what you just did was, you kind of you're like really? Like that’s all you expected [of] me?”

One new theme emerged under the category of microinvalidation: unnecessary mediation. For example, some ALTs described times while they were the ones speaking in Japanese, the listener would look to or answer to a 3rd party member that adhered to Japanese physical characteristics. The fact they were speaking Japanese was ignored. It should be noted that the listener did not say “tell this person...” but rather would answer to the 3rd party as if he or she was the one that asked.

***Microassaults.*** For a majority of these cases, ALTs explained the statements were random or unwarranted. A couple of ALTs were told to respect the area or respect someone’s personal property. However, most of these microassaults stemmed from the recent election. Some ALTs were told they were stupid for voting for Trump or they, specifically, were the reason America was “this or that.” ALTs’ Japanese colleagues and community members projected the idea that since Trump was elected, and they disagreed with the election, it was the ALTs who were personally at fault, and JTEs and colleagues wanted an explanation of how it could happen.

**Workplace Microaggressions.** Based on the workplace microaggression subcategory from Nadal’s (2011) REMS scale, there were 260 reported instances of workplace microaggressions that occurred over a six-month period of time. However, most of these only happened on the

frequency of one to three times over the same six-month time span. The most common one was being treated differently than a Japanese colleague. ALTs who had previously studied Japanese were more likely to experience the microaggressions of a co-worker being unfriendly, being told they didn't work as hard, or being told they weren't a real teacher. This is likely due to the fact the comments were in Japanese so ALTs would understand, or these ALTs were better able to understand the nuances behind the statements and behaviors.

**Microinsults.** Using Sue et al.'s (2007) definition and indicators of microinsults, the most commonly expressed microinsult reported during the interviews was the lack of credibility the interviewees received outside of the classroom. Many of these were offhand comments that varied on the spectrum of working too hard or not working hard enough. Others were told not to attend meetings, separating them from the other teachers. For credibility, unique examples were being laughed at, not being taken seriously by students, being told to make copies (which is not an ALT's duty), or being talked-over in the classroom. Following this were microinsults where ALTs were addressed improperly (i.e., calling the ALT *chan* instead of *sensei*) or telling them they did not adhere properly to the dress code.

**Microinvalidations.** Again using Sue et al. (2007) to identify microinvalidations, credibility in the classroom. Some microaggressions for credibility outside the classroom came instead in the form of microinvalidations. For some ALTs, they were never told prior to going to class about that day's lesson, or they only spoke for the first few minutes of class while the JTE spoke for the remaining class time (classes are typically 50 minutes long). In terms of meetings, some ALTs described times where suddenly everyone would leave, leaving the ALT alone in the staffroom. One ALT was supervised while he taught a class solo since the JTE left sick. The principal sat in the corner, observing but not saying anything. The ALT found the supervision

unusual and unnecessary.

A majority of the microinvalidations fell into the job duties category. Several ALTs described times they felt they were marginalized. This was mostly true when it came to school wide events (i.e., sports festivals, cultural festivals) where ALTs were never asked to participate. Or, in some cases, they were ignored while all other teachers had a designated duty. This was also true for ALTs that were not placed with regular teachers at ceremonies or did not sit with other traditional teachers in the staffroom.<sup>5</sup>

*Microassaults.* There were also examples of microassaults for credibility in the classroom. This happened when ALTs were told or heard explicitly that English is not an important subject (ergo, the ALT is not important) or that American teachers are lazy compared to Japanese teachers. Grace experienced this a lot with her boss at her direct hire school. Her activities were criticized and she was told she and other ALTs were not able to handle their responsibilities as teachers.

This study strengthened our knowledge of the types and frequency of microaggressions a minority member can experience while living among the majority building on the work of Johnston and Nadal (2010), Nadal (2011), and Sue et al. (2007). This study highlighted the unique experiences expatriates face, especially those ALTs face while living in Japan. Based on her time as an ALT, the researcher added several items to the REMS scale asking about weight, food, and loudness for the survey section. The qualitative method led to the identification of several unique microaggressions that were missing from Nadal's (2011) REMS scale, were matched only in definition to Sue et al.'s (2007) typology of microaggressions, or were unique to

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<sup>5</sup> Most staffrooms separate teachers' desks into islands by grades, student aids, part-time teachers, or other faculty, like accountants or librarians.

this study. One such example are microaggressions based on unique American stereotypes held by the Japanese. This study also adds to the types of microaggressions one can specifically experience in the workplace such as not being properly addressed, being marginalized, or being told they are not a real teacher despite “teacher” being in their job title.

As a result of interviewee’s comments, this researcher proposes a few questions to add to the REMS scale when investigating the expatriate experience:

1. I am told Americans put themselves before the group.
2. I am told Americans are too individualistic.
3. Someone assumed I own a gun.
4. Someone told me America was a dangerous place.
5. Someone told me I don’t look American.
6. Someone assumed I came from a major American city (i.e., New York City).
7. Someone assumed I drink alcohol often.
8. Someone told me many Americans are rude.
9. Someone told me I didn’t understand Japanese culture.
10. Someone assumed I didn’t understand Japanese.
11. Someone praised my Japanese after my saying only a few words.

In terms of the effect of a microaggression on an ALT, repetition is key (Gomez et al., 2006; Nadal et al., 2015; Sue et al., 2007). Many ALTs indicated that isolated microaggressive comments are not a problem, but if and when comments are consistent they became problematic. Similarly, if the comments consistently came from the same person (i.e., a principal or new teacher) it would also be problematic. As one participant put it “[it’s] so many little things. It’s not necessarily like, not necessarily one big gigantic thing. It’s just [an] accumulation of things.”

## **Emotional Responses to Microaggressions**

Research question two asked, “How do message recipients respond emotionally to these microaggressions?” Looking at ALTs’ overall FUM scores for general microaggressions, many ALTs scored on the lower range, indicating more feelings of misunderstanding. For feelings of misunderstanding, ALTs were most likely to feel annoyance. For feelings of understanding, ALTs were most likely to feel acceptance. Overall, females were more likely to feel negative affect while males were more likely to feel positive affect.

For workplace microaggressions, the FUM scores were similar to general microaggressions. Like general microaggressions, the most common feeling of misunderstanding was annoyance. However, feelings of insecurity and discomfort were more common for workplace microaggressions. For feelings of understanding, acceptance was also the highest, same as for general microaggressions. Workplace microaggressions were the only time where males felt more negative affect than females.

**General microaggressions.** Pulling from the interviews, specific emotions that ALTs brought up were feeling invisible, uncomfortable, humiliated, annoyed, and realizing they are indeed a foreigner. Some ALTs found comments directed toward them to be weird or shocking. Others found the comments seemed almost obsessive in nature when it came to asking an ALT inappropriate questions. Others labeled the microaggressions inappropriate, shocking, offensive, and in one case, terrifying. Feeling patronized and seen as incapable of doing certain tasks were common reactions, especially in terms of their ability to speak Japanese. A few felt the comments were hurtful or made them sad. One participant said she fought “indirect battles every day.”

Some of the positive or comments included they were not meant to be malicious, they don’t

come from an evil place, and overall people are just trying to be friendly and helpful. Other feelings included apathy, as in why bother. In a few instances, ALTs found the comments funny, mostly because they weren't expecting them or found humor in the situation.

**Workplace microaggressions.** Pulling from the interviews, negatively valenced emotions included feeling shocked, bad, disappointed, judged, inadequate, odd, weird, self-conscious, and stressed. One unique example was an ALT describing how a microaggression made her want to crawl up on her desk and cry. A couple of female ALTs referred to "walking on eggshells" in the workplace. Other emotions included feeling belittled and ridiculed. However, some of the positive or neutral emotions included not being too afraid, not minding, and again finding a situation funny.

This study found that ALTs experience a range of positive, neutral, and negative affect. However, a majority of the literature (e.g., Camara & Orbe, 2010; McCabe, 2009; Sue et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2011) shows that emotional responses to microaggressions are inherently negative. Rarely are they positive, and they are neutral at best. Similar to previous research (Huynh, 2012; McCabe, 2009) the most commonly identified negative valence emotions are frustration and isolation. However, McKayla, who has been in Japan for at least three years, said that microaggressions become so commonplace you tend to block them out, leaving little room emotional reactions to occur.

### **Nonverbal and Verbal Responses and Coping Mechanisms**

Research question three asked, "How do message recipients respond, nonverbally or verbally, to these microaggressions, and what coping mechanisms do they use?" ALTs used a wide range of nonverbal and verbal responses. These ranged from passive (i.e., smiling and nodding, simple replies) to more aggressive responses (i.e., avoiding eye-contact, confronting an instigator). In

terms of nonverbal reactions to general microaggressions, ALTs described smiling, nodding, brushing it off, awkward laughter, or laughing to themselves about the ridiculousness of the situation. For workplace microaggressions, ALTs described either utilizing eye contact or avoiding it all together, again depending on the situation.

**General microaggressions.** In terms of verbal reactions to general microaggressions, ALT's internal dialogue included confusion, asking why someone made the statement, or imagining how they would respond. The internal dialogue of an ALT was a common response. This allows people to "respond" without having direct confrontation, giving them the same satisfaction as if they were to actually respond (Mellor, 2004).

For more vocal responses to general microaggressions, a majority of ALTs took a very polite approach. These ranged from short, simple answers (e.g., stating they understand Japanese) to slightly more elaborate explanations to answer a question that was masked as a microaggression (e.g., this may be the case for some people, but it is not the case for me). In addition, ALTs used jokes (e.g., I guess I'm the strange one; it's the size of food portions). There were a few instances of an ALT taking an aggressive approach, such as asking why the person said that or telling someone to never say that again.

**Workplace microaggressions.** For workplace microaggressions, ALTs were also likely to use internal dialogue. However, many of the internal responses ranged from being confused to disappointment to shame. There were a few cases where an ALT would laugh inside her head and make a joking comment. For verbal responses, ALTs were most likely to remain polite yet somewhat firm if they encountered a microaggression such as not being asked to participate in a school event or make activities for lesson plans. They would also use more elaborative responses if the comments themselves were more aggressive (e.g., being told the ALT is not a real teacher;

being told not to let other duties affect their work). ALTs were again, least likely to use more aggressive responses. The ALTs that did use this tactic had lived in Japan longer and had higher competency in Japanese.

**Coping mechanisms.** For coping mechanisms, ALTs used emphasizing commonalities, developing positive face, censoring self, avoiding controversy, extensive preparation, utilizing liaisons, confronting, or avoiding for both general and workplace microaggressions. However, some coping mechanisms for general microaggressions that were not used for workplace microaggressions were manipulating stereotypes, dispelling stereotypes, communicating self, and educating others. For workplace microaggressions, different coping mechanisms included mirroring, bargaining, intragroup networking, increasing visibility, maintaining barriers, and embracing stereotypes. ALTs were more likely to use assimilation (i.e., mirroring) and accommodation (i.e., education others) over separating (i.e., avoiding a specific place or person).

Sue et al. (2007) stress that before victims can, and should, react to a microaggression, they first need to analyze if the utterance was in fact a microaggression. Moreover, the authors emphasize that reacting in a negative way or aggressively may perpetuate the expectation the perpetrator anticipated. Consequently, the perpetrator may in turn react negatively. Sue et al. (2007) call this the “catch-22” of responding to microaggressions (p. 279). Once victims recognize a microaggression did indeed happen, they must be selective in the coping mechanism and response that best suits the situation without causing negative repercussions (Sue et al., 2007). This type of careful selection was seen in the ALTs’ narratives and helps contribute to the work of scholars that one should think carefully before deciding which coping mechanism best suits the situation, the individual, and the instigator. The choice of coping mechanism can be successful when executed properly (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016; Gomez et al., 2011, Ting-

Toomey, 2005).

The ALTs coping mechanisms for this study best reflect facework theory (Cai & Wilson, 2001; Ting-Toomey, 2005) and the differences between high- and low-context cultures (Gudykunst et al., 1985; Leung & Lee, 2006). Cai and Wilson (2006) argue that members of low-context cultures (i.e., Americans) focus on protecting self-face when encountering a threatening situation to their identity (e.g., being American or being an ALT). For example, when an ALT is told she is not a real teacher, she may use a coping mechanism that protects self-face such as politely reminding colleagues of her educational background or stating that while she might not be a homeroom teacher, she is still a teacher. Gudykunst et al. (1985) say that low-context cultural members are more likely to focus on similarities or self-monitoring in their interactions. This is seen in the coping mechanisms of emphasizing similarities and intragroup networking for the former, and mirroring and self-censoring for the latter. High-context cultures (e.g., Japan) rely more on non-verbal communication and indirectness. Polite and indirect responses adhere to the expectation of high-context interactions while attempting to gain positive face. Discerning this ambiguity and learning how to properly respond is sometimes problematic and time-consuming for members of low-context cultures (Leung & Lee, 2006).

The coping typologies ALTs use are similar to those Camara and Orbe (2010) identified when studying people with two or more racial identities and Mellor (2004) found were used by Australian aboriginals. Some were common to low-context cultural members such as mirroring, intragroup networking, emphasizing similarities, and censoring. Finally, DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby (2016) and Gomez et al. (2011) both emphasize that educating others and creating dialogue is a critical and tactical coping mechanism for intercultural communication.

## **Job Satisfaction**

Research question four investigated, “Is there a correlation between an ALTs job satisfaction and the frequency and emotional valence of workplace microaggressions?” The quantitative portion of this research question showed that ALTs had mixed feelings about their job satisfaction. ALTs who completed the survey were disappointed in taking the job and disliked their work. A negative relationship between job satisfaction and the total number of workplace microaggressions approached significance. The less satisfied ALTs were with their jobs, the more likely they were to feel dissatisfaction and incompleteness. ALTs who reported higher job satisfaction identified more feelings associated with understanding and felt the emotion of satisfaction following microaggressions. However, the study method does not allow us to identify the causal direction between emotion and job satisfaction.

Interview and survey responses differed. One participant felt the survey was looking for negative experiences and she wanted to clarify how she loved her job and the job had a positive impact on her life. Generally, the interviewees were happier with their jobs and living in Japan than the survey respondents. Most interviewees expressed positive experiences with their jobs and overall high job satisfaction. Many ALTs said they love their job and enjoy working with their students. This was especially true for the participants who had stayed past their time at JET and found work as ALTs through Interac or direct hire programs. Malorie said, “I like it very much...it’s been a wonderful experience thus far, and I’m looking forward to the next five months as well.” Many of the ALTs interviewed have been on the JET Program a number of years (three years or longer) or have moved on to other teaching programs after their time in JET. Two of the female participants were married to a Japanese native, and another was married to another American.

However, a few ALTs were less satisfied with their job, mostly because there are problems they cannot change and they have limited upward mobility. For example, Brandon said, “I think one of the reasons the job satisfaction is going down is I don't have any more upward mobility.” He had already achieved the goals he set going into the program. Grace described upward mobility as climbing up a cliff until you have nowhere to go but down.

### **Intercultural Communication Competence**

Research question five asked, “Is there a relationship between an ALT’s intercultural communication competence (i.e., perceived effectiveness during interactions with culturally diverse others) and the frequency and emotional valence of experienced microaggressions?” Overall, ALTs reported higher amounts of ICE. They found it fairly easy to get along with and talk to people from other cultures and were not afraid to express themselves. The greater an ALT’s ability to interact competently in another culture, the more likely they were to feel acceptance and less likely to feel dissatisfaction. In terms of workplace microaggressions, those who reported higher ICE scores were less likely to experience microaggressions where a co-worker is unfriendly, be told they didn’t work as hard, be told they wouldn’t understand the Japanese education system, be treated differently than other co-workers, or be told they were not real teachers. The higher an ALT’s ICE score, the less likely he or she is to feel discomfort or insecurity and the more likely they are to feel good.

Looking at the qualitative data, at least eight participants had prior intercultural experiences which would increase their intercultural communication competence. Several of the ALTs interviewed had studied abroad in Japan before joining the JET Program. For some of them, it was the reason they wanted to come back to Japan. Two of the ALTs being half-Japanese have first-hand experience growing up with a Japanese parent and have personal experience living and

learning about that aspect of their identity. These ALTs already have a rich understanding of Japanese culture or why a Japanese person might make a microaggressive statement.

When Heather worked as the program coordinator at the consulate, part of her job was to interview candidates and review applications. She felt it was part of her responsibility to make sure candidates would be able to handle the challenges they might face,

Seeing the kids apply to be on JET because it was their dream but then having no knowledge, no understanding, no even like, I felt a step of learning Japanese culture and it was just mind-boggling for me. It's like, why are they interested? I know why I did it for myself. It was really beautiful and challenging to do it, for so many others and on top of that, challenging because you are altering someone's life, and it's true. I really, really, really felt that I'm changing your life forever, and I take it very seriously.

She, alongside other JET Program coordinators, put JET applicants through a very rigorous vetting process. The interview portion of the process is extremely important, as it gives the interview panel<sup>6</sup> a chance to see whether or not the applicant is truly able to handle the challenges and rewards that come with living abroad. It is the panel's job to predict if an applicant is competent to both live and work abroad.

According to Wiseman, Hammer, and Nishida (1989), there are two key components in predicating ICC—knowledge of the host culture and attitude toward the other culture. Cultural knowledge is understanding the norms and communication rules of a second culture while the latter is composed of attitudes and stereotypes one holds of the second culture, likes and dislikes of that culture, and social distance of members from that culture (Wiseman et al., 1989). With these components in mind, the panel is first able to predict an applicant's ICC through the paperwork portion of the application process. In the interview, however, the panel is better able to ask ALTs questions about their knowledge about specific Japanese components (i.e., “What is

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<sup>6</sup> The panel is made of one Japanese member from the consulate, a former JET ALT, and a third-party member, such as an instructor from a local state university.

a common Japanese holiday or festival?") or how the ALT would handle themselves in a what-if scenario (e.g., "What if your JTE teaches students something that is grammatically incorrect? Would you address it? How?).

Moreover, the interview process allows ALTs to further elaborate their desire to go to Japan, what draws them to Japanese culture specifically, past exposure to Japanese culture and language, and so forth. If ALTs can demonstrate these abilities, their ICC will minimize misunderstandings and maximize intercultural understanding (Wiseman et al., 1989). More importantly, the panel can also gauge if true mutual cultural exchange can occur, since ALTs are also expected to be cultural ambassadors of their country. Schneider (2010) says that part of this ambassador role comes through cultural diplomacy, which consists of persuasion through cultural values and ideas. This exchange is implicit rather than explicitly. More importantly, with the presence of another culture, "if cultural outreach is conceived as part of a long-term relationship, it can help to separate people from policies. This is the critical element of success in people-to-people programs" (Schneider, 2010, p. 102).

For applicants that indicated formal or informal Japanese language study and for how long, the last part of the interview is conducted in Japanese to better gauge ALTs' language ability in person (e.g., "What part of Japan do you want to visit and why?). As Root and Ngampornchai (2016) found in their study of ICC gained through study abroad, rigorous prior assessment of one's culture and language knowledge is crucial for survival and integration into the host community. While this knowledge can be gained through first-hand experience living in the host country, preparation and previous exposure is vital (Root & Ngampornchai, 2016). While it is not a requirement to know Japanese or have studied it, language knowledge is, regardless, a crucial component to ICC (Redmond, 2000). The higher ALTs' language abilities, the better they

might perform in the program, especially in rural areas where English is rarely spoken outside of school (as was this researcher's experience).

Kim (2005a) states that ICC can increase over time. A majority of the interviewees that lived in Japan for longer periods of time reported experiencing fewer microaggressions, or what microaggressions they did experience, happened within their first year or two. The longer an ALT lives in Japan, it is less likely they will perceive a statement to be a microaggression, or microaggressions will become isolated instances. Shiri (2015) says that regional competence also plays a role. Since Japan is made up of four main islands, each island has its own unique culture, not unlike the U.S. ALTs from areas like Osaka, which has its own quirks (e.g., standing on a different side of the escalator compared to the rest of Japan), understand these differences and are able to adapt accordingly. Kim (2005b) states that within ICC is host communication competence, or the ability for one to suspend what he or she considers to be cultural norms in order to integrate and comply. McKayla was a perfect example of this since temporarily suspending her Jewish beliefs to talk about Christmas since her JTEs wanted her to talk about that specific holiday.

### **Relational Intimacy with JTEs**

Research question six asked, "Is there a relationship between the frequency of workplace microaggressions and an ALT's perceived relational intimacy with his or her JTEs?"

Overall, ALTs showed relational satisfaction in terms of receptivity/trust and similarity/depth.

They were more ambivalent about composure, formality, and equality. The biggest surprise for this aspect of the study was that formality was unrelated to workplace microaggressions.

Burgoon and Le Poire (1999) state that formality is key to building rapport and that its absence is an indicator of where the relationship stands in terms of interpersonal closeness. The researcher

assumed that the less formal an JTE was with their ALT, the ALT would perceive fewer microaggressions in the workplace. Only a few isolated instances did appear in the narratives.

For similarity/depth, positive affect included happiness and pleasure while negative affect only included discomfort. Finding similarities with a JTE or other co-workers can help an ALT reduce anxiety as part of anxiety uncertainty management (AUM) (Gudykunst et al., 1987). Once an ALT finds and establishes similarity to their JTEs (i.e., both studied abroad while in college), this creates feelings of closeness. This closeness and feeling of similarity/depth could lead to two things: finding out why someone made an utterance or using a JTE as a liaison (i.e., a coping mechanism). Dawkins (2010) says reward is the first step in the AUM cycle. If this reward is learning of one of many commonalities, the ALT and JTE can predict that future interactions will reap similar rewards, the ALT may be less likely to identify something as being a microaggression, and the JTE may be less likely to say something that might be viewed as a microaggression.

For receptivity/trust, positive affect also included happiness, as well as pleasure. However, more negative affect was present in terms of discomfort, sadness, failure, and insecurity. Focusing particularly on receptivity, if an ALT oversteps bounds by too quickly wanting to attend multiple classes or pressures JTEs to use the activities they created, this dominance is frowned upon in collectivist societies like Japan (Knobloch et al., 2010; Solomon et al., 2002). Thus, the JTE or coworker may be hesitant to be receptive if trust has not yet been built. Time is crucial to building trust and relationships, especially with out-group members (Burgoon & Le Poire, 1999; Neuliep, 2012). When trust exists within the ALT-JTE relationship it is less likely that the ALT will identify something as being a microaggression and the JTE to say something that might be viewed as a microaggression.

For composure, positive affect included feeling good and satisfaction, while negative affect included dissatisfaction and insecurity. Burgoon and Le Poire (1999) remind us that composure is the ability to have self-control. If a JTE loses this composure, it is natural that ALTs will feel negative affect. Ting-Toomey (2005) says that autonomy face includes one's independence and boundaries. If a JTE's composure breaks these boundaries (i.e., saying an ALT is not a real teacher), the composure of that teacher is lost and an ALT experiences a microaggression.

Last, equality, identified pleasure as a positive affect and annoyance and discomfort for negative affect. This can perhaps be explained by power distance. The U.S. and Japan lay on opposite ends of the power distance scale (Ting-Toomey, 2005). This dichotomy can create problems where the ALT sees herself as equal as a teacher, but a JTE or college focuses more on the "assistant" part of the title. Even though ALTs may recognize cultural differences in terms of power dynamics, they may still identify related comments as being microaggressions.

### **Limitations**

Although this study is the first to use mixed methods to investigate the microaggressions ALTs working in Japan experience, there were several limitations. The first limitation occurred during initial data collection. When initially sending out e-mails, the link included in the e-mail was only allowed to be used once, leaving the second or third person who received the e-mail unable to complete the survey. The second limitation was that multiple participants exited the survey without completing it, causing the researcher to delete over 50 responses. The researcher added a completion bar at the bottom of the Qualtrics survey, but after testing it, the bar did not accurately represent how far long a participant was in the survey. This could influence a participant to believe the survey was too long and so he stopped completing it. A third limitation involved why the alpha for microinvalidations was much lower for this survey compared to

Nadal's (2011) study. This could be because some of these microinvalidations do not happen in Japan. A fourth limitation involved the scales used to measure intercultural communication effectiveness. While the alpha level for the ICE scale was adequate, correlation tests showed little to no correlations with the other study variables. Perhaps that might have been different if a different scale was used. In order to shorten the relational intimacy scale questions were deleted from the original scale leaving several subdimensions with only two items. Finally, the demographic portion of the survey did not include a question asking how long the ALT had in the program, leaving out valuable information if time in the program contributed to the questions being investigated.

### **Scholarly Contributions**

A major strength of this study was that it studied the microaggressions American expatriates experience in Japan. Since society is becoming more globalized, it is important to see the microaggressions expatriates face when they move from the majority group (American) to the minority group (sojourners). Using Nadal's (2011) REMS scale, this study was able to identify very specific microaggressions ALTs experienced and how often they experienced them over a six-month period. Sue et al.'s (2007) typology and Johnston and Nadal's (2010) subcategories allowed investigation for the more nuanced and unique microaggressions ALTs experienced. The qualitative portion of this survey also allowed a larger window of time since the interviewees' time in Japan was much larger than the six-month period investigated using the REMS scale (Nadal, 2011). Interviews allowed the researcher to identify microaggressions unique to the ALT expatriate experience.

ALTs are in a somewhat unique position of having dual identity—they are simultaneously both in-group members and out-group members. In-group refers to those with the same values

and social ranking while out-groups are those with different status, values, rankings, and positions (Clément et al., 2003; Muir et al., 2016). Outside of school, ALTs live in Japan but they are out-group members because they are American. Inside of school, they are in-group in that they work for the school but out-group because they may not be considered real teachers. Shifting back and forth between which group they are in during a particular situation gives them a dual identity that can at times prove to be problematic. Inadvertently crossing the boundary from the out-group to the in-group, with no apparent reason or invitation, could lead to hearing a microaggression. Zhiqing (2015) and Wang (2008) state that not adopting, or not adapting quickly enough, to the host environment, and to new or unfamiliar expressions and concepts (e.g., cultural norms) can cause tension and escalation. In this case, that tension can especially come at work (e.g., not adhering to dress code or being addressed improperly).

Previous literature suggests that microaggressions will rarely end with positive affect (e.g., Huynh, 2012; Nadal et. al, 2014; Wang et al., 1996). A second strength to the study is that the qualitative data collection allowed the researcher to gather a larger lexicon for the emotional valence a person might feel when encountering a microaggression. There were several emotions found through interviews (i.e., belittlement, shock, humiliation, isolation) that were not included on the FUM scale. Future researchers can use this information to expand the FUM scale when studying expatriates.

The qualitative data also allowed the researcher to investigate the link between emotions and response strategies. In terms of positive affect, several ALTs used responding to microaggressions as a way to “expand someone’s horizons” and as a teaching moment to recognize the differences between America and Japan, as well as disband certain stereotypes. Despite feeling negative affect, ALTs largely remained polite. According to facework theory

(Cai & Wilson, 2001), when people from individualistic countries (e.g., the U.S.) are faced with a threatening statement, they focus on gaining positive face often in order to gain the respect of others. This explains why ALTs took a polite vs. aggressive approach when responding to microaggressions by seeking to dispel stereotypes or by providing elaboration to prevent further misunderstanding. Two theories additional theories played a key role when interpreting the qualitative findings: attribution theory and expectancy violation theory. Future researchers investigating microaggressions will find both theories especially relevant.

Considering the different emotional affect that males and females felt between the different types of microaggressions (i.e., general and workplace), it is important to also look at gender through the lens of Japanese culture. In Japan, despite having a similar degree, a female worker might be given only secretarial duties (e.g., making tea for the staff/team, making copies) while a male worker might be given a more prestigious position. The secretarial position, sometimes called *ofisu redi* [office lady] was once named “office flower” which implied “they served a decorative function and thereby inspired men to work hard” (Ogasawara, 1998, p. 12). Many women in Japan have less mobility to move upward in a company, especially after they get married or have children. Moreover, Ogasawara (1998) states that Japan is notorious for its mentality of conforming, and companies are no exception. Many large companies will often look toward one another to see where women are in the workplace and the type of mobility they are given.

However, this isn't to say that women are powerless in their workplace situation; it is actually somewhat of the opposite. Ogasawara states this gives women the upper-hand in many cases, such as if a woman gets too busy she may be often “late” or disappear in into the kitchen to get a drink because her job is less tethered to the company than a male colleague. Unlike the U.S., the

Equal Employment Opportunity Law was not passed in Japan until 1985 and implemented in 1986 (Gelb, 2000). With these thoughts in mind, it is possibly some of the same treatment mentality toward Japanese woman is carried through to American ALTs, especially considered their temporary status (generally one to five years). Therefore, female ALTs may be treated differently not only because of their gender but their temporary position within the school, giving them zero chance for mobility, especially considering if a Japanese colleague with seniority will not be given an equal chance for mobility.

Within the complexity of relational intimacy and its many subcomponents (Burgoon and Le Poire, 1999) an ALT may not have enough time to adequately frame the relationship with the situation to determine if an utterance is a microaggression or not. McLauren et al. (2014) say that framing is a “fast-moving process” in terms of how to respond to an utterance (p. 519). Cues, quality and goal of an utterance, relationship, personality traits, and both social/cultural norms are all tied together in this fast-pace, unconscious process (McLauren et al., 2014). This stimuli help us understand the actions of others (Dillard et al., 1996). So, if ALTs have the preconceived idea they are both part of the in-group and their relationship with the JTE is affiliative, statements like being told not to attend meetings, not being invited to school events, or being asked to wear more appropriate work attire suddenly shift the frame to dominance-submissive. This message now puts JTEs as the dominate and the ALTs as the subordinate. This sudden shift in the framing of the ALT-JTE relationship can hinder composure (i.e., being asked an intrusive question) or equality (i.e., not being asked to participate with other teachers). The affiliation, correlated with liking (Solomon et al., 2002), is suddenly gone, and ALTs are left to decode the utterance, often as a microaggression. Further research could lead insight to how the frame of a situation and the relationship between JTEs and ALTs determines whether or not an utterance is

a microaggression.

ALTs and JTEs simultaneously use convergence and divergence in their everyday communication. The use of divergence may explain why an ALT feels a statement is a microaggression. An example of a divergence tactic in intercultural context is when a JTE chooses to use exclusively English when the ALT may want to use Japanese, or when someone uses too simple Japanese. While the intent is benevolent, as Gallois et al. (2005) states, if the ALT knows his or her Japanese ability is much higher than what is being recognized, he or she could interpret this benevolence as belittling. Moreover, divergence perpetuates cultural differences (Gallois et al., 2015), so an exhaustive attempt on the JTEs part to maintain this culture boundary can be especially frustrating for an ALT when he or she is trying to move toward the in-group by using the host environment's native language.

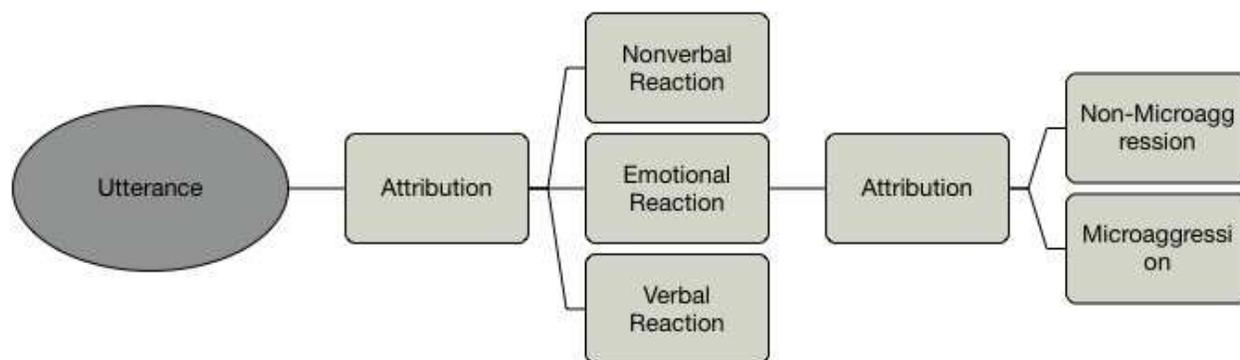
There is also malevolent divergence (Shepard et al., 2001). This would be a JTE showing an uninterest in discussion or unwillingness to continue the conversation past a certain point. The latter was more obvious for microassaults. For example, when Grace's boss switched from English to Japanese in a heated discussion to say something negative about her and the other ALTs' work performance, not only did her boss diverge by switching languages, she also showed unwillingness to solve the problem, which resulted in a microassault. Other examples of such unwillingness also came in the form of ALTs not being invited to participate in certain events or meetings. The lack of invitation resulted in microinvalidations, such as telling an ALT being told he or she need to do anything or not to worry about a certain task. While the intent may not be inherently malevolent, it is interpreted as such (Shepard et al., 2001).

### **Theory Based Insights**

**Attribution theory.** Attribution theory plays a role at two points in how ALTs describe the

microaggression. The ALTs narratives showed they used attribution to explain, in hindsight, if a statement was a microaggression or not. Attribution then determined how ALTs approached the situation. Throughout the interviews, all ALTs gave indications of attributing the cause for the microaggression to either themselves, the instigator, or the situation. Attribution theory states that attributions are either internal or external, but members from individualistic cultures tend to make external attributions (Chattopadhyay, 2007; Ting-Toomey, 2005). Figure 1 shows the narrative flow of ALTs as they retrospectively recalled the situations and microaggressions they experienced. This allowed the researcher to understand the situation, how ALTs handled it, and possible reasons why the microaggressions happened. It showed her how the interviewees went about determining if a statement was in fact a microaggression. In the next section, narratives showing how internal and external attributions were used to reach the conclusion something is or is not a microaggression.

Figure 1: *Flow of the Narrative of Microaggressive Statements*



**Internal attributions to non-microaggressions.** Internal attributions, according to Chattopadhyay (2007), are based on ability, effort, or personality. There were several instances where ALTs used internal attribution towards themselves to decide that an utterance was not a microaggression. For many, their personality was key. One ALT felt she rarely experienced

microaggression, but added “I am curious if I’m difficult to offend” while another said “I try not to pass judgment.” Others were based more on ability. More specifically, the ability to dissect the experience. As Heather explained it,

I think for me living abroad, being abroad and understanding Japanese culture, I think I try to understand first that why they said that, and just take a step back....at the beginning you take it very personally. It's very offensive. You get hurt....over time it helped me to more evaluate why do they say this? Should I check myself? And I think that's one thing I focused on is, I am in Japan. They are not in my country.

In other instances, ALTs used internal attribution towards their instigators to determine the utterance wasn't a microaggression. Some of these attributions involved the personality of the other person such as “they're very set in their ways...their own perception of you know, the differences between foreigners and Japanese,” and “she's old and she helped me through this situation. I'm not going to make a big fuss about some sort of weird race thing.” So, the ALTs used their knowledge of the person and previous experiences with them, to determine what was said was a matter of personality and not meant to be a racial slight against them.

**External attributions to non-microaggressions.** External contributions, on the other hand, are attributions towards task, situation, luck, and intimacy (Chattopadhyay, 2007). A few ALTs said their specific schools could be the reason why utterances are made but they were not meant as a microaggression. For example, Sarah said her school is notorious for having bad students while Brandon said his school is considered a lower level school, or a “death-sentence” for teachers who are sent to work there. Sarah also said her students bad behavior is something they are probably learning at home. Their situation of being at that particular school was the reason for microaggressions to occur, and like internal attributions, they are not meant to be insensitive or racially biased against the ALT. However, when Hannah and her husband were denied an apartment, she thought “maybe they just had bad experience with one foreigner, and they ruined

it for all of us.” She did not blame it on her own foreignness, but a situation that was out of her control despite the discriminatory overtone.

**Internal attributions to microaggressions.** Like with non-microaggression statements, many ALTs attributed the utterances to personality traits. ALTs were more likely to attribute microaggressions to the personality of their instigator such as “he was a pretty direct guy for being Japanese,” “I know from their standpoint they're acting this way because they want to help me and they're doing it out of like goodness. I don't think they realize that it is patronizing,” and “[she] doesn't it have the skills to lead a group of foreign teachers.”

**External attributions to microaggressions.** For external attributions, ALTs were more likely to attribute (ill) luck or situation to the microaggressions they experienced. Situational attributions included “most of things that have come up stuff that people are unaware of because they don't have to deal with it because they were born Japanese” and “they don't feel comfortable teaching with me because it's a waste of a lesson to them.” For luck, or lack thereof, attributions included when Heather was griped at for leaving behind bits of paper while creating a lesson but “had done nothing to indicate [it]...I'd made no mess.” Another example included when Cassandra was told she wasn't a real teacher. “I had a TESOL certificate but no classroom experience...[and] I felt very inferior to them.” Her bad luck came with her teachers not recognizing, or not willing to recognize, her previous teaching experience.

**ALTs' ability to utilize attributions and reassess.** As external attributions show situations play a large role. There were times when ALTs were able to recognize which situations would make a statement a microaggression and which would not. When Nicole was tokenized for having her name written in the school newspaper a certain way, she did not interpret it as a microaggression. She understood her Americanness helped define her at the school, so having it

put that way was not a problem for her, especially considering she was that school's first ALT. For her the instance with her phone company, where her identity of having a Japanese surname was taken from her by their insistence and policy that she use her maiden name, was viewed as a microaggression. When Louise was tired of constantly being told how good her chopstick skills were, she approached the instigator and asked why she felt the need to constantly comment. Her teacher replied, "I'm complimenting you because you're good...because a lot of our students suck at it." She investigated to see if this was true, saying "I went to a couple of lunches with the students and looked around like oh my gosh she's right! They hold them like all kinds of ways!" She was able to reassess the microaggression, which she initially attributed internally, and found it to be situational. The statement was meant as a genuine compliment and not meant as a slight toward her.

**Expectancy Violation Theory.** According to Burgoon and Ebesu Hubbard (2005), expectancy violation theory (EVT) "refers to the actions sufficiently discrepant from the expectancy to be noticeable and classified as outside the expectancy range" (p. 154). It can be predictive (behavior that is "appropriate, desired, or preferred") or prescriptive ("idealized standards of conduct") (Burgoon, 1993; Burgoon and Ebesu Hubbard, 2005, p. 151; Joardar, 2011). This study found that both ALTs and JTEs violated one another's expectancies which resulted in microaggressions. This research helps us identify some of the issues which might violate an expectancy and either be classified as a microaggression or provoke a microaggression. Moreover, low-context cultures value beliefs, values, and feelings while high-context cultures focus more on background information of the person (Gudykunst and Nishida, 1984; Selmer, 2002). When an utterance does not align with an ALTs personal beliefs or values, a statement may be a microaggression. Conversely, when an ALTs background does not give

enough information, a JTE may make a statement that comes across as a microaggression.

**ALTs violating expectations.** Japanese people hold stereotypes about Americans. When ALTs violate prescriptive expectancy, microaggressions are likely. For example, from the Japanese perspective ALTs are white. Non-Caucasian ALTs experienced comments that they don't look American or heard remarks on their skin tone and color. This was also true for stereotypes of Americans as loud, large, or eating certain foods (i.e., "You are a lot quieter than any American I've ever met"). Prescriptive expectancy violations occurred when JTEs were surprised or confused to learn an ALT could speak Japanese or eat certain Japanese foods. However, this is not to say ALTs are never to blame. ALTs break the prescriptive behavior that being quiet or keeping opinions to one's self is expected in Japan. Since JTEs will hold ALTs to Japanese cultural standards, breaking these expectations may warrant a comment, as Selmer (2002) says hosts will expect sojourners to have knowledge of and adhere to their own societal and cultural norms.

**JTEs violating expectations.** Burgoon and Ebesu Hubbard (2005) say that a sudden departure from an expectancy with no explanation can be seen as a violation. If an ALT considers him or herself to be part of the in-group at school, but he or she is not invited to a meeting or class, the JTE violated the prescriptive behavior that as a member, the ALT would be invited. Microaggressions can also occur if JTEs or other colleagues break an ALTs predictive expectancy, such as not gossiping in front of them or being overly direct or rude, behaviors which are uncommon in Japanese culture (Burgoon & Ebesu Hubbard, 2005; Cai & Wilson, 2006). When students, teachers, or JTEs do not address an ALT with a proper title, they violate the prescriptive behavior. While some ALTs were not bothered by this, more often the lack of a proper title is seen as a microaggression.

## **Practical Implications**

By showing that ALTs experience microaggression while working abroad, and identifying the types of microaggressions they experience, this research can help the JET Program, its consulates and coordinators, create pedagogical tools and conferences to help ALTs understand what they might experience before they go to Japan. Having such information would help ALTs be better prepared to recognize the types of utterances they may hear, as well as the implications behind the message. Moreover, workshops while ALTs are still in Japan can help them further understand the phenomenon they are experiencing. Finding and sharing common and useful coping mechanisms can provide ALTs with the tools they need if and when they encounter these situations with their new roles as expatriate, cultural ambassadors, and ALTs.

## **Future Research**

During the interviews, three types of microaggressions emerged that need to be further investigated. The first type this researcher labeled as 2<sup>nd</sup> hand microaggressions. These were cases where an ALT heard a story of a microaggression an ALT experienced either “through the grapevine” or directly from another ALT. For example, one of Cassandra’s friends told her students would try to rub her skin because she is African-American and they wanted to know “why is her skin dirty?” A second involves observed microaggressions. Several studies have looked at the microaggressions a person hears or sees either about a person present or a person in conversation (Nadal et al., 2015). In this study, some of the observed microaggressions were not about Americans, but rather Koreans or Chinese.

There was only one case of an environmental microaggression emerging from the interview data. Nadal’s (2011) REMS scale includes this as a subcategory. Chris described a restaurant in his town where there is sticker on the door that reads roughly, “if you come to our establishment,

please have someone with you that can speak Japanese.” He explained it was their way of saying “we prefer not to have anything to do with English-speaking patrons without being blatant.”

Further research is needed to see how often these types of microaggressions occur and how they are perpetuated in Japan.

While this study did incorporate some ethnic factors into the microaggressions American ALTs face, it would be important to investigate the degree of and types of microaggressions Caucasian-American ALTs face compared to non-Caucasian American ALTs. This study showed that non-Caucasians experienced different types of microaggression, but further research is needed (i.e., Korean-American versus African-American). English as a second language (ESL) jobs are becoming increasingly popular, especially in South East Asian countries like Korea, China, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Further research should investigate the microaggressions expatriates in these countries experience. It would be worthwhile to see what microaggressions U.S. business people working in Japan and other South East Asian countries experience. Future research should also investigate the attribution process people go through when deciding whether or not a comment is a microaggression. Do ALTs attribute the microaggression before or after they verbally and emotionally respond, and does this affect what coping mechanisms they chose to use? Moreover, future research could highlight how ethnicity and nationality plays a role when choosing a coping mechanism.

As for environmental factors, it would be pertinent to see how being in the private sector (i.e., Interac, private schools) versus the public sphere (i.e., JET program, government run schools) had an impact on the number and type of microaggressions, as well as how it affects the ALT-JTE relationship. Furthermore, while the difference of academic level in high schools with the participants did show several differences in microaggressions, more research needs to be done to

see how the academic level or type of school (i.e., technical school, agriculture school) plays a role in the frequency and interpretation of microaggressions. A last factor to investigate in the future is the number of schools an ALT has. It is possible that the number of schools, and thus an increase in the number of JTEs, could affect both frequency, perception, and reaction to microaggressions.

Last, the timeline of an ALTs career in Japan and the frequent exposure to microaggressions could lead to some desensitization. Several of the participants for the interview that had lived in Japan longer had a harder time coming up with examples of microaggressions or where able to give some reasoning behind the statement (i.e., attribution). This begs the question do ALTs inadvertently ignore microaggressions as their tenure increases, or do they no longer see the statements as microaggressions? A few participants seemed to indicate the later. One participant, who attended a lecture on microaggressions with other ALTs, said she felt like the examples were not really microaggressions, and she was able to give an explanation for why the instigator made a comment. She became a sort of liason (one of the coping mechanisms) for ALTs that felt they had been told microaggressions and was able to give them advice on how to handle it (i.e., make a joke) or explain possible meaning behind the statement (i.e., pathologizing statements are meant as possible conversations starters and not meant to attack the ALT personally). However, future research for ALTs that have been in Japan for an extended amount of time will help clarify and answer this question.

## **Conclusion**

This study found that ALTs do indeed experience microaggressions while they live and work in Japan. ALTs feel a wide range of emotions when hearing microaggressive statements, ranging from neutral to highly aroused. ALTs strong intercultural communication competence both helps

them realize when, and if, statements were microaggressions and how to best manage them.

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## Appendix A

### Letter to Recruit Participants

To [Name entered will depend on who will receive it],

My name is Stephanie Hupp, and I am a second year graduate student working on my master's thesis at the University of Arkansas Department of Communication. I am currently conducting research on both current and previous American Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) who have taught or are currently teaching in Japan. My thesis focuses on the microaggressions American ALTs experience and how these microaggressions affect their satisfaction with their jobs and their working relationships with their Japanese coworkers. A microaggression is a comment (sometimes intending to be a complement) that undermines a part of your identity. The survey is online, and I am also recruiting participants who are willing to be interviewed.

Would you please send this e-mail on my behalf, along with the link provided at the bottom, to all ALTs that were contracted through your consulate or satellite? If you can, please also ask them to send this email to other ALTs, both past and previous, that might participate in the study. After my study is complete, I will send you a copy of my findings if you wish. I will also send you any demographic information regarding participants in your area for future statistics. These findings will provide you with information you can utilize to strengthen the program and help prepare future ALTs for their life and job in Japan.

If there is a different person that I need to contact in regards to this process, please let me know.

Best,  
Stephanie Hupp  
University of Arkansas Department of Communication  
Public Speaking Instructor and TA  
shupp@uark.edu  
479-466-4881

## Appendix B

### Interview Questions

1. What are some of the positive comments you hear(d) about Americans while teaching English in Japan?
2. What were some of the negative comments you hear(d) about Americans while teaching English in Japan? How do(did) you respond? Were you any less willing to talk to the speaker, did you avoid conversations that might bring up similar comments, or do/did you confront the comments to clear possible misunderstandings?
3. Can you describe to me a time when you felt you had to defend yourself as an American or defend Americans in general? What did the speaker say? How did you respond?
4. What was the most offensive thing a Japanese person has said or insinuated to you about Americans? How did they say it to you and what was their tone of voice? How did you respond?
5. Sometimes ALTs are not considered “real” teachers or are at the bottom of their hierarchy in their school. Does that pertain to your situation? What has been said to make you feel that way? Did that influence how you do your job?
6. Were you ever shocked by a comment a Japanese colleague told you about Americans. What did they say? What was your reaction? How did you feel afterwards? Did this affect your future interaction with him/her? How?
7. Have you ever felt verbally threatened or patronized by a Japanese co-worker? What did they say? How did you respond?

## Appendix C

### Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Scale (REMS)

Directions: Read the following statements. Recall how often you have experienced them. Check (1) for *I did not experience this event in the past six months*, (2) for *I experienced this event 1–3 times in the past* (3) for *I experienced this event 4–6 times in the past six* (4) for *I experienced this event 7–9 times in the past six months*, and (5) for *I experienced this event 10 or more times in the past six months*

#### Second-Class Citizen and Assumptions of Criminality

1. Someone avoided sitting next to me in a public space (i.e., restaurants, subways, busses).  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
  
2. A server hesitated to take or complete my order because they were afraid I would not understand them.\*\*  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
  
3. Someone gave me an English menu without my asking.\*\*  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
  
4. I received substandard service in stores compared to customers that were Japanese.\*  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5

#### Microinvalidations

5. Someone told me that they “don’t see color”  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
  
6. Someone told me that they do not see race.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
  
7. Someone told me that people should not think about race anymore.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
  
8. Someone told me that she or he was color-blind.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
  
9. A Japanese person told me that there is no difference between the two of us.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
  
10. I was told I should not complain about race.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5

11. I was told that people of all racial groups experience the same obstacles

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Exotization/Assumptions of Similarity

12. Someone assumed that I only spoke English.\*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

13. Someone asked me to teach them English outside of school (i.e., at a bar)\*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

14. Someone assumed that I ate foods associated with Americans every day (i.e., pizza, hamburgers).\*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

15. Someone assumed that all Americans were fat.\*\*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

16. Someone assumed that all Americans were loud.\*\*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

17. Someone wanted to date me only because of my race.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

18. Someone objectified one of my physical features because of my race (i.e., touching my hair or skin without permission).

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

19. I am told how good my Japanese is.\*\*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

20. I am told I am good at using chopsticks.\*\*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

## Appendix D

### Workplace Microaggressions Scale

Directions: Read the following statements. Recall how often you have experienced them. Check (1) for *I did not experience this event in the past six months*, (2) for *I experienced this event 1–3 times in the past*, (3) for *I experienced this event 4–6 times in the past six months*, (4) for *I experienced this event 7–9 times in the past six months*, and (5) for *I experienced this event 10 or more times in the past six months*

#### Workplace and School Microaggressions

1. An employer or co-worker was unfriendly or unwelcoming toward me because of my race.  

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
  
2. A co-worker complained that I was overpaid than him or her. \*\*  

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
  
3. A co-worker told me I did not work as hard as many of my Japanese co-workers.\*  

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
  
4. I was told I would not understand certain things about teaching in Japan and/or the Japanese education system.\*\*  

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
  
5. My opinion was overlooked in a group discussion because of my race.  

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
  
6. Someone assumed that my work would be inferior to other Japanese co-workers.\*  

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
  
7. An employer or co-worker treated me differently than our Japanese co-workers.\*  

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
  
8. I was told I am not a real teacher.\*\*  

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

## Appendix E

### Feelings of Understanding/Misunderstanding Scale

*Directions:* Recall the statements you have just read. The following terms refer to feelings that may be relevant to the experiences described above. Please indicate the extent to which each term describes how you generally feel (or would feel) about the experiences above. Respond to each item according to the following scale. (1) indicates you feel *very little* of this emotion and (5) is you feel *very great* amounts of this feeling.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="text"/> 1. Annoyance<br><input type="text"/> 2. Satisfaction<br><input type="text"/> 3. Self-reliance<br><input type="text"/> 4. Discomfort<br><input type="text"/> 5. Relaxation<br><input type="text"/> 6. Shyness<br><input type="text"/> 7. Dissatisfaction<br><input type="text"/> 8. Pleasure<br><input type="text"/> 9. Enviousness<br><input type="text"/> 10. Insecurity<br><input type="text"/> 11. Good<br><input type="text"/> 12. Attentiveness | <input type="text"/> 13. Sadness<br><input type="text"/> 14. Acceptance<br><input type="text"/> 15. Humbleness<br><input type="text"/> 16. Failure<br><input type="text"/> 17. Comfortableness<br><input type="text"/> 18. Hostility<br><input type="text"/> 19. Incompleteness<br><input type="text"/> 20. Happiness<br><input type="text"/> 21. Compassion<br><input type="text"/> 22. Uninterestingness<br><input type="text"/> 23. Importance<br><input type="text"/> 24. Assertiveness |
|---|---|

## Appendix F

### Intercultural Effectiveness Scale

Directions: Think about your time as an ALT and reflect on your experiences in Japan working with your Japanese colleagues. Read the statements below and answer how much you agree or disagree with the statement. There are no right or wrong answers. Answering (1) means you *strongly disagree* with the statement and (5) means you *strongly agree* with the statement.

1. I find it easy to talk with people from different cultures.  

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
  
2. I am afraid to express myself when interacting with people from different cultures.  

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
  
3. I find it easy to get along with people from different cultures.  

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
  
4. I am not always the person I appear to be when interacting with people from different cultures.  

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
  
5. I am able to express myself clearly when interacting with people from different cultures.  

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
  
6. I am able to answer questions effectively when interacting people from different cultures.  

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
  
7. I find it difficult to feel my culturally different counterparts are similar to me.  

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
  
8. I use appropriate eye contact when interacting with people from different cultures.  

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
  
9. I always know how to initiate a conversation when interacting people from different cultures.  

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

10. I often miss parts of what is going on when interacting with people from different cultures.
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5
11. I feel relaxed when interacting with people from different cultures.
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5
12. I often act like a very different person when interacting people from different cultures.
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5
13. I always show respect for my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5
14. I always feel a sense of distance with my culturally different counterpart during our interaction.
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5
15. I find I have a lot in common with my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5
16. I find the best way to act is to be myself when interacting with people from different cultures.
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5
17. I find it easy to identify with my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5
18. I always show respect for the opinions of my culturally different counterparts during our interactions.
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5

## Appendix G

### Relational Communication Scale

Directions: Below is a series of statements. Think about previous conversations with your Japanese co-workers. For each one, please circle a number from 1 to 7 where (1) indicates you *strongly disagree* with the statement and 7 indicates *strongly agree*.

#### Similarity/Depth

1. He/she made me feel he/she was similar to me.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

2. He/she tried to move the conversation to a deeper level.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

3. He/she acted like we were good friends.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

4. He/she seemed to desire further communication with me.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

5. He/she seemed to care if I liked him/her.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

#### Receptivity/Trust

6. He/she was sincere.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

7. He/she was interested in talking with me.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

8. He/she was willing to listen to me.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

9. He/she was open to my ideas.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

10. He/she was honest in communicating with me.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

Composure

11. He/she felt very tense talking to me.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

12. He/she felt very relaxed talking with me.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

13. He/she seemed nervous in my presence.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

14. He/she was comfortable interacting with me

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

Formality

15. He/she made the interaction very formal.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

16. He/she wanted the discussion to be casual.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

Equality

17. He/she considered us equals.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

18. He/she did not treat me as an equal.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

**Appendix H**

### Overall Job Satisfaction

*Directions:* Please look at the following statements and rate them on a scale from 1 to 5. 1 means you *strongly disagree* with the statement, 2 means you *disagree*, 3 means you are *undecided*, 4 means you *agree*, and 5 means you *strongly agree*.

1. My job is like a hobby to me  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
2. My job is usually interesting enough to keep me from getting bored  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
3. It seems that my friends are more interested in their jobs  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
4. I consider my job rather unpleasant  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
5. I enjoy my work more than my leisure time  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
6. I am often bored with my job  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
7. I feel fairly well satisfied with my present job  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
8. Most of the time I have to force myself to go to work  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
9. I am satisfied with my job for the time being  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
10. I feel that my job is no more interesting than others I could get  
1                      2                      3                      4
11. I definitely dislike my work.  
1                      2                      3                      4

12. I feel that I am happier in my work than most other people  
1 2 3 4 5
13. Most days I am enthusiastic about my work  
1 2 3 4 5
14. Each day of work seems like it will never end  
1 2 3 4 5
15. I like my job better than the over worker does  
1 2 3 4 5
16. I find real enjoyment in my work  
1 2 3 4 5
17. I am disappointed that I ever took this job  
1 2 3 4 5

**Appendix I**  
**Demographics**

Directions: Please answer the follow questions that best suits your situation. This will be used to gather information about the demographics of American ALTs.

What is your age?  
\_\_\_\_\_ years old

What is your biological sex? (Please pick one)

- A. Male
- B. Female
- C. Other

What ethnicity do you identify as? (Please check all that apply)

- A. African American
- B. Latino/a
- C. Asian American
- D. Native American
- E. Pacific Islander
- F. Caucasian
- G. Other

What state are you from?

What prefecture do you live in?

What level of school do you teach at, and how many of that school? Please answer all that apply.

- A. \_\_\_\_\_ Elementary Schools
- B. \_\_\_\_\_ Junior High Schools
- C. \_\_\_\_\_ High Schools

How many JTEs do you work with?

\_\_\_\_\_

Is this your first time to Japan?

- A. Yes
- B. No

Have you studied Japanese? If so, please indicate in number of years studied (if you are just now starting Japanese, please answer in terms of months).

\_\_\_\_\_ years

a.  $\frac{\quad}{\text{N/A}}$  months

### Background Information on Interviewees

Participant 1: Damien. Damien is a first year high school ALT who lives in Tohoku. He works at one high school and one night school. This is his 5<sup>th</sup> time to Japan. One time was for a study abroad. He is recontracting for a second year. He spends some of his free time making fan dubs for anime. He is JLPT certified at the first level, the highest. He is fluent in three languages.

Participant 2: Malorie. Malorie is a first year high school ALT, but she only teaches at one school. She has been to Japan a few times for travel and vacation. She is not recontracting for a second year because she went into the program with the intention of staying only one year. She said overall her experience has been very positive.

Participant 3: Grace. Grace completed all five years in the JET Program. After leaving JET, she worked through a direct hire program. She has only taught in the Kansai area. As a JET, she worked at both junior high school and elementary schools with a total of eight schools. At the direct hire program, she only teaches at one elementary school. She is married, and her husband is Japanese. She is currently on maternity leave.

Participant 4: Nicole. Nicole is an ALT in Tohoku. Because of her location, her city allows JETs to stay three years past the normal five years. She is on her 7<sup>th</sup> year and will continue with an 8<sup>th</sup>. She teaches at an elementary school. She is also JLPT certified. She has passed level 2, which is the second highest certification. She is also married, and her husband is Japanese.

Participant 5: Sarah. Sarah is a junior high school ALT who teaches in the Kansai area. She only teaches at one middle school, the only middle school in her small town. She will start her fourth year in the program in July, but she does not know yet if she will continue with a fifth.

Participant 6: Allison. Allison was an ALT in the Kansai region for four years. She taught at two high schools: one academic school and one science based school. On occasion, she would visit a school for children with special needs. She now lives in Colorado and works for a non-profit company. She is JLPT certified at level 2.

Participant 7: Cassandra. Cassandra is a high school ALT who teaches at one school in Shikoku. She is considered a Prefectural ALT. This is her second year on the program and she has decided to recontract for a third. She also has her TESOL certification.

Participant 8: Chris. Chris is an ALT in Kyushu. He teaches anywhere from kindergarden to 9<sup>th</sup> grade and has a total of 18 schools. This is his second year, and he has already decided to stay for a third. He wants to stay on the program for all five years. He is actively involved with attending sports competitions or choir concerts. He plans to take the JLPT this summer. In his free time he practices tea ceremony with an elderly lady in his community.

Participant 9: Grant. Grant lives in Tohoku and teaches both junior high and elementary school. He has a total of four schools. This is his first year in the program and he plans to stay for a second. He practiced jujitsu in America, so he spends time with the Judo club at his junior high school. He enjoys bringing the two sports together and spending time with his students during their club activities.

Participant 10: McKayla. McKayla is a high school teacher in Kyushu. She teaches at a commercial high school that is 75% girls. This is her fourth year on the program. However, she is not recontracting and will return to America this summer. She is also JLPT certified at level three. She plans to take the level two test this summer. In her free time, she goes to *taiko* lessons two times a week.

Participant 11: Eric. Eric is a high school ALT in Kyushu. He teaches at three different high schools: one academic, one agricultural, and one technical high school. This is his second year in the program and he plans to do a third. After JET, he would like to attend graduate school in Japan. In his free time, he says he does his own field work and study regarding the perception of sexuality in Japan.

Participant 12: Brandon. Brandon is a high school ALT in Kyushu. He only teaches at two high schools: his base school and a visiting school. This is his first year on the program, but he does not plan to stay for a second. He feels he accomplished what he could at the school, and doesn't want to live his life in suitcases. His brother is visiting him this summer, and will be his school's first foreign exchange student.

Participant 13: Hannah. Hannah taught high school in Hokkaido for all five years on the program. Now, she is in her second year with Interac. She still lives in Hokkaido, but now teaches just junior high school. Because her old school is close by, she often visits for graduation or entrance ceremonies for the students. She is married, but her husband is American. She says she misses JET, and dislikes Interac in part because they are very strict with how she can interact with her JTEs while at school. She feels Interac also gives their ALTs less support than JET does.

Participant 14: Ellen. Ellen is at a junior high school and elementary school ALT in Tohoku. This is her third year in the program and she plans to do a fourth. In her free time, she also participates in a local *taiko* group. She is currently studying for the LSAT. She plans on going to law school when she returns to America. She also studied abroad while in college, and lives in the same area where she studied.

Participant 15: Emily. Emily is a high school ALT in Tohoku, and teaches at four high schools. This is her second year on the program. She plans on doing a third year. She used to

work for a Japanese company, so she has some business experience in her background. She keeps herself very busy with her schools and teaching preparations.

Participant 16: Louise. Louise is a high school teacher in Kyushu. She teaches at a high level academic school that focuses strongly on preparing students for college. This is her third year in the program, but she will not continue with a fourth. She is level 3 JLPT certified and plans to take level two this summer. Since her background is in computer science, she spends some of her free time working on personal coding projects.

Participant 17: Tommy. Tommy is an elementary and junior high school teacher in Kyushu. He teaches at a total of four schools. He is on his fourth year and plans to stay for a fifth. He hopes to go to graduate school, preferably in Japan. His undergraduate focus was in archeology and anthropology and he wants to continue studying in those fields.

Participant 18: Virginia. Virginia is a high school teacher in Kyushu. She teaches at two schools. One of her schools is unique in that many of the students there have part time jobs. The students at that school may have an extra year of high school, attending four years instead of the traditional three. This is her second year on the program but she will not stay for a third as she wants to explore other options and not be stagnant. She traveled to Japan when she was in junior high school. This was where she met other ALTs on the JET program and learned about the opportunity.

Participant 19: Samantha. Samantha is a first year ALT, and she teaches at three high schools in Kyushu: one academic school with a focus in arts, an engineering school, and an agricultural/general education school. She has decided to stay for a second year. She had visited Japan previously, in Osaka. While in college, she had experience tutoring Japanese students one-on-one to help them with their English skills.

Participant 20: Heather. Heather was a junior high school and elementary school ALT in Kyushu. She was in the program for a total of two years, which she saw as a good fit. After leaving the JET Program, she worked for a Japanese Consulate in the South for a total of two years. She worked as the JET Program coordinator. Her job was to help recruit ALTs, conduct interviews, and prepare ALTs before they departed to Japan.



## IRB Approval Form

February 2, 2017

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Stephanie Hupp  
Myria Allen

FROM: Ro Windwalker  
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 16-12-353

Protocol Title: *Microaggressions Against American Assistant Language Teachers in Japan*

Review Type:  EXEMPT  EXPEDITED  FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 02/02/2017 Expiration Date: 01/24/2018

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Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<https://vpred.uark.edu/units/rscp/index.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

**This protocol has been approved for 100 participants.** If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or [irb@uark.edu](mailto:irb@uark.edu)