

Socioeconomic Status, Acculturation, Discrimination, and Health of Japanese Americans: Generational Differences.

Introduction

Asian Americans, especially Japanese Americans, have moved from the object of racism to now being “the model minority” in America. This suggests the most Asian Americans adapted well to the mainstream and attained considerable successes in the American society free of adjustment and mental health problems. This model minority stereotype masks the experiences of Asian Americans who have not succeeded with neglect of several problems such as racial discrimination. A closer analysis of U.S. census data indicate that although Asian American groups have, on average, superior education and income compared with the majority group, in urban areas Asian American are not as successful (Smith, E.M., 1985, Fong, T.P., 1998, pp.65-67). For example, the median family income for whites in Chicago 1990 was \$38,833 which is higher than that for Asian Americans income of \$31,986. This image of the model minority also conceals within-group and between-group differences as well. Because Asian Americans are so few in number traditional or national surveys do not include adequate number of this ethnic group to yield reliable estimates of the distribution of health problems (Williams, D.R. & Harris-Reids, M., 1999, Takeuchi D.T. & Young, K.N.J., 1994). Hence, more researches on individual Asian American ethnic groups are necessary to enhance science and yield policy implications. (Sue, S. et al., 1995).

Although there are a few documents about the history of Japanese American, as it has the second Asian American group to come to America and the third-largest population among the Asian American groups, we have little empirical studies on younger generations such as Yonsei (the fourth generation from their first-generation immigrants), Gosei (fifth generation), and newcomers so-called Shin-issei to recognize their reality in the contemporary social context¹ (Okamura, Y.J., 2002). One study or some

studies on interethnic differences among Asian Americans documented that Japanese Americans had the fewest mental health problems (Gim, R., Atkinson, D., & Whiteley, S., 1990). However, as well-known, Japanese Americans on the mainland experienced forced relocation during the World War II that other Asian Americans never experienced, but Japanese Americans in Hawaii². Some researches witnessed that the interment camp experience affected profoundly their identity, parent-child relationship or cross-generational relationship, as well as strategies for adaptation to the dominant society, that is, all over their lifestyle (ex. Nagata, D., 1990, Nagata, D., 1993). Although redress was successfully obtained, racism still persists in many areas (Homma-True, R., 1997). Japanese Americans might have evolved different lifestyles, and suffered from different health and psycho-social problems compared to other Asian American groups (Matsouka J.K. & Ryujin D.H., 1991) when considering that their population increased at the lowest rate of 18% between 1980 and 1990 in contrast, the population of Asian/Pacific Islander in America increased by 95.2%. For example, a reawakening of ethnic identification within the third-generation, so-called ‘Sansei’ is observed in some third-generation Asian Americans. However, do we expect to find a similar phenomenon within the third-generation Japanese American, even though their parents, the second-generation, encouraged them to be “a good American” to greatest extent as possible? The findings in the previous studies on this issue are

Japanese. Subsequent generations of Japanese Americans are called Nisei (second-generation), Sansei (third-generation), and Yonsei (fourth-generation). The immigrants who emigrated to the United States after the WWII is sometimes called Shin-issei that means the first-generation of newcomer. However we should note that when certain number of subject straddled the generations, such respondents might misclassify their generations that could cause some effects on findings.

² A typical voice is that “*I live in Hawaii, where minorities, such as Japanese Americans, are not really minorities. In Michigan, I was mistaken for an exchange student who could not speak English; so most, if any, discrimination that live experienced has been on the US mainland (female Sansei in her thirties).*”

¹ Japanese American often identify with a generational segment. The oldest immigrant generation is popularly called Issei, which means “the first-generation” in

contradictory, thus far from conclusive (Uba, L., 1994, pp109-110).

A female Sansei respondent in her fifties supports the assumption that Japanese American evolved different lifestyle and attitudes toward cultural heritage compared with other Asian American groups, that is, *"I would like to have more Japanese American friends however, there are few in numbers compared to other Asian groups, many Sansei/Yonsei have rejected traditional cultural practices and customs and we do not seem to have the same customs to want to be around other Japanese Americans as the Chinese, Indian, and Vietnamese communities do. (female Sansei in her fifties)"* Another female Sansei respondent in her forties suggests that a psychological problem related to the interment camp experience: *"Nikkei suffer from low self-esteem and lack of confidence since WWII, they have never been able to openly be proud of their heritage. The entire sense of the War caused them to tend into the mainstream society as much as possible....."* Standing for our guess, several respondents made such a remark that *"Both parents Nisei –were in relocation camps in WWII. We were raised very American as a result. (female Sansei in her forties)"*

The small number of Japanese Americans makes it difficult for them to uphold their roots and culture and easier to assimilate into mainstream America. A Sansei female in her twenties describes her situation as *"I value and try to uphold my JA roots and culture, with such a small JA community around me, I feel it is a very difficult task.I think our small population and ability to integrate well into mainstream American culture has contributed to the rarity and diminished JA culture and society."*

Unheeded invisible problems may be burdened because of "invisible minority" (Takahashi J., 1997, pp.157-160, Fong T.P., 1998, p108-139,³).

³ Takahashi J. pointed out that despite of their successes, there is evidence to indicate the status of Japanese Americans was in a mixed reality status in the 1970s. For example, Japanese Americans males and females earned 94% and 55%, respectively, of the average that majority white people with the same educational level. With the median annual earnings by engineers and scientists, a discrepancy was still found between Asian American and whites but smaller in 1989 according to Fong.

Therefore, a Japanese American survey aimed to clarify generational differences of socioeconomic status, degree of acculturation (e.g. language, identity struggle), discriminatory experiences (e.g. day-to-day perceived discrimination), life chances, and health status. The reason generational differences were studied is that previous research indicated cultural and generational conflicts were stressors on Asian Americans (ex. Kuo, W.H. & Tsai, Y-M., 1986), such comment as *"Classification of Nisei in S. California: there is a gap between Nisei my age and the 60-80 groups, including the use of Japanese words and phrases. There is also a large gap with the younger generations (e.g., 3rd, 4th, and 5th generations) who categorize those who do or do not speak/read Japanese; in some sense creating factions within the JA community.....(Nisei, female, in her late twenties)"*. Although simplified characteristics of each generation too much, the following insightful comment suggests that each generation has unique problem affected by the antecedent generation and remains to be resolve, such as *"Each generation – Issei, Nisei, Sansei, Yonsei, Gosei-of JA who have lived here since the turn of the century affects the next. Especially now that the community is more disparaged and diluted and there is not a strong unifying community issue. Yonsei and Gosei will be a lost generation of children of Sansei who are affected by the shifting racial and economic conditions of the US and who, in turn, has been affected by the Nisei camp/WWII experience (female, Yonsei in her early twenties)."* Therefore, addressing generational differences is one of important issues in improving not only social well-being but also the health condition of Japanese Americans.

Method and Subjects

Participants

It is difficult to sample representative Japanese American participants, so several ways were used to increase Japanese Americans participation in this research. First, in cooperation with local offices of Japanese Americans Citizens League (JACL), permission was obtained to access their national mailing list and recruited their membership who fit the composition for age, gender, and region. Consent

forms and surveys were given to these Japanese Americans who agreed to participate in the research project. Second, advertisements were placed in magazines and journals most likely read by Japanese Americans such as the Chicago Shinpo, JACLer, and Nichi Bei Times. Japanese Americans who fit the study and agreed to participate were sent consent forms and surveys. The returned surveys included Japanese Americans from 28 different states, which were divided into three regional areas: the West coast including Washington, Oregon, Nevada, and California, Hawaii, and other states. The sample included both male and female participants. Additionally, researchers visited Japanese American events to encourage participation in the study. Although these sampling strategies do not result in a random sample, it is a challenge in attempting to recruit a considerable number of participants from a relatively small population such as Japanese Americans (Williams R.D., & Harris-Reid, M., 1999). Resultantly, our participants were not restricted those who are living in Japanese American communities or places where Japanese Americans are concentrated, a considerable number of participants are living in areas where none of Japanese American lives in their neighborhood.

The number of samples obtained was 555. Two questionnaires were excluded because gender or age were missing. Therefore the valid sample for further statistical analyses is 553 respondents with ages ranging from 19 to 88. The numbers of participants by regions are the West Coast 245 or 44.3%, Hawaii 83 or 15.0%, and other states 220 or 39.8%. Estimating regional distributions of Japanese American according to the 2000 U.S. Census data⁴, the proportion of Hawaii in this study is low or under-represented and the respondents residing in other States are a little higher, or over-represented. However, the difference between our sample and the U.S. Census data seems to be permissible. These data were collected for approximately a year beginning in

⁴ According to once race category as "Japanese" in 2000 American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau), we estimated 42% of Japanese American were residing in West Coast: 26% in Hawaii, and 32% in other States.

July 2001.

Measure and variables

Socio-economic variables

To determine the socio-economic conditions of Japanese American, questions about their ascribed status of age, gender, generation, and percent of Japanese heritage were asked as well as their acquired status of marital status, educational attainment, length of Japanese language education, employment/occupation, and family income.

A question about the average family or household income in the last three months could be answered by 7 options, that is, "less than \$1,500", "\$1,501-\$3,000", "\$3,001-\$5,000", "\$5,001-\$7,000", "\$7,001-\$10,000", "\$10,001-\$15,000", and "\$15,001 or more". In addition to family income, financial difficulty experienced was requested with question, "Do you have any difficulty in meeting monthly family expenses?" The response options are "extremely difficulty", "difficulty", "mild difficulty", "rare difficulty", and "not difficulty at all" (Williams D.R., et al., 1997).

Furthermore, since ethnic density in the neighborhood might affect a degree of acculturation or mental health issues (Halpern, D. & Nazroo, J., 1999), that was explored in terms of a gross number of Japanese American by using six rank-ordered options; i.e. "none that I know of", "5 families or fewer", "between 6 to 10 families", "between 11 to 20 families", "between 21 to 50 families" and "greater than 50 families".

Acculturation

In this paper we examined the differences of the degree of acculturation by generation. In general, acculturation means the process of cultural or behavioral changes for adaptation in descendents of immigrants, which sequentially occurs when ethnic groups with different cultural norms contact each other (ex. Tamura E.H, 1994). To seize Japanese Americans behavior changes, that is "Americanization", from psychological as well as social perspectives, we prepared a series of questions

such as language acculturation or retainment, ethnic identity issues (such as conflict in ethnic identity, attitudes toward cultural heritage and intermarriage), communication with Japanese Americans, and self-evaluation to acceptance by Japanese Americans, and by other Americans as well.

To access language proficiency or skills for both English and Japanese, each scale was constructed by summing the values of the four items such as speaking, hearing, reading and writing; response categories and its values of each item were (0)Not at all, (1)Almost unable, (2)A little, (3)Good, (4)Very well. Correlation coefficients among English skills ranged from 0.78 to 0.88 ($p < 0.001$), highly correlated each other. Similarly, Japanese skills strongly correlated each other, their correlation coefficients ranged from 0.72 to 0.96 ($p < 0.001$). Therefore, Cronbach's alpha coefficients of these scales are 0.95 for both which indicates high internal consistency. Consequently, mean scores of the English proficiency scale and the Japanese proficiency scale are 15.2 ± 1.8 , and 6.6 ± 5.1 , respectively.

As examining ethnic identity conflict they experienced as Japanese American, we created such a question that phrased "I have struggled with whether I am Japanese or American", which had five options such as "strongly agree", "agree", "neither agree nor disagree", "disagree", and "strongly disagree".

To understand how they perceived the culture or lifestyle they inherited from their ancestors, we asked them about attitudes toward three types of culture or lifestyle, i.e. Japanese, Japanese-American, and American. For this purpose, we used these questions, that is, the question about Japanese culture or lifestyle is "Japanese culture and life style are valuable to me" and "I want to develop my understanding of Japanese culture". The inquiry about the attitude toward Japanese-American culture is "I want to contribute to the development/creation of distinctly "Japanese American" culture". The question about American heritage is "American culture and life style are valuable to me". The same response categories as in the question on the ethnic identity conflict were used in these questions.

We asked them the attitude toward

intermarriage (marry with a person with the different ethnic background) in terms of the two opposite questions that were used in the study by Noh et al. (1999); i.e. "My preference is that people marry within the same ethnic group" and "It is fine if my children and grand children marry someone from a different ethnic group." The response categories are as same as in the above questions.

To explore generational differences on inter- or intra- ethnic relations of Japanese Americans in their neighborhood, we adopted several questions in our questionnaire, such as asking frequencies of communication with Japanese American neighbors, and acceptance by Japanese American neighbors, and by other Americans as well. The question asking for frequencies had a four-rank ordered option, that is, "no", "seldom", "sometimes", and "often", and the latter two questions had a five-rank ordered option, such as "extremely accepted", "accepted", "neither yes nor no", "unaccepted", and "extremely accepted".

Perceived discrimination

To assess perceived discrimination due to the ethnicity, we prepared a comprehensive inquiry and ten ones about discrimination on a day-to-day basis. The phrase of the former one was in the following manner (referred to Noh, S. et al., 1999); "Have you experienced or felt discrimination in housing, at school, on jobs, or other place because you are Japanese American?" The response categories to this question were "often", "sometimes", "seldom", and "never".

This question was followed by a separate ten questions, which was then asked about frequency of exposure (experience) to more chronic daily discrimination ("How frequently have you experienced each of the following in your daily life?"), such as "being treated less courtesy" and "being insulted". These questions were modified the nine questions which was originally constructed by Kessler R.C., Mickelson K.D, and Williams D.R. (1999). The phrases of questions are as follows: 1) people act as if you are inferior, 2) people act as if you are not smart, 3) treated with less courtesy than others, 4) treated less respect than others, 5) received poor service in stores/restaurants, 6) people act as if you are dishonest,

7) you are called names or insulted, 8) you are threatened or harassed, 9) discriminated or pressed by police, and 10) inhibited from renting or buying a house. The response options of these questions were as follows; (3) frequently, (2) sometimes, (1) seldom, and (0) never.

Inconsistent with the findings by Kessler's (1999) study, explanatory factor analysis (EFA), which extracted factors by maximum likelihood method and promax rotation, found two meaningful factors with eigenvalues of 15.6, and 2.9 respectively, and then EFA was followed by second-order confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Both No. 10 and No.6 were eliminated because of low factor loadings in CFA⁵. Consequently, two first-order latent factors were interpreted as "being looked down on" and "being insulted or harassed"; and the second-order latent factor denoted "perceived day-to-day discrimination". The factor labeled "being looked down on" loaded on items from No.1 to No.5, which factor loadings ranged between 0.66 and 0.87. The other first-order factor labeled "being insulted or harassed" loaded on items No.7 to No.9, which factor loadings ranged between 0.52 and 0.81. According to Fit Indexes, this second-order factor measurement model showed good enough or good factor validity, that is, Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI)=.983, Adjusted GFI (AGFI)=.962, and RMSEA=.048(.026-.069).

To construct a scale for measuring perceived day-to-day discrimination, the values of the individual items appeared in the second-order measurement model, i.e. No.1-No.5 and No.7-No.9 were summed up together. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this scale was 0.88. Although there is a question whether such perceived discrimination scale developed on the basis of other ethnic minorities such as African American or Hispanic rather than Asian Americans will be adequate (Young, K. & Takeuchi D.T., 1998, pp.425-427), it is concluded that the construct validity as well as the reliability of this scale are sufficient to use.

Life chances (Opportunity)

⁵ The eigenvalues of EFA suggest one-factor model, however, according to the fitness indexes in CFA second-order factor model consisted of eight items was superior to one-factor model.

Life chances are the probabilities of realizing life choices that people have in their selection of lifestyle. Actualization of choices is influenced by life chances or opportunities that respective societies allowed their people. Darendorf (1973) noted that the best interpretation is that life chances are "the crystallized probability of finding satisfaction for interest, wants and needs, thus probability of the occurrence of events which bring about satisfaction." Also, Darendorf suggested that the concept of life chances include rights, norms, and social relationships (the probability that others will respond in a certain manner). Giddens (1980) further defined the term of life chances as the chances a person has to share in the socially created economic or cultural "goods" that are valued in a society (cited from Ritzman, R.L. & Tomaskovic-Devey, D., 1992). The overall thesis is that chance is socially determined and social structure is an arrangement of chances (Cockerham W.C., 1997). In other words, certain life chances result from circumstances of origin, such as race, gender, and parents' social class positions, educational level and occupations (Giddens, A., 1980). Additionally, we can say that life chances are like an opposite concept against relative deprivation that people may feel when they perceive that their future chances of achieving what they want is blocked⁶ due to circumstances of their origin (Hurr, W.M. & Kim, K.C., 1990). Although some reference group is needed to assess relative deprivation, we do not need any reference for evaluating items of life chances. Therefore, we could understand easily how much opportunity descendants of Japanese immigrants have obtained to succeed in life or fulfill their life in the American society by evaluating perceived life chances or opportunity, and we could realize its disparity among generations as well. In other word, it gives us some cues to recognize the extent that barriers to opportunity for Japanese Americans still exist, not merely because of their ethnicity.

In line with this theory, we prepared a series of eight items inquired by the main phrase; "How do

⁶ "Relative deprivation theory" was an original idea of Crosby (1982); we cited it from Hurr & Kim (1990).

you evaluate the opportunity to achieve the following in the US as a Japanese American?" These items tapped on the following major life domains; 1) receive quality education; 2) opportunity for financial success; 3) getting better job; 4) healthy living; 5) live safely; 6) enjoy family life; 7) enjoy leisure time; and 8) find fulfillment. The response options of these items are (4) opportunity are strong, (3) opportunity are good, (2) opportunity are okays, and (1) opportunity are weak. We analyzed these eight items individually.

Health status

To identify overall health status, self-rated health (SRH), as Idler and Benyamini (1997) have confirmed its importance as the device to measure overall health, was evaluated by the inquiry in which the phrase was "How do you describe your health relative to your age?" The response categories were rank ordered five categories such as "very good", "good", "average", "poor", and "very poor". Regarding health status in a physical aspect, as it was suggested that Japanese American as well as Chinese American had more somatic complains than European-Americans on MMPI (Sue S. and Sue D.W., 1974), a self-administered checklist of twenty somatic symptoms/problems was constructed by modifying Symptoms and Problems Complexes (CPX) for the Quality of Well-being Scale originally developed by Bush, J.W. & Kaplan, R.M. (cited from McDowell, I. & Newell, C., 1996, pp.483-491). The participants responded by "yes" or "no" to each of twenty somatic symptoms experienced over the past few weeks, which included general tiredness/weakness, pain or stiffness in lower back, sick or upset in stomach and so on. As for a mental health measure, the twelve items version of the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) that was a self-administered instrument designed to identify non-psychotic psychological disturbance in the community was applied (Goldberg, D.P., 1972). Such numbers as 0-1-2-3 were given to options of each item in order that higher number indicate higher psychological disturbance.

Results and Discussion

Ascribed Status

Generation

The total valid sample (N=553) consisted of 8 subgroups regarding to the immigrant generation, the second-generation (Nissei) 124(22.4%), the third generation (Sansei) 245(44.3%), the fourth generation (Yonsei) 88(15.9%), the fifth generation (Gosei) 6(1.1%). Shin-issei who immigrated to the United States after the World War II were 28(5.1%). There were 13 or 2.4% who did not identify their generation. And 42 or 7.6% who did not fit given categories, and 7 or 1.3% who did not respond to this question⁷.

Participants in the generation categories with small numbers such as Gosei and participants who could not identify their generation were eliminated from the sample. Five generational categories were studied: 124 Nisei, 245 Sansei, 88 Yonsei, 28 Shin-issei, and 42 OTs.

Age

Every generation had wide age range. The mean age of the Nisei group was 67.5, the Sansei group was 47.6, the Yonsei group was 30.2, the Shin-issei group was 47.0, and the Others (OTs) group was 40.7. Nisei are the oldest and most are in their retirement years. The Sansei tend to be middle aged and the mainstay of their families as well as their business, since there is considerable evidence that most peoples' economic fortune improve as they age, at least until late middle age. The mean age of the Shin-issei is the same as the Sansi or 47 years old. The Yonsei are mostly in late adolescence transitioning to adulthood. The mean age of the OTs was 40.7 years.

Mixed ethnicity or heritage

There are no precise statistics on the number of mixed race people, so Japanese American is not exception. Therefore, we tried to distinguish 100% Japanese lineage descendents i.e. full Japanese biologically from mixed ethnic or heritage descendents (part-Japanese). Examining this distribution by

⁷ Providing additional information about generations, the mean age of Gosei is 34.6±20.6, DK (do not identified) stand at 30.3±9.6, and NA (not answered) stand at 40.3±10.0. Proportions of mixed ethnic Japanese American were 33.3% for Gosei, 76.9% for DK, and 66.7% for NA. Partly due to the higher proportion of mixed ethnicity in DK and NA groups, we assumed that they might hardly answer the inquiry on their immigrant generations.

generation, proportions of mixed ethnic Japanese American were 9.8% in Nisei participants, 10.6% for Sansei, 34.5% for Yonsei, 7.1% for Shin-issei, and OTs with 33.3%. This result showed that the ratios of mixed ethnicity were relatively low in our sample of Nisei, Sansei, and Shin-issei. In contrast, mixed ethnicity occupied one third in the sample of Yonsei, and OTs. According to sociologist Nakashima C. (1992), mixed-race people are viewed as “genetically inferior to both (or all) of their parents” and they feel in general the social pressure to have to “choose” what group they belong to. And, a biracial individual strives for a totalness, a sense of wholeness that is more than the sum of its parts of that person’s heritages (Kich, G. K., 1992). So that, we consider that being mixed-race might be one of sources of social stress.

We heard several voices for claiming mixed-race issues in our research, such as *“The only area that I feel was not really covered is a tendency towards reverse discrimination towards mixed Japanese Americans. I can remember feeling it from my relatives, peers all my life. It was very subtle uncomfortable and unidentifiable until I became an adult. I am half Japanese.....,but look very much Caucasian. Growing up only around my Japanese side of the family left me feeling very different most of the time. I could never understand the distance I felt from some Nisei (even my own aunties). I was definitely not able to blend in with my 20 other Japanese cousins! (female Sansei in her thirties). Although some mixed-raced people continue to struggle everyday with such a feeling “what am I?” or “Am I accepted by Japanese-Americans or white people?”, other researches indicted that the experience of interracial Japanese Americans vary vastly, from strongly positive to quite painful (Mas Iwasaki A., 1992). For instance, a positive experience of being a mixed race is represented by such a voice that “...Also, being “half”, I have not really experienced the discrimination that people of 100% Japanese lineage may face, since I do not look obviously Japanese and most are unsure of my ethnic background....”*

Since now, a handful of researches attempted to explore biracial identity development, and a few theories were proposed such as three-stage theory/model (Jacobs, 1992, and Kich, 1992), a

five-stage approach (Poston, 1990), and a four-phase model (Collins, 2000), according to Collins (2000). Hence, analyses of the experiences of mixed ethnic Japanese American in comparison to 100% Japanese lineage descendents is planned for a future paper to contribute biracial identity issues.

Gender

Ratios of males were 42.7% for Nisei, 41.6% for Sansei, 43.2% for Yonsei, 28.6% for Shin-issei, and 35.7% for OTs. Although this result shows the ratios of Shin-issei and OTs seem to be relatively lower, there is no statistical difference among them concerning gender. These ratios indicated that in general, our data would less represent conditions of the Japanese American males.

Acquired Status

Marital status

As for ratios of married or cohabit participants, the older generational subgroups such as Nisei, Sansei, and Shin-issei have higher ratios (62.1%, 72.0%, and 78.6%, respectively) compared to Yonsei (37.9%), and OTs (50.0%). In addition, 15.3% of Nisei experienced deaths of their spouses, as is often the case with the elderly. Although Sansei have the highest ratio of divorced or separated among them (8.6%), it is quite low compared to the ratio of the national census. Regarding to single, around nineteen percent of Nisei as well as of Sansei are never married, in contrast, 60.9% for Yonsei, and 42.9% for OTs.

Educational attainment

The proportions of obtained university degree or higher educational career are significantly different by generation (Kruskal-Wallis test, $p < 0.001$). The lowest in our sample is Nisei (59.8%), nevertheless this percentage is considered being still higher comparing with 34.5% of Japanese Americans aged 25 and older completed, on average, at least four years or more collage education according to the US Bureau of Census in 1990. Although, historically, it is notable that not only Issei in U.S.A. but also Issei in Canada and Brazil had the strong value placed on attaining a higher education (ex. Makabe, T., 1998), our sample might be skewed to higher acquired social status.

It is evident that Sansei have strong

motivation to attain higher education for achieving 'successes' as the literature documented (Makabe, T., 1998), therefore, the ratio of Sansei who completed at least four year or more collage education was the highest ratio such as 83.5%. Although Yonsei with 68.2% was the second lowest in our sample in the time of this point, 25.0% were still students probably in undergraduate or graduate schools because they were younger on average. Thus, in future it is possible for Yonsei subgroup to attain higher education at the same or higher ratio compared to Sansei, however, we can not specify the reason of their higher educational attainment is whether strong motivation for success with limited opportunities in noneducational area as similar to Sansei, or parental pressure caused of higher academic expectations for their children (Sue, S. & Okazaki S., 1990, Peng, S. & Wright, D., 1994)⁸.

Additionally, the percentages for the other subgroups are 75.0% for Shin-issei, and 78.6% for OTs. The ratio of lower educational attainment than high school diploma was only 0.5% in all subgroups.

Length of Japanese language education

It was found that length of learning Japanese language was significantly different by generation (K-W test $p < 0.001$). Among both Sansei and Yonsei, one fourth had never learned Japanese; the proportions including "none" and "less than one year" occupied 44%, and 46%, respectively. By contrast, Nisei who studied Japanese more than 5 years stood at 40.3%. This indicated that Japanese language skills among Japanese Americans reduced remarkably between Nisei and Sansei/Yonsei; retaining Japanese language was a difficult issue among the contemporary Japanese Americans. As a matter of course, Shin-issei had more Japanese education; more than three fourths (77.8%) had studied Japanese for more than ten years, thus they have attained proficiency in Japanese and ten percent of them only know Japanese at an elementary school level or lower.

Employment status

Most participants were working as employees in

companies: 37.1% Nisei, 67.4% Sansei, 48.9% Yonsei, 57.1% Shin-issei, and 57.1% OTs. The percentages of self-employed were similar and small between 7 % and 13% in every generation. This is in contrast to Japanese Canadians who have a goal to establish themselves in their own business (Makabe, T., 1996, p.49). Takahashi (1997) suggests small business is not considered a secure method to earn a living, therefore, parallel with major occupational shifts in the larger American economy, occupations of Japanese American had shifted to professional and technical employment, especially for Japanese American with higher educational level, by examining the employment data between 1940 and 1970.

The reason why Nisei showed the relatively lower ratio is that, we assumed, 37.9% (n=37) of them did not answer this question. In examining a mean age of non-responded Nisei, the most of them were old enough to retire from their working lives (the mean age was 77.0 ± 5.4). The lower ratio of employee we found in the Yonsei subgroup was due to the highest ratio of student (25.0%). Although the sample in our research was small, the unemployment ratio of Yonsei was showed almost two or three times higher, that is 8.0%, than that of the rest generational subgroups, ranged from 0% to 4.8%.

Using working participants in the five subgroups including self-employments as well as employees, we examined further their occupations by generation. The majority engaged in professional and technical job in each generation, ranged between 48.2% and 60.0%. It was clarified that Japanese American had a strong inclination to engage in professional and technical occupation across generations. In Nisei, Sansei, Shin-issei, and OTs subgroups, the second largest was executive, administrative, and managerial job, i.e. 23.1%, 24.8%, 15.0%, and 31.0%, respectively. In consistent with the previous literatures, most of contemporary Japanese American engaged in professional or administrative jobs (ex. Fong, T.P., 1998). This was suggested that structural change had been happened in employment patterns for Japanese Americans since the end of the World War II (Takahashi J., 1997, pp118-121).

Family income (Household income)

⁸ In examining perception of life chances, 68% of all participants (n=553) responded "opportunities are strong" to the inquiry of "receiving quality education", then this was the highest among 8 life chances.

It is suggested that on average, Asian American families enjoy a higher family income compared to all other American. Especially, according to the 1990 U.S.A. census, as only 3.4% of Japanese American live below the poverty level, this is lowest among Asian American ethnic groups and just a half of white Americans (7.0%). To the contrary, Japanese Americans have the highest median family income of \$51,550 among Asian Americans (Fong T.P., 1998).

In examining the total amount of household income by generation, we found a significant difference (K-W test, $p < 0.001$). Among the five generational subgroups, if we combined four categories over \$5,000 per month on average, the ratio of Sansei was the highest with 61.4%; that means almost two thirds lived with median or more affluent financial condition. The next highest was OTs with 50.0%. The ratios of the rest three subgroups were similar; Nisei with 44.2%, Yonsei for 41.3%, and Shin-issei for 44.0%. Since Yonsei was youngest in these generations, 15.0% were in income level of "\$500-\$1,500 per month" on average in the last three months before this survey.

Financial strain

Accordingly, examining the distribution of five options by generation, we found a significant generational difference (K-W test, $p < 0.001$). That is, showing ratios of those who felt harsher financial condition than "difficulty" in order from higher to lower, the highest was Yonsei with 10.4%; the second highest was Sansei (4.5%); the third was Shin-issei (3.7%); then followed by Nisei with 2.6%, and the lowest was OTs (2.8%)⁹. From this result, we assumed that although the ratio was not large in general, among our Japanese American sample, Yonsei suffered from relatively strong financial strain. Because the financial strain is a major source of life stress, we conceived health, especially mental aspect, of Yonsei might be affected by this social stressor.

⁹ Compared with the findings of Williams et al. (1997) when higher scores indicated higher financial stress, the mean score of Japanese American was 0.81 ranging between 0.54 and 1.22, thus quite lower than Black (1.996) and Whites (1.65).

Ethnic Contacts/Ethnic Socialization

Ethnic density in neighborhood

In general, about three fourths of the Japanese American sample reported that they lived communities where "none" or "less than 5" Japanese American families lived. From our data, most participants were living in the social circumstances with less ethnic contact so that they would hardly maintain their own ethnic culture or language. However, looking the distributions in detail, we found a significant generational difference in the number of Japanese American neighbors (K-W test $p < 0.05$); Sin-issei and OTs lived communities where, as they reported, none of Japanese American family lived in their neighbors. Such ratios accounted for more than 55% in both subgroups. In case of Nisei and Sansei, most of them lived communities where "one to five" Japanese American families lived in their neighbors; 52.1%, and 41.3%, respectively. Characteristically, 17.7% of Yonsei lived in circumstances that "more than 50" Japanese American families lived partly because 25% of them were undergraduates or graduate students.

Contact with relatives who live in Japan

Evidently, for the most part of Shin-issei (92.9%) keep in contact with their relatives living in Japan because they are newcomers from Japan. Apart from Shin-issei, ratios of those who still have some contacts with relatives in Japan decrease as succeeding generations, that is, Nisei stand at 59.4%, Sansei 33.3%, and Yonsei 28.7%. It is surprising that almost two thirds of Nisei maintain some connections with relatives in Japan, and even in Yonsei subgroup more than one fourth still have them. The ratio of OTs subgroup accounts for 59.9%, as large as Nisei.

Communication with Japanese American neighbors

It was found that there was a significant generational difference in the frequency of communication with Japanese American neighbors (K-W test, $p < 0.001$). The generation with most frequently communicating with Japanese American neighbors was Nisei, the ratio of those who communicated with them more frequently than "sometimes" stood at 67.0%, the highest. Showing the rest subgroups in order from higher to lower, Sansei was 50.3%; Shin-issei, 37.5%;

Yonsei, 36.7%; and the lowest was OTs, 30.4%. Nisei maintained well communication with the Japanese American. Reversely, as for the ratio of having never communicated with them, the highest subgroup was OTs, 47.2%; next was Yonsei, 46.8%; followed by Shin-issei, 41.7%, and Sansei, 32.0%; and the lowest was Nisei of 21.1%. We can suggest the tendency that with subsequent generations Japanese Americans communicate less and less with their Japanese American neighbors.

Acceptance by Japanese-American and the other American neighbors

Examining the ratio of positive responses (both “extremely accepted” and “accepted”) that indicated perceived acceptance by Japanese American, and by the other American neighbors, we found no difference among generations (K-W test, $p>0.10$). In the entire sample, 88.6% evaluated they were accepted by Japanese American neighbors, however, it needs to be cautious when interpreting the data because some part of them did not communicate with their Japanese American neighbors as stated above, especially younger generation such as Yonsei. Concerning self-evaluation for acceptance by other American neighbors, 92.3% of all generation subgroups were accepted subjectively, so that we conceived that almost of all Japanese American adapt very well to the dominant American society. However this fact does not mean they did not face on any discrimination or disadvantage in the American society, as we described below.

Acculturation

Language

English: In examining the mean score of the English proficiency scale by generation, we found significant generational difference in English proficiency (ANOVA, $F_{4,517}=12.6$, $p<0.001$). Three generational subgroups had higher scores that stood for almost complete skills, that is, Sansei with 15.5 ± 1.5 ; Yonsei, 15.5 ± 1.4 ; and OTs, 15.7 ± 1.3 . Compared to these subgroups, Nisei with 14.6 ± 2.1 and Shin-issei with 13.6 ± 2.4 were lower; especially Shin-issei was lowest since for the most part of them their mother tongue must be Japanese. Consequently, our result showed that

language acculturation proceeded with succeeding generations, that is, from Nisei to Sansei/Yonsei. English proficiency seemed to approach at its zenith in Sansei and was maintained in Yonsei at the same level. Japanese: Similarly, examining the Japanese proficiency scale by generation, in marked contrast with English proficiency, the score of Shin-issei stood at 14.6 ± 3.9 , which was highest among the generations (ANOVA, $F_{4,516}=34.9$, $p<0.001$). Shin-issei retained Japanese language skills, however the score indicated that the level of their proficiency was a little lower than the perfect. The second highest was Nisei with 8.4 ± 4.2 , which score indicated their proficiency was, on average, at “a little” level. Showing the scores of other generational subgroups, the score of Sansei stood at 5.1 ± 4.6 ; Yonsei with 5.5 ± 4.7 ; and OTs with 7.6 ± 5.0 . It suggested that the Japanese proficiency would have been lost gradually with succeeding generations, so that Sansei and Yonsei are almost unable to use Japanese.

Experience of the internment camp cast a shadow over the relatively lack of Japanese language skills in Sansei and Yonsei subgroups. To raise children as a good American, their parents in older generation, mostly Nisei, especially experienced internment did not teach them Japanese language and culture. Accordingly, although several participants remarked that they did want to learn Japanese from their parents, Japanese as ethnic language hardly transmitted from old generations to new generations.

Identity struggle

As examining the responses to the question that “I have struggled with whether I am Japanese or American”, we found there was significant generational difference in the distribution of response categories (K-W test, $p<0.05$). Combined “strongly agree” category with “agree” category, more Nisei, Yonsei and OTs tended to affirm that they struggled to find their ethnic identity than the other subgroups; the percents were 30.5%, 33.0%, and 31.7%, respectively. Those who affirmed this question in Sansei and Shin-issei occupied 20.1%, and 21.4%, respectively. Interestingly, even Yonsei who are younger generation, one third of them still have struggled with their ethnic identity to a greater or lesser degree. We assumed that

the relatively higher ratios of mixed ethnic or mixed heritage participants among Yonsei and OTs, occupied around 33-34%, might influence on their conflict with ethnic identity (Nakajima C.,1992, Iwasaki, M.A., 1992).

Attitude toward Japanese, Japanese-American, and American culture/lifestyle

First, examining the attitude toward Japanese culture/lifestyle by generation, there were no significant generational difference statistically in both questions (K-W test, $p>0.10$). Consequently, a few common tendencies in the attitude toward Japanese culture/lifestyle were found across generations. First, observed the ratios combined “strongly agree” with “agree”, on average of all subgroups, 88.0% responded to the first question concerning Japanese culture/lifestyle affirmatively, that is, “valuable to them” (ranged from 85% to 93%). Similarly, to the second question such as “I want to develop my understanding of Japanese culture”, 85.3% responded affirmatively in all subgroups (ranged from 75% to 89%). Next, regarding the attitude toward Japanese American culture/lifestyle by generation, we found no statistical difference as well. On average, 57.1% of all subgroups showed the affirmative attitude toward development or creation of Japanese American culture/lifestyle (ranged from 54% to 66%). In the same way, there was no generational difference in the attitude toward American culture/lifestyle. The ratio of affirmative response stood at 84.3% in the total sample (ranged from 76% to 89%).

To conclude, a greater number of Japanese Americans in our sample considered both the Japanese heritage and American heritage were valuable for them, compared with the affirmative attitude toward Japanese American culture/lifestyle. Therefore, the biculturalism would penetrate into the Japanese American, although American-born generation retained Japanese language in a lesser degree. Additionally, the fact that more than half of our sample, even the young generation such as Yonsei (65.9%), hoped to contribute to Japanese American culture/lifestyle denotes that Japanese American ethnic community would continue to maintain and be innovated in the future as the hybrid/blended culture

or Nikkei culture. Since no difference in these attitudes toward their cultural heritage between Shin-issei and the other generation subgroups were found, we assumed that acculturation might proceed rapidly in the Shin-issei subgroup, although the sample size of Shin-issei was small.

How Japanese-Americans ethnically define themselves, i.e. ethnic identity of Japanese-American, depends on such factors as generation, parenting or discipline in childhood, parents’ experience during WWII, ethnic circumstances in neighborhood, and mixed race. Aging or time may be an important factor, as well. Interestingly, some participants witnessed that as they were ageing, for example in their forties or later years, they awoke themselves as a Nikkei without intention. They never thought of it before, partly because they had been brought up in non-Asian communities. *“Growing up in non-Asian communities, I do not relate first to my Japanese heritage. However, when I turned 40, I began to develop an appreciation for my heritage, -purchasing books, travel to Japan with my family-...(Sansei female in her late forties)”*

Attitude toward intermarriage

There found a rather strong negative correlation between two opposite questions about attitudes toward intermarriage, in other words, endogamy and exogamy. ($r=-0.51$, $p<0.001$). In examining generational differences in these questions, we found significant generational differences in both questions (K-W test, $p<0.01$, for both). In the same way as examination of the attitudes toward cultural heritage, in terms of ratios of affirmative responses to endogamy, we found the ratio of Nisei was the highest stood at 20.7%, next Sansei with 13.8%, followed by Yonsei with 12.6%, OTs with 9.8, and Shin-issei was the lowest standing at only 3.6%. In contrast, examining the latter question about exogamy, in order from higher to lower, Yonsei was the highest stood at 88.4%, next was OTs with 87.8%, Shin-issei with 85.2%, Sansei with 77.0%, and the lowest was Nisei stood at 74.6%.

These results indicated that as succeeding generations, in general, a greater number of Japanese Americans tended to show a positive attitude toward intermarriage (exogamy), and in reverse, a positive attitude toward marriage within the same ethnic group

(endogamy) was weakened. Resultantly, mixed ethnic or mixed heritage Japanese American must increase more in the next generations such as Gosei, and the second-generation (we may call it as Shin-nisei) of Shin-issei.

Perceived Discrimination

In examining comprehensive evaluation on lifetime ethnic discriminatory experience by generation, we found a significant difference of exposure of ethnic discrimination (K-W test, $p < 0.05$). Describing the ratio of participants who never experienced discrimination due to their ethnicity in order from higher to lower, the highest generation was Yonsei with 31.0%: next was Shin-issei with 25.0%, Nisei with 20.3%, and both Sansei and OTs were 19.1%. By contrast, showing the ratios of those who experienced ethnic discrimination more frequently than “sometimes”, Yonsei were less likely to experience ethnic discrimination (21.8%), while ratios of the other generations were higher ranging between 36% and 42%. It suggested that as subsequent generations in the Japanese American, exposure of ethnic discrimination as life stressor would lessen.

However, compared scores of the perceived day-to-day discrimination scale among generations, inconsistent with the comprehensive question as stated above, no statistically significant difference was found (mean scores ranging between 5.7 and 6.7). This contradictory, we conceived, indicated that a degree of ethnic discrimination related to housing, job, or school were different among generations during their lifetime, but humiliated discriminatory experiences they faced on the daily basis.

Additionally, Kessler et al. (1999) showed that only 8.8 percent of Non-Hispanic black and 19.5% of other ethnicities reported they were not exposed to any of nine day-to-day perceived discriminations, eliminated No. 10, compared with 44.4% of Non-Hispanic white. As for the Japanese American sample, 12.3% reported they did not experience any day-to-day perceived discrimination; therefore 87.7% had experienced it. Kessler et al. (1999) also find that the most common reason for perceived discrimination is race/ethnicity. Although

the cause of perceived day-to-day discrimination is not solely race/ethnicity, other major causes of discrimination are gender, appearance, and age. Taking these things into account, we suggested that ethnic discrimination against Japanese American might be still prevalent in American society, like to Non-Hispanic black and other ethnicities. However, ethnic discrimination against Japanese American is caused not merely by white people, but also by other Asian American groups as well as Japanese nationals, as remarked that “*I feel that you not only receive discrimination from others but also from within other Asian groups and full blocked Japanese..... We sometimes bring ridicule upon ourselves because we close ourselves from others.*”

As causes of discrimination are complex, therefore this social phenomenon is complicated. We can understand well double or triple burdens Japanese American may sometimes face on from such an experience that “*Growing up in Kibei Sansei (mom) and 1st generation (dad) family set me apart from a lot of the other JA kids I grow up with, who we are solidly Sansei or Yonsei.....I always felt like I was a bit more in limbo, because I did not feel wholly Japanese, wholly American, or wholly Japanese-American. I also feel that JA’s my age experience a lot of obstacles that are not necessarily monitored. For example, I have had experiences where I have felt like I was not being taken seriously, despite the fact that I was knowledgeable in those particular contexts, but not necessarily because I am Japanese American but because I am young and female. In my experience, age, socioeconomic background, and gender are just as important in terms of how I am treated, as race is.*”

Life Chances

In examining the individual items on life chances among five generation subgroups by Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance test, we found there were significant differences in just half of eight items such as “opportunity for financial success” ($p < 0.01$), “getting better job” ($p < 0.01$), “enjoy family life” ($p < 0.05$), and “find fulfillment” ($p < 0.01$). Consequently, no generational differences were found in the domains of life chances such as education,

healthy life, safe life, and leisure time. Regarding generational difference in perceived opportunity for financial success, in terms of the ratios of “strong” category, those of Sansei and Yonsei were relatively higher, that is, 55.9% and 53.4%, respectively. The middle subgroups consisted of Shin-issei and OTs, i.e. 44.4% and 43.9%, respectively: and then Nisei (33.3%) was the lowest subgroup. In the same way, concerning “opportunity for getting a better job”, the highest subgroup was Sansei, 52.5%; next Yonsei, 48.9%; third OTs, 46.3%; followed by Shin-issei, 37.0%; and the lowest was Nisei with 31.6%. Similarly, with regard to “enjoy family life”, the highest was Yonsei, 66.7%; Sansei, 65.0%; Nisei, 61.9%; Shin-issei, 46.4%; and OTs, 46.3%, the lowest. Presenting in the same way, with the life chance to “find fulfillment”, the highest was Sansei, 62.9%; next Yonsei, 60.2%; third Shin-issei, 50.0%; followed by Nisei, 49.1%; and the lowest was OTs, 34.2%.

We can understand from these results that Sansei and Yonsei would have greater life chances to achieve life satisfaction. It is understandable that Yonsei considered their life chances greater since they were less exposed to discrimination. However the situation that Sansei experienced was different from that of Yonsei, they reported that they exposed to more discrimination. Why did Sansei evaluate their life chances as much as Yonsei did? We assumed it was partly because they might struggle for success and be making it true despite of ethnic discrimination in terms of excelling in educational achievements. Their successful experiences with a struggle might be associated with their positive evaluation for their life chances that they prized open. Compared to them, the generation of Nisei evaluated life chances for Japanese American in a lesser degree. Both Shin-issei and OTs subgroups would have the least probabilities of realizing life choices to create lifestyle fulfilled their wants or needs; therefore, we conceived that their life choices might be restricted in some reasons.

We closed this section with a suggestive remark of Nisei in the middle of seventies; “*Today, Sansei and Yonsei have more opportunities and resources available to them. This is remembering that, in most cases, Issei and Nisei were not afforded for*

various reasons. Nisei have been aware of the negatives produced during their young adult years. They tried to make up that void by exposing their children to all the positive of living in the US today and they (Sansei/Yonsei) have taken advantage of this. As a result of that attitude, the younger generation today meets with little discrimination or perhaps none at all.....” This remark echoes Niseis’ parenting principle by which they raised their children as “a very good American” and oriented succeeding generations strongly to the today’s direction, that is, “Americanize”.

Subjective Health Status (SRH)

Exploring generational difference in overall health status, as a result, there was no difference in SRH, although the ratios of “very good” category were widely ranging between 25.0% (Yonsei) and 41.8% (Sansei). Around 70% or greater portion of participants evaluated their health better compared with their same ages.

Although around 33% of the sample did not answer the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12), we attempted to compare the GHQ-12 total score by using likert-type score among five generational subgroups. Resultingly, we found generational difference in the GHQ-12 score, although the evidence was limited or preliminarily (ANOVA $F_{4,345}=7.44$, $p<0.001$). Yonsei had the highest score of 15.1 ± 5.8 that indicated most stressed or depressed among the groups partly because they were younger and suffered from financial strain described above. The second highest generations were OTs and Sansei, 13.0 ± 5.8 , and 12.9 ± 6.0 , respectively. The scores of Shin-issei and Nisei were relatively lower, i.e. 9.4 ± 4.3 , and 10.3 ± 6.3 . Consistent with the finding on the GHQ-12, in examining 20 somatic complaints by generations, we found a greater number of Yonsei had specific somatic symptoms, such as “general tiredness/weakness” (63.1%, Chi-square test, $p<0.001$), “pain or stiffness in shoulders, arms, or neck” (51.2%, $p<0.05$), and “headache” (40.0%, $p<0.05$).

Regarding Yonsei’s mental health states, here is a voice that suggested Yonsei would be demoralized/spoiled or in anomic mental states as

“The next generation of community leaders - the Yonsei are in a lost position. We have been cushioned from the leaderships the Issei, Nisei, and even Sansei faced. We are spoiled and not challenged; we have one of the only declining rates of Asian ethnicities in higher education.....(female, Yonsei in her twenties).” To confirm our finding that Yonsei stressed most mentally or physically among the five generational subgroups, we should compare the health status among them after adjusting other factors described in this paper. This task remains to be examined in future.

In addition, as emotional characteristics or traditional values of Japanese, what we call Japaneseness, such as shame, blame/responsibility, guilt, neatness, loyalty, cooperative consciousness and reliable are very strong points or internalized resources that succeeding generations of Japanese American inherited by their ancestors, led to their success in the U.S. society. However, a few participants looked them as causes of depression for them, according to such a remark that *“I have always sensed a high degree of depression in many who still opt to experience life as the three Japanese emotions: shame, blame and guilt.”* This suggests that less acculturated Japanese Americans are, more depressed they are. We will examine the relationships between acculturation and mental/physical health in the future.

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