



Health of Japanese Americans:

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DISCUSSION

Participants in the generation categories with small numbers such as those who could not identify their generation were eliminated from the analysis. The ethnic composition was studied: 124 Nisei (No. 67.3 yr old), 240 Sansei (No. 58.2 yr old), 58 Yonsei (No. 50.2 yr old), 28 Shinsei (No. 47.0 yr old), and 17 Issei (No. 37.7 yr old).

There are no precise statistics on the number of mixed ethnic Japanese American in our country. Therefore, we tried to distinguish ethnic descent (i.e. full Japanese biologically from mixed ethnic or part-Japanese). Examining this distribution by generation, mixed ethnic Japanese American were 3.0% in Nisei participants, 11.0% in Sansei, 4.5% in Yonsei, 7.1% in Shinsei, and 0% in Issei. This result shows that the ratio of mixed ethnicity was relatively low in our sample of Nisei, Sansei, Yonsei, and Shinsei. In contrast, mixed ethnicity occupied one third in the sample of Issei.

In marked contrast with English preferences, the Japanese score of Shinsei was 14.6±3.4, which was highest among the generation. The second highest was Nisei with 8.4±4.2, which score was similar to that of Issei. Younger with 5.5±4.7, which score was lowest. This result suggests that the preference for Japanese language is almost stable to the relatively low level of mixed ethnicity in a good way.

Acculturation stress of the Japanese Brazilians living in Japan.

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BACKGROUND

The demographic data published in 2001 by the Ministry of Justice showed a massive influx of Japanese Brazilians and their families after 1990. Their numbers increased more than fourfold from 56,429 in 1990 to 254,704 in 2000 even though the Japanese economic recession had seriously deepened. Japanese Brazilians then accounted for 15.1 percent of the entire registered foreign population and comprised the third-largest group in this category.

Historically, high levels of economic growth have been achieved in Japan with minimal dependence on foreign workers, however this situation has changed. The aging society, a lower birth rate, and most of all distaste for manual labor among younger workers have created a serious labor shortage in manual and unskilled work. This is especially evident in small and medium firms throughout the manufacturing, construction, and service industries. The Japanese government responded by amending the Immigration-Control and Refugee-Recognition Act in 1989 to meet small and medium-scale employers' needs, while maintaining the old principle of an exclusive immigration policy, which preserved the myth of a racially homogeneous people and Japanese cultural heritage (Weiner, 1997). This law granted Japanese Brazilians (JB) a special residence status without restriction on activities in Japan because of their Japanese lineage.

However, they have limited opportunity for employment in anything other than menial jobs that Japanese people are reluctant to take. Most JB were employed as contract workers by brokers known as "haken-gaisha" in Japanese (Kajita, 2001; Kawamura, 1999; Kitagawa, 1993; Linger, 2001 pp.55-55, Sato, 1996 p.163, Watanabe, 1995). Many of them who borrowed money from the brokers for their air tickets to Japan and accommodations are not free to change workplaces until their debts are repaid.

Acculturative stress may be high among these migrants. An American anthropologist reported that many Japanese Brazilians, who lived in the most congested housing complex, complained of "stress," and they had problems of exhaustion, nervousness, and depressive symptoms such as difficulty in sleeping, fatigue and social withdrawal. However, there little research on mental health of JB, but labor sociology.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to examine whether the return-migration to Japan influenced the mental health of Japanese Brazilians in Japan (JB) and to identify psycho-social factors related to their acculturation stress. First, the ratios of JB with potential mental health problems, as identified by the General Health Questionnaire-12 score, were compared among the following three groups by gender and age brackets: JB (N=293), Japanese Brazilians in Brazil (JBBr) who had experience of work in Japan (i.e. returnees, N=153), and JBBr who did not migrate back to Japan (i.e. non-return migrants, N=910).

RESULT

It is found that JB males had the highest ratios of potential mental disturbance among the three groups for all the age brackets. In contrast to the males, no significant differences were found among the three female groups (Table 1).

With the male sample, psycho-social risk factors for mental health problems were as follows: being in the "lower" group within the category of the self-evaluated economic conditions and living for "8 years and longer" in Japan (Table 2). In addition, a tertiary education level appeared to be an ameliorating factor for mental health of JB males. Risk factors identified in the female sample were somewhat different from those in the male group. Risk factors were "lower" in the self-evaluated economic conditions, "8 years and longer" in the length of residence, and "not having health insurance."

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, it might be possible to protect the mental health of JB by reforming Japanese immigrant policy, improving their working conditions, and changing the present social security and health insurance policies.

Table 1 Comparisons of ratios of caseness identified by GHQ-12 among three Japanese-Brazilian Groups by age and gender

| Age | | Male | | | χ ² test |
|-------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| | | JB | JBBr | non-returnees ¹⁾ | |
| Total | Caseness(%) | 47.0(16%) | 17.0(7%) | 48.7(27%) | p<0.0001 |
| | Total(%) | 161(100%) | 192(100%) | 164(100%) | |
| 18-24 | Caseness(%) | 22.7(14%) | 42.4(19%) | 22.0(10%) | p=0.048 |
| | Total(%) | 46(100%) | 217(100%) | 105(100%) | |
| 25-34 | Caseness(%) | 27.0(17%) | 4.7(4%) | 11.2(5%) | p=0.013 |
| | Total(%) | 47(100%) | 113(100%) | 216(100%) | |
| 35-39 | Caseness(%) | 40.7(19%) | 14.9(10%) | 17.0(10%) | p=0.001 |
| | Total(%) | 48(100%) | 126(100%) | 162(100%) | |
| Total | Caseness(%) | 44.3(27%) | 55(21%) | 133(28%) | p=0.248 |
| | Total(%) | 126(100%) | 262(100%) | 480(100%) | |
| 18-24 | Caseness(%) | 22.4(18%) | 18.4(7%) | 44.3(18%) | p=0.151 |
| | Total(%) | 48(100%) | 241(100%) | 243(100%) | |
| 25-34 | Caseness(%) | 13.2(8%) | 14(24%) | 11.0(5%) | p=0.223 |
| | Total(%) | 38(100%) | 58(100%) | 216(100%) | |
| 35-39 | Caseness(%) | 13.2(27%) | 11.2(9%) | 42.2(25%) | p=0.004 |
| | Total(%) | 34(100%) | 125(100%) | 162(100%) | |

¹⁾ JBBr indicates Japanese Brazilians in Brazil who have been to Japan for labor within the last ten years and staying in Brazil at the time of research.
²⁾ JBBr non-returnees indicates Japanese Brazilians who continue to reside in Brazil.

Table 2 Odds ratios derived from stepwise multiple logistic regression analysis predicting GHQ-12 caseness by gender in the JB sample

| Variables | JB Males (N=177) | JB Females (N=113) | | |
|--|------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------|
| | OR (95% CI) | p value | OR (95% CI) | p value |
| Education level | | | | |
| primary or lower | 1.00 | | 1.00 | |
| secondary | (stopped) | | (stopped) | |
| tertiary | 1.7(1.1, 2.5) | p=0.002 | 1.00 | |
| Length of residence in Japan | | | | |
| <3 years | 1.00 | | 1.00 | |
| 3-7 years | (stopped) | | (stopped) | |
| 8 years or longer | 2.4(1.7, 3.4) | p=0.028 | 1.4(0.7, 2.4) | p=0.211 |
| Having health insurance | | | | |
| yes | 1.00 | | 1.00 | |
| no | (stopped) | | 1.00 | |
| Presence of someone living together | | | | |
| living alone | 1.00 | | 4.0(1.7, 22.2) | p=0.012 |
| living with someone | (stopped) | | 1.00 | |
| Self-evaluated economic conditions | | | | |
| lower | 1.4(1.1, 1.8) | p=0.007 | 1.7(1.2, 2.1) | p=0.0002 |
| middle or upper | 1.00 | | 1.00 | |
| Peak motivation: Disorientation to Brazilian economy and social conditions | | | | |
| yes | 1.00 | | 1.00 | |
| no | 1.00 | | 1.00 | |
| Proficiency of speaking Japanese | | | | |
| fluent or good | 1.00 | | 1.00 | |
| a little | (stopped) | | (stopped) | |
| incomprehensible | 2.1(0.8, 5.7) | p=0.112 | (stopped) | |
| Statistics | | | | |
| Score test | p=0.002 | | p=0.0001 | |
| Wald and Likelihood test | p=0.024 | | p=0.791 | |